

MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

A publication of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association
Massachusetts Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Winter 2023



Planning Awards

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Deerfield Healthy
Soils Project*

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Keith Zaltzberg (Regenerative Design Group) and students during the Frontier High School Soil Health Field Day, Deerfield, MA. The Deerfield Healthy Soils Project was awarded APA-MA's Sustainability Award (see page 6).

From the President



I don't know about you, but 2022 feels like it went by in the blink of an eye! Despite the ongoing COVID pandemic, we were able to reconnect in person for the SNEAPA conference in Providence and the annual awards lunch in New Bedford. A special thank you to our Regional Representatives and Chapter Administrator for all their hard work organizing the awards lunch. It was a great opportunity to reconnect before the holidays. After virtual conferences and online awards events, the overwhelming feedback was that people were thrilled to be back in person. If you missed the awards program, make sure to read about the 2022 awardees in this issue of the magazine. We celebrated planning at all levels throughout the Commonwealth and it was exciting to learn what's happening in different corners of our state. In addition to our in-person events, the chapter had several opportunities to gather virtually. We continue to offer the AICP Prep Course online, host webinars, and work with allied organizations to provide online learning opportunities.

We are also celebrating two planners joining state government this month! Please join me in congratulating **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll** and **State Representative Kristin Kassner**. Ms. Driscoll was most recently the Mayor of the City of Salem and ascends to the Lt. Governor's Office by way of the Beverly Community Development Department and as chief legal counsel and deputy city manager for Chelsea. She also served on Salem's City Council. State Representative Kassner served the Massachusetts Chapter in several roles, including President, and was Planning Director in the Town of Burlington for many years. We are proud of our colleagues for taking on these important positions and are excited to have more people in the State House with planning experience and knowledge! Congratulations, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll and State Representative Kassner...we look forward to working with you!

As always, please reach out if you're interested in getting involved with the Chapter. We still have a few vacancies on our Board and are always looking for committee volunteers. In addition to webinars and other learning opportunities, we are planning both in-person and virtual social events for this year. Already on the calendar is the National Planning Conference in Philadelphia April 1-4 and the SNEAPA Conference in New Haven on October 5-6. Stay tuned for more dates and events as we finalize details.

Alison

Alison LeFlore, AICP
president@apa-ma.org

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.

PLANNING PROJECT AWARD

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the Barrett Planning Group: “Moving Beyond the Pandemic: Economic Development Assessment of Small Towns and Rural Communities”

In February 2022, the **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)** engaged **Barrett Planning Group** to review and assess economic conditions in 35 small towns and rural communities in Hampden County and Hampshire County. The purpose of the project was to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Pioneer Valley’s rural economy and the region’s readiness and capacity for economic development moving forward from post-COVID recovery to the future. Toward these ends, the consultants examined, analyzed, and mapped data from a variety of sources, interviewed many local officials and business leaders, and visited and photographed conditions throughout the study area.

This report presents the results of the study and identifies opportunities to support and enhance the varied economic development interests of the participating communities. The environment for employment in these communities is challenging for several reasons. The population is small, household formation rates are low, and much of the land is difficult to develop. These conditions, coupled with lack of infrastructure and restrictive zoning, have much to do with the small size and make-up of the economic base. Still, there are lots of thriving businesses and entrepreneurs in this part of the Commonwealth, and the insistence of residents to protect what they value—the large expanses of open and forested land, small town centers, and low-density residential development—is remarkably similar

to the sentiments of residents around Greater Boston and other cities in New England.

The study’s results and recommendations pointed out many opportunities to tailor economic development to the region’s small towns. Some of these recommendations included:

- improving understanding of resources and assets through improved communication between communities within the region
- promoting local businesses
- addressing limited housing choices, lack of affordability, and poor or unsuitable housing conditions which often go unrecognized as barriers to economic development
- creating regional roundtables
- creating basic permitting guides for businesses and commercial property owners
- promoting tourism and recreational resources
- making local zoning and permitting more efficient and amending zoning for economic development
- conducting detailed municipal economic assessments



WILBRAHAM: KEY FACTS

POPULATION	14,613	PERSON
% CHANGE 2010-2020	2.8% ↗	
MEDIAN AGE	46.1	PEOPLE
POPULATION DENSITY (Persons per square mile)	662.89	
HOUSEHOLDS	5,510	HOUSE
% CHANGE 2010-2020	3.8% ↗	
SELF-EMPLOYED RESIDENT WORKERS	9.0%	BRIEFCASE
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2021)	5.10%	
INCOME PER CAPITA	\$50,471	DOLLAR
% POPULATION IN POVERTY	4.33%	

The Minuteman Bikeway (Town of Arlington)

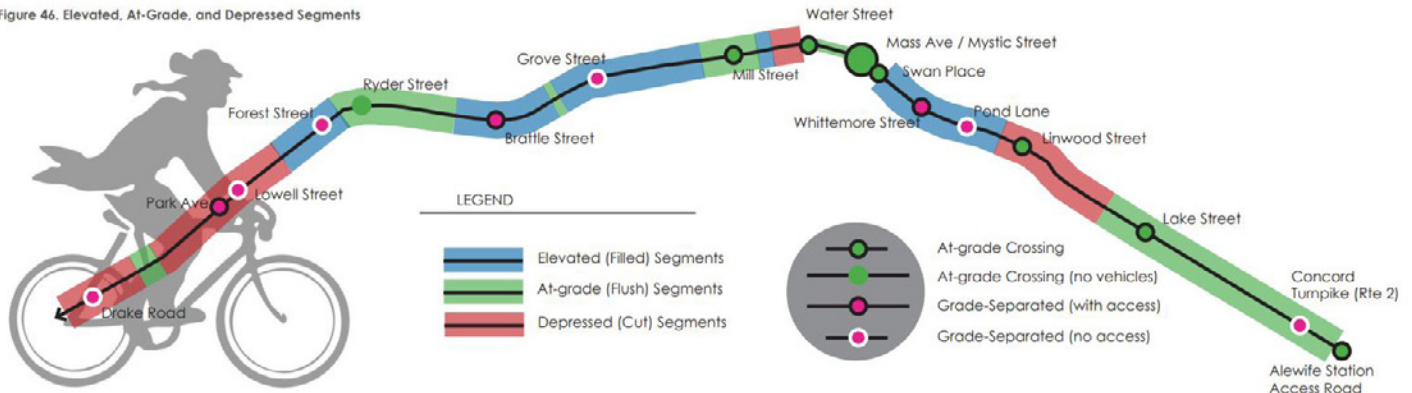
The Minuteman Bikeway in Arlington, MA is a beloved community asset and highly used regional multi-modal corridor. The planning process was a grassroots effort by the Town of Arlington's Community Preservation Act Committee, which was supportive of securing funding for a thorough Bikeway planning process.

The process included a public survey which received a total of 1,688 total responses, a series of field reviews,

three virtual public meetings, and internal stakeholder meetings. The final report addressed existing conditions and the project's vision statement and goals but also included a series of a comprehensive policy, maintenance, design, and implementation recommendations.

This primary plan recommendations consider opportunities to manage speed on the Bikeway to promote a safe and comfortable experience, crafting a maintenance program, and upgrading trailheads and waysides to establish a cohesive identity and better connect people to and from the Bikeway throughout the Town of Arlington.

Figure 46. Elevated, At-Grade, and Depressed Segments



ELECTED OFFICIAL AWARD

Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

The Baker-Polito administration successfully reformed the Massachusetts Zoning Act in January 2021, which supports increased housing production throughout the Commonwealth.

Amendments made to the Zoning Act were through Chapter 40A and made two significant changes. First, it reduced the number of votes required to adopt certain zoning ordinances and by-laws from a 2/3 supermajority to a simple majority. Second, it added a new section 3A, which requires half of Massachusetts cities and towns to zone for transit-oriented multifamily housing as of right, where applicable.

The successful amendment was the result of over four years of campaigning, 13 events in numerous cities and towns, and the work of a diverse coalition which included the Homebuilders and Remodelers Association, CHAPA, Massachusetts Municipal Association, and The Nature Conservancy, among others.

Since the passage the "Housing Choice" legislation, at least 25 successful zoning amendments in local governments have been passed with a simple majority paving the way for more Accessory Dwelling Units, multi-family, and mixed use areas.

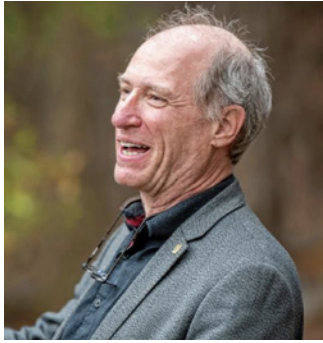
This has been one of the most important and meaningful zoning reforms for Massachusetts in the last generation.



This has been one of the most important and meaningful zoning reforms for Massachusetts in the last generation, supporting increased housing production throughout the Commonwealth.

PROFESSIONAL PLANNER AWARD

Wayne Feiden



Reflecting on **Wayne Feiden's** career, the now retired FAICP, City of Northampton Director of Planning and Sustainability stated his goal was always to do what is fair and right for Northampton. To be willing to collaborate on the path to get there, to listen to the community

when designing every solution, and to communicate the resulting final approach to everyone. Having served the community of Northampton for 34 years, there were countless collaborations, accomplishments, and successes.

To highlight some of the success, during his tenure, Northampton has quadrupled the amount of protected open space in the city; quadrupled the city-owned paved shared use bike paths; created a limited development program to add affordable and market-rate housing to conservation purchases; and moved the city from suburban strip development to a walkable, bikeable, sustainable city.

EMERGING PLANNER AWARD

Rowen McAllister



Planning is a challenging field for early career professionals. There are so many things that are learned on the job that an academic program can't teach; through experience do we grow as planners. Despite these challenges, we find young planners that are wise beyond their years. **Rowen McAllister** is one of those planners. She can see the big picture in a manner that belies her age and experience. She is calm under pressure, she has advanced analytical skills, extraordinary communication capability both oral and written, and offers sound judgment.

Rowen has been instrumental in working with the Shrewsbury Town Center Association, working to revitalize the area to serve the community for generations to come. Her involvement has included grant writing and facilitation, public outreach, and countless public meetings discussing economic development and citizen participation. We were impressed to learn about this young planner and are proud to present the 2022 APA-MA Emerging Planner award to Rowen McAllister.

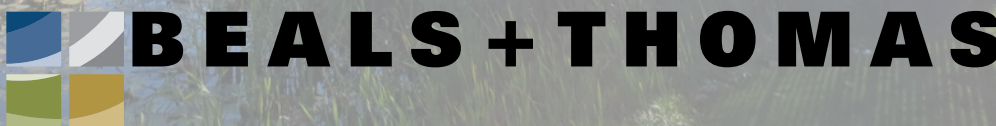
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The Deerfield Healthy Soils Project

The **Deerfield** community, like so many communities around the world, is facing unique challenges in the face of climate change including higher risks of flood, drought, and extreme temperatures. Many concerned citizens looking for solutions to the challenges ahead attended the Deerfield Climate Change Forum on April 2, 2022. The town has also been very forward thinking and proactive in creating the “Climate Resiliency: Deerfield 2030” plan. Since soil health either directly or indirectly addresses the potential hazards brought about by climate change, this project provides tools for the Deerfield community to make impactful changes at the local level on issues that deeply concern them. Healthy soils equal healthy ecosystems, and healthy ecosystems equal high resilience in uncertain futures.

The project was completed in 2022 as part of a larger Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness action in the town of Deerfield, MA. Regenerative Design Group (RDG) worked closely with Chris Curtis (Conservation Works) who was the lead planner for the larger MVP project and who was the lead author of the sample bylaws included in our report. The consultants reported directly to Deerfield’s Climate Change and Energy Committee in carrying out the work of the project.

The project kicked off with an analysis of existing soil function revealing the significant vulnerabilities and opportunities for soil health in Deerfield. The primary product was a set of graphics and maps that illustrated current patterns of soil health and showed where actions to improve soil function would have the greatest effect. This analysis was a key contribution in drawing up a proposed “Forest Upland Protection Overlay District” that would protect the town’s most significant healthy soil resources.

The outcome of analysis advised specific actions for soil health in Deerfield that fell under four priority categories:

1. Increased protection and climate-forward management of wetlands and forests
2. Better soil management on farms and gardens
3. Management of turf and lawns for soil health
4. Soil-smart construction and development patterns & practices

The plan is a model for how to approach soil health at a town scale. The steps outlined in the report create a framework that can be easily followed by any municipality to enact their own healthy soils initiative tailored to their own unique soils. Particularly, it is hoped that the sample bylaws may inspire similar bylaws in other towns.



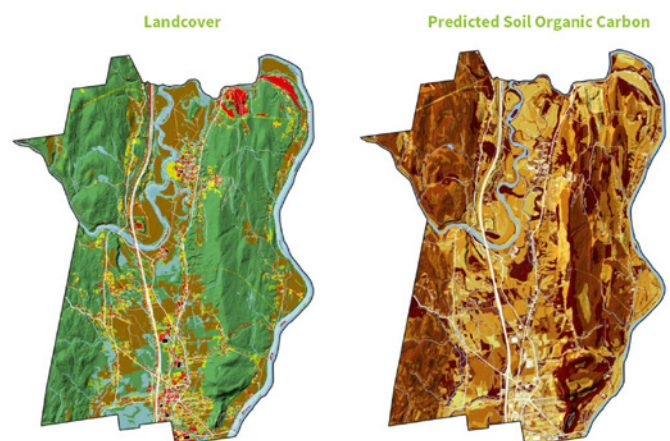
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Town of Palmer Master Plan

The world has changed a lot since 1975 when the **Town of Palmer** adopted the previous master plan. Thrusting themselves into the 21st century, Palmer went far beyond the statutory requirements of a master plan and incorporated climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as public health assessments and recommendations into a comprehensive planning document. In so doing, Palmer has adopted a master plan that is a model for communities across the Commonwealth.

Residents, businesses owners, and local stakeholders came to consensus on a vision statement that characterizes the community's ideal future, with emphases on sustainability and climate resilience in the face of current and emerging challenges. Adopted unanimously by the Palmer Planning Board in August 2021, the Palmer Master Plan equips Town officials to better manage change and to inform residents and businesses about the community's characteristics, trends, and policies.

We are impressed with the vision of this plan and the transformational opportunities it represents. For these reasons, we are excited to present the 2022 APA-MA Comprehensive Planning award to the Town of Palmer for their Master Plan.



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DEVELOPMENT**

August 25 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM
View it live on Channel 15, through the Town's
Facebook account, or join through ZOOM:
<https://vhb.zoom.us/j/92053591994?pwd=MDNEaHpRUewzTXNVbytlVzBzV0VlZz09>
Passcode: 040390

Don't forget to take the Community Survey at:
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Department of Urban Planning and Community Development, School for the Environment, University of Massachusetts, Boston: “Cool Roxbury: Lower Roxbury’s Extreme Heat Challenges and Solutions”

Cool Roxbury: Lower Roxbury’s Extreme Heat Challenges and Solutions is a report based upon a four-week investigation of extreme heat in Lower Roxbury carried out by 16 high school students from four Boston Public Schools under the supervision of students and faculty from the University of Massachusetts Boston’s Department of Urban Planning and Community Development.

In the fall of 2021, the Boston Planning and Development Agency invited area planning schools to submit proposals aimed at introducing young persons of color from underserved communities to public service career opportunities in urban planning, design, and development.

The UMass Department of Urban Planning and Community Development proposed the establishment of a Summer Program in Urban Planning to expose freshmen and sophomores from Roxbury’s Madison Park Technical Vocational High School through active engagement with local residents, institutional leaders, and UMass Boston graduate planning students in a “real world” planning project focused on a

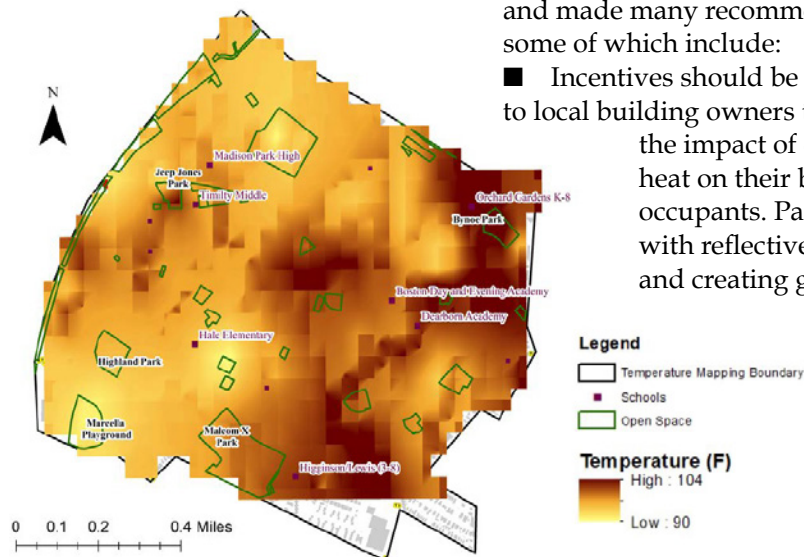
critical issue facing their community.

The high school student researchers who participated in the 2022 Summer Program in Community Resilience Planning sought to answer two research questions: First, Does Lower Roxbury face an extreme heat problem? Second, if so, what steps can be taken to protect Lower Roxbury’s most vulnerable residents from the public health threats posed by the issue?

Working with graduate planning students and faculty from the University of Massachusetts Boston, the high school students devised a four-part research design to generate reliable and valid data to answer these two questions. Their research methodology included examining scholarly research on the subject but also included 109 “people in the street” interviews with local stakeholders regarding their lived experiences dealing with Boston’s steadily rising temperatures.

After compiling finding of scholarly studies and data collection in field as well as on-the-street interviews of residents of the study area the project arrived at conclusions and made many recommendations, some of which include:

- Incentives should be provided to local building owners to mitigate the impact of extreme heat on their building occupants. Painting roofs with reflective materials and creating green roofs



Heat Map Visualization of the Temperature Points in Roxbury on July 20, 2022



Students identifying locations for the temperature survey in Lower Roxbury.

where structures and space permits should be encouraged. Incentives to encourage re-insulating the roofs, attics, and basements of older residential and commercial buildings should also be provided.

- Grants should be provided to local merchants and merchant associations to install first-floor awnings to reduce heat gain in their buildings, provide pedestrians with shaded sidewalks, and to reinforce the identity of economically, socially, and culturally significant subareas within Lower Roxbury.

- Bus stops should be redesigned replacing heat absorbing with heat repelling materials, increasing the amount of shade they generate, and utilizing solar energy to power fans and other cooling devices.

- The City should collaborate with local civic organizations and schools to undertake an outdoor air temperature survey and tree audit of Lower Roxbury playgrounds and parks so as to generate “context specific” designs for transforming those that are currently functioning as urban heat islands into effective “cooling centers” for the community.

- Strong support surfaced for expanding the federally funded Home Energy Assistance Program traditionally used to assist families with winter heating bills to help families struggling to cope with summer cooling expenses.

CITIZEN PLANNER AWARD

Jesse Geller

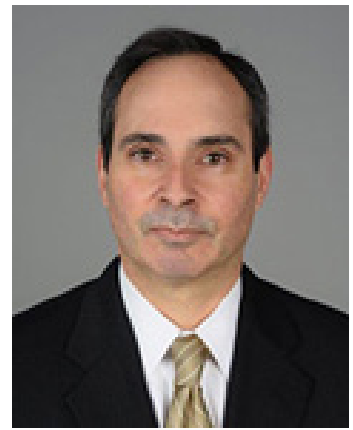
Jesse Geller is the APA-MA Citizen Planner Award recipient for his distinguished contributions to planning efforts in Brookline.

As Chair of the Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals, Jesse Geller led the process of approving 15 projects and 1,074 housing units since 2015 through the Comprehensive Permitting process alone. This accomplishment has significantly furthered the Town's housing production goals. Mr. Geller's volunteer public service as an appointed ZBA member has furthered planning principles at the municipal level. Jesse's dedication to his community is second only to his ethical and deliberate method in running a public hearing process.

Jesse joined the ZBA in 2006, and apparently, the Board had so much faith in Mr. Geller's abilities

that a majority of the Board resigned the next year. Over his 16 years of public service, Jesse has developed the Board's practices such as careful documentation of findings in their decisions and incorporated land use decisions such as Deadrick and Bellalta. Chair Geller updated ZBA regulations to treat comprehensive permitting fairly and transparently, transformed public hearings to a virtual format due to COVID, and participated in several court cases on behalf of the ZBA—including one in which the Select Board sued the Zoning Board of Appeals. Whether large or small, his deliberate decision-making process has set the bar for documenting sound planning decisions at the local level.

Amongst all of these stories, Mr. Geller has maintained decorum and moved the Board forward in an often-contentious environment. As testament to leading a successful comprehensive permitting process,



the ZBA approved all 40B applications and only had one case in his leadership where the developer appealed conditions. Due to his dedicated public service, the Zoning Board of Appeals has significantly impacted our region's housing crisis. His commitment to the City of Brookline and to the field of planning is inspiring, which is why Jesse Geller is the APA-MA Citizen Planner of the year.



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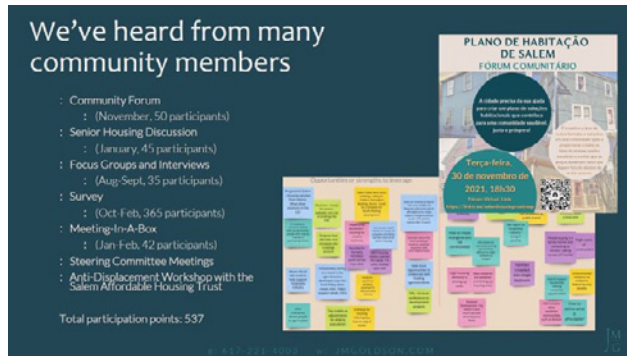
Over the last two years, **Salem** has effectively formulated and successfully implemented myriad planning projects to address history, climate resiliency, and equity across the City. Salem's planning efforts have resulted in new and updated regulations, thought leadership programs, and community engagement and assistance, to advance sustainability and resiliency, housing, public art, historic preservation, pandemic response, and equity and diversity. The City's numerous achievements are summarized below.

■ **Sustainability & Resiliency** – In 2022 the City created a new Sustainability, Energy, and Resiliency Department focused exclusively on climate. In 2021 the cities of Salem and Beverly jointly completed Resilient Together, a plan to take collective action in the face of the climate crisis.

■ **Housing** – In the fall of 2021, the City began a planning process to develop a Housing Production Plan, referred to as the Housing Roadmap. The Roadmap was guided by a steering committee and consisted of a nine-month community engagement process with over 500 points of community participation through interviews, focus groups, community forums, online and paper surveys, and Meeting-in-a-Box sessions.

■ **Public Art** – From July 2020 through January 2022 the City's Arts and Culture Programs developed Culture House Salem – a pop-up arts and culture space at Salem's Old Town Hall. The project is designed to test and study operational models for a long-term and sustainable arts and culture space in the historic building.

■ **Equity and Diversity** – In 2022 the City created a new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) position and established a permanent Race Equity Commission, to implement the action plan developed by the Race Equity Task Force that was established in 2021. The DEI Director leads this work and takes on many of the other components of this shared action plan, including working



in collaboration with the Latino Affairs Coordinator to advance Salem's Welcoming City application, Government Alliance on Race and Equity certification process, and more.

■ **Historic Preservation** – Charter Street Cemetery Welcome Center: In 2021, City staff worked with the Peabody Essex Museum on a unique collaboration for a new welcome center at the Charter Street Cemetery. The center is housed in the PEM-owned historic Pickman House (1665) at the edge of the cemetery. The Welcome Center culminated an effort managed by the Planning Department to preserve the landscape of the historic burial ground, which was established in 1637.

For all of this great planning work we are delighted to award the 2022 APA-MA Community of the Year Award to the City of Salem.



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NEWS FROM CPM | Consulting Planners' Perspective

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



Distinguished Civic Leadership Excellence Award: Emmy Hahn

Consulting Planners of Massachusetts at the annual APA-MA chapter luncheon presented **Emmy Hahn** the CPM award for Distinguished Civic Leadership Excellence for her tireless advocacy for downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts throughout the Commonwealth, including her continuing management of the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.

Of particular note is Hahn's successful launching and stewardship of the Local Rapid Recovery Program which assisted downtowns and commercial districts of all sizes in the midst of the pandemic. The International Downtown Association recognized the MA Local Rapid Recover Program with its highest honor, the Pinnacle Award in 2022. The Rapid Recovery Program (RRP) provided contracts and work for consulting planners from firms of all sizes, as well as regional planning agencies during the pandemic. One of the less visible achievements of the RRP program was the use of both private practice planners and regional planning agencies to provide services, along with the

skillful coordination with DHCD fiscal staff for timely processing of payments during the pandemic. This unsung achievement should be a model for future state-agency sponsored planning initiatives.

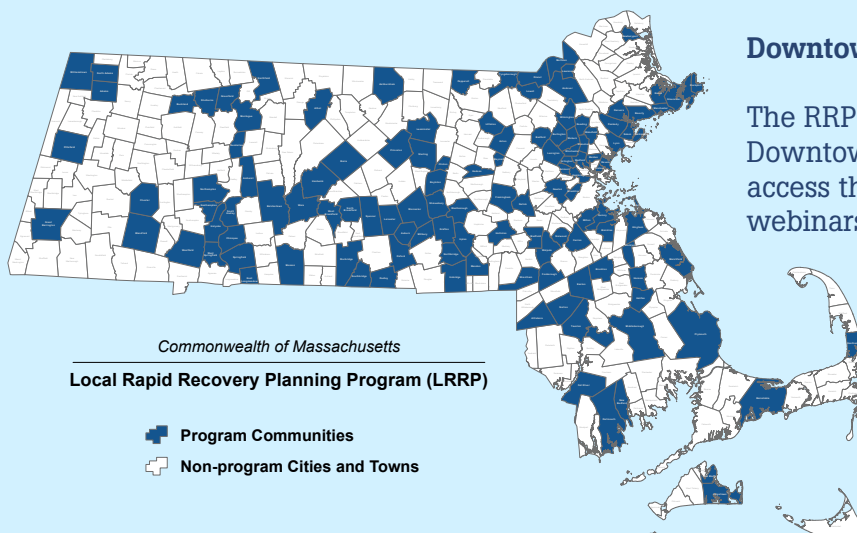
In addition, Hahn has fostered the development of Business Improvement Districts throughout the Commonwealth, providing municipalities and downtown advocates with the tools to help sustain revitalization efforts. The Rapid Recovery Program also established a much-needed database on the state of downtowns and town centers throughout the Commonwealth. Detailed data on the economic contributions, needs, and impacts of downtowns and town centers was sorely lacking, and is now available.

The CPM award for Distinguished Civic Leadership Excellence recognizes an individual – Emmy Hahn – whose collective leadership achievements exemplify planners' best efforts to create stronger, healthier, and more just communities. It recognizes and reinforces efforts to strengthen professional planning practice, utilize best practices, stimulate community



CPM President Leonardi Aray presents Emmy Hahn with the Distinguished Civic Leadership Award at the annual holiday luncheon.

involvement and civic effectiveness, and overall adds to the quality of life to cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



Downtown Revitalization Virtual Toolbox

The RRP program created a virtual toolbox for Downtown and Town Center Revitalization. To access the tools, resources – videos, slideshows, webinars, handouts, and potential funding information – developed during the Rapid Recovery Program, visit mass.gov and then type in "RRP" in the search bar once you land on the state's website. All the plans for the 125 communities are posted on the website, as well.

More Tools Needed for 2023

The adoption of the supplemental budget in October left many important tools and programs unfunded or undercapitalized. As we turn the page to a new year and a new administration, the planning community should call on Governor Healey, Lt. Governor Driscoll and our legislators, both new and returning, to take action to fund three key programs: MassWorks, HDIP, and implementation funds for downtown and town center recovery.

MassWorks needs reauthorization and funding. Since the legislature adopted the economic development budget bill during informal sessions in late October, MassWorks was left out. The legislature must approve projects involving bond-supported programs, like MassWorks during formal sessions. As the legislature reconvenes, the new Healey-Driscoll administration, the MA House, and Senate need to make reauthorization of bond programs, especially programs like MassWorks, a priority for action this quarter. Timeliness is important for the 2023-2024 grant cycle to proceed in a timely manner and a year of construction is not lost.

Last year, the Governor requested a \$400 million re-authorization of MassWorks plus \$147 in ARPA funds for MassWorks. A similar amount or greater is needed now. MassWorks helps municipalities address key infrastructure issues, that support affordable housing and economic development. Many projects with MassWorks funding advance climate resiliency, as well.

To help MassWorks funding go farther, the Healey-Driscoll administration should consider giving cities and towns using District Improvement Financing, a higher priority for MassWorks funding.

There is a clear need for infrastructure investment statewide. American Society of Civil Engineers most recent infrastructure report card grades Massachusetts infrastructure as a C-. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Massachusetts as 39th amongst the states as to transportation infrastructure, largely due to poor condition of roadways and deficient bridges.

HDIP — Housing Development Incentive Program is another bond supported program, which the legislature was unable to reauthorize since they were in informal session. There is a six-year queue of projects in Gateway Cities awaiting HDIP reauthorization and funding. Hello, we have a housing crisis. Gateway Cities have 41 projects that are ready-to-go that would create 2,300 new units of housing.

Downtown and Town Center Recovery. In 2022, the administration called for \$108 million for downtown and town center recovery to be funded in part by ARPA funding. The state still has ARPA funds and downtowns have not fully recovered from the pandemic. Smaller retailers, mom'n'pop businesses, local restaurants, and cultural and performance spaces are all still suffering.

The National Restaurant Association reported in December 2022 that 16% fewer people are dining on premises in restaurants than before the pandemic. Massachusetts local option meals tax revenues in 2022 were lagging behind 2019 revenues plus inflation by 4%. Clearly, the restaurant sector that is so vital for lively town centers and downtowns has not fully recovered. Hybrid work environments are altering shopping and dining patterns. Massachusetts' downtowns and town centers will have to adapt. Recovery resources are needed.

Through the Rapid Recovery Program (RRP), 125 action-oriented plans were developed focusing on downtowns, town centers, and commercial corridors. Implementation requires resources, yet no additional funds have been provided for the award-winning RRP program for downtowns. The state's ARPA funds have not fully been allocated and many of the RRP plans rely on prospective ARPA resources. The Healey-Driscoll administration has the opportunity to work with the legislature and make a real difference in the Commonwealth's downtowns, town centers, and commercial nodes. Hopefully, Lt. Governor Driscoll's experience revitalizing Downtown Salem will spark action and a funding commitment.

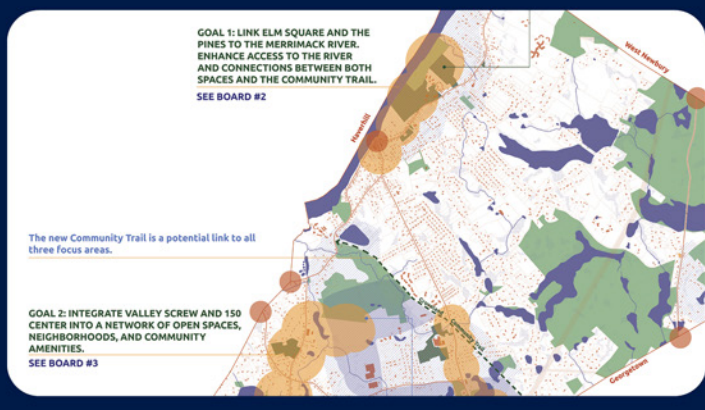
— Kathy McCabe, FAICP

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The PDO Corner

by Ralph Willmer, FAICP, MA Chapter PDO

First, I want to congratulate the following planners that passed the AICP exam in November:

Adria Boynton
Barbara Carboni
Nicholas Cohen
Christopher Hayes
Joseph King
Alexis Lanzillotta
Lauren Lind
Tyler Maren
Brendan McIntyre
Shane O'Brien
Gabrielle Queenan
Gabriel Ramos
Takashi Tada
Megan Trudel
Wenzheng Wang
Jessica Wilson

For those of you considering taking the AICP exam next year, the MA Chapter will be offering the AICP Exam Prep class again starting in March. Look for registration information soon. Additionally, there will be another AICP diversity scholarship offered for the May and November exams. The application window for submission of applications should open in January.

On another note, this year there will be a design competition focused on a community issue in the 2023 National Planning Conference (NPC2023) host city, Philadelphia, PA. This year's competition challenges students to create planning and design proposals that demonstrate a multidisciplinary and multifaceted approach to promoting public health, equitable access to nature, inclusive design, and high-quality, affordable housing options for the Logan Triangle area, one of Philadelphia's largest concentrations of vacant land located in the city's Upper North District. See www.planning.org/students/awards/designcompetition for more details. Wishing you all a happy holiday season!

— Ralph Willmer, FAICP is the Technical Assistance Program Manager and Principal Planner at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

For those of you considering taking the AICP exam next year, the MA Chapter will be offering the AICP Exam Prep class again starting in March. Look for registration information soon.

Using Grant Funding to Promote Tree Equity in Lowell

by Doris Jenkins, Weston & Sampson



What is Tree Equity?

American Forests, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting and restoring healthy forest ecosystems, defines “tree equity” as having enough trees in an area such that everyone can experience the health, climate, and economic

benefits that they provide. A thriving urban forest can reduce urban heat island effect, contribute to human comfort, enhance air quality, mitigate stormwater flooding, and increase the health and happiness of residents.

Healthy and thriving urban forests can also help reduce energy costs at adjacent properties; provide ecosystem services; support habitat connectivity; create more comfortable outdoor commercial areas, public spaces, and parks; and increase the overall aesthetics of a city by introducing more greenery. The first step towards achieving tree equity, however, is identifying canopy gaps in vulnerable areas, followed by resilient planting plans.

Identifying Tree Canopy Gaps

On a bright, sunny day this past September, several students from the “Climate Crisis and Society” class at the University of Massachusetts Lowell (UML) could be seen wandering the streets of the city, eyes to the sky. While passersby may have thought they were merely students with their heads in the clouds, they were in fact students with their heads in the trees.

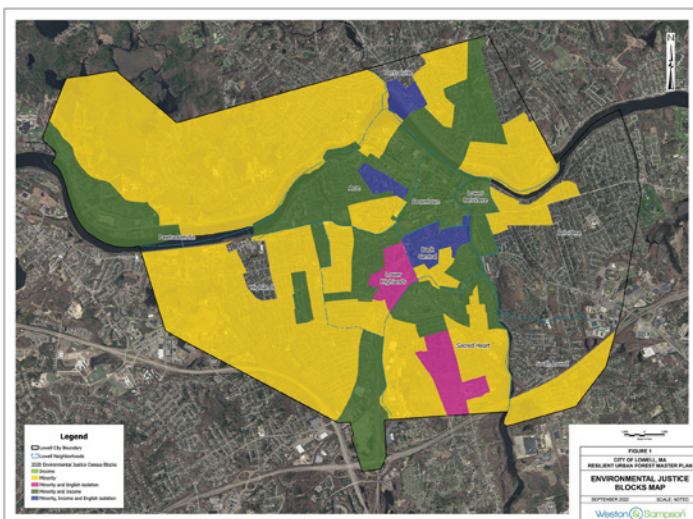
The focus on Lowell’s trees came about due to a grant that the City of Lowell received through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ (EEA) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program. According to its website, the MVP



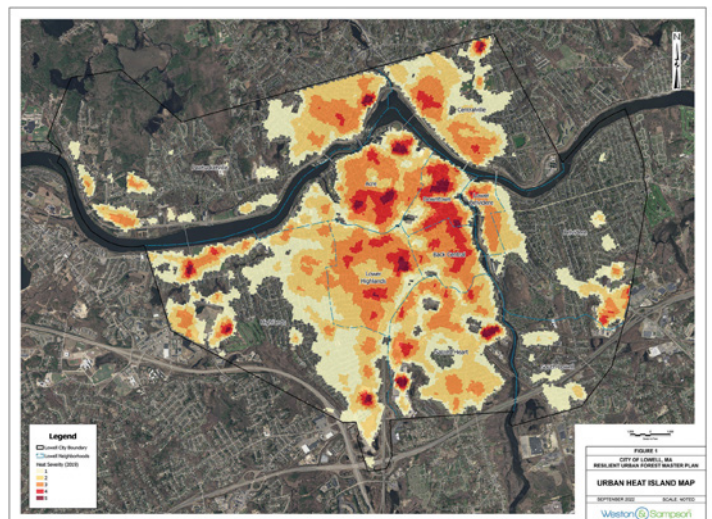
UMass Lowell students measure the diameter of a honey locust.

program provides support for cities and towns to begin the process of planning for climate change resiliency and implementing priority projects. In this case, the city is using the grant to help complete its first ever Resilient Urban Forest Master Plan.

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Left: Lowell’s environmental justice blocks compared to 2019 Trust for Public Lands Urban Heat Island Data show significant overlap between environmental justice blocks and high heat severity.



UML students from a variety of majors such as environmental science and engineering, sociology, and criminal justice began by participating in a lecture on how urban forestry and climate justice are intertwined with each of their prospective careers. Following the presentation, they took part in on-the-ground tree inventory

Healthy and thriving urban forests can help reduce energy costs at adjacent properties; provide ecosystem services; support habitat connectivity; create more comfortable outdoor commercial areas, public spaces, and parks; and increase the overall aesthetics of a city by introducing more greenery. The first step towards achieving tree equity, however, is identifying canopy gaps in vulnerable areas, followed by resilient planting plans.

training. Using a plant identification application and ArcGIS Survey123, the students collected GPS coordinates of trees throughout the city, along with information such as species, diameter at breast height, and planting space condition. This effort resulted in over 250 data points which were field verified by trained city and consultant staff.

In Massachusetts, an environmental justice (EJ) population is a neighborhood where one or more of the following criteria are true: 1) the annual median household income (MHI) is 65% or less of the statewide annual MHI; 2) minorities make up 40% or more of the population; 3) 25% or more of households identify as speaking English less than “very well”; 4) minorities make up 25% or more of the population and the annual MHI of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual MHI. Lowell has significant EJ populations, often overlapping geographically with areas that have minimal forest canopy and thus experience the more intense effects of urban heat islands. Urban heat islands occur in heavily developed areas with large amounts of impervious surfaces such as paved roads, parking lots, and buildings that absorb and retain heat, often with minimal relief from shade trees. The goal of this Resilient Urban Forest Master Plan is to understand the condition of the existing urban forest, identify geographic regions with EJ populations or critical infrastructure like community centers and transit stops, and create a planting and maintenance plan that will promote tree equity and help mitigate negative climate impacts.

Too often, trees that are planted with good intentions die shortly thereafter due to poor site conditions and a lack of water. By assessing site conditions prior to



Understanding what species are best suited to a given location is crucial for growing a resilient urban forest.

planting, such as available space, soil type, surrounding pervious or impervious surfaces, and topography, it is possible to make educated planting decisions that increase a sapling's chances of survival. Understanding what species are best suited to a given location, as well as the maintenance capacity of the staff at that location, is crucial for growing a resilient urban forest. Species diversification also increases the resiliency of an urban forest by preventing monocultures that can be wiped out by a single blight.

In a time when climate resiliency is at the forefront of everyone's minds, focusing on urban forests can offer communities a great starting point. Using native species and incorporating stormwater management into tree plantings can maximize the potential of small greenspaces while simultaneously reducing operations and maintenance needs.

— Doris Jenkins is an ISA-Certified Arborist and Engineer with Weston & Sampson's climate resiliency team. Based in Boston, she provides technical assistance for urban forest resiliency plans, climate baseline and projection analyses, and statewide resilience standards development. Doris can be reached at jenkins.doris@wseinc.com.

Building Community Resilience Through Nature-Based Solutions: *What Do Your Land Use Regulations Encourage?*

by Stefanie Covino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative

As climate change brings increased temperatures and sea levels, more frequent and stronger storms, and intense droughts, our conventional land use regulations often exacerbate these negative climate impacts by continuing to encourage the increase of impervious surfaces by transitioning fields and forests to roofs, roadways, and parking lots.

Municipalities have significant power to reduce these impacts by changing local land use regulations and bylaws that encourage smart land use and encourage nature-based solutions (NBS). These are defined as actions that protect, restore, and/or manage an existing ecological system or mimic natural

processes – to protect public health and clean water, increase natural hazard resilience, and/or sequester carbon. NBS can be broken down into three categories:

- 1) **Conserve** natural areas that are already providing ecosystem services such as recharging groundwater, buffering wetlands, supporting diverse habitat, etc.
- 2) **Integrate** natural features and low impact development (LID) into new and redevelopment such as maintaining mature vegetation as much as possible, creating vegetated buffers along roads to infiltrate stormwater, and minimizing impervious surfaces.

By comparing what is on the books with current best practices, municipalities have an opportunity to examine what they are asking for in development and identify opportunities to create changes.

- 3) **Restore** the resilience of highly developed areas by restoring impervious surfaces into natural areas or permeable pavement, collecting roof runoff for infiltration, or creating bioretention areas to clean and slow runoff instead of going into the municipal stormwater system.

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Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), Bylaw Training Workshop.

to do just this, aptly called the **Bylaw Review Tool**, available at snepnetwork.org/bylaw-review.

The tool is a multi-tab excel spreadsheet that lays out best practices and color coding of “best,” (green) “better” (yellow) and “conventional” (orange) for each of zoning bylaws/ordinances, subdivision rules and regulations, site plan review, and stormwater bylaw, including any open space residential design (OSRD) or similar bylaw that the community may have. The tool breaks down about 35 considerations such as road width, curbing, lot size, parking requirements, gutters, and many more into five clear goals:

- 1) Protect Natural Resources and Open Space
- 2) Promote Efficient, Compact Development Patterns and Infill

continued next page

Community Resilience *cont'd*

Currently, many communities’ land use rules do not fully align with the goals a community actually holds, such as enhancing climate resiliency and maintaining community character. By comparing what is on the books with current best practices, municipalities have an opportunity to examine what

they are asking for in development and identify opportunities to create changes. This can yield multiple benefits including enhancing resilience, proactively meeting state and federal stormwater regulations, and save money through avoided costs in the long run. Mass Audubon, in consultation with federal and state agencies, regional and local planners, and other experts, has created a tool

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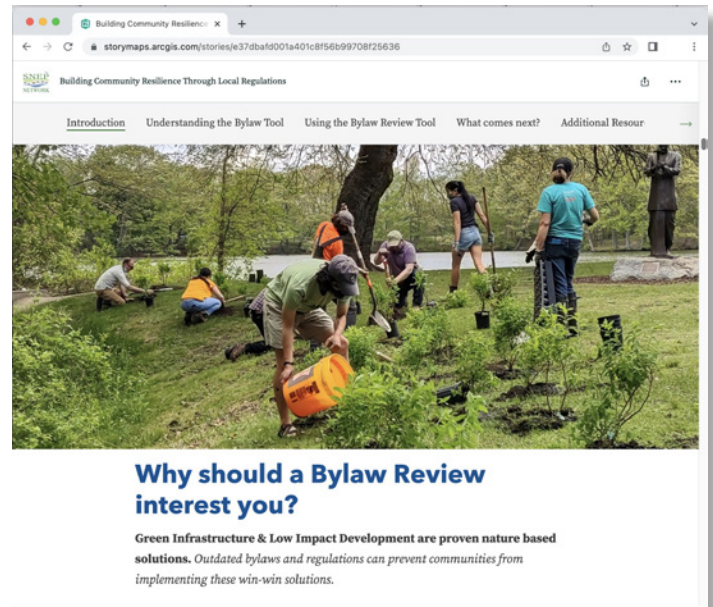
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- 3) Smart Designs that Reduce Overall Imperviousness
- 4) Adopt Green Infrastructure Stormwater Management Provisions
- 5) Encourage Efficient Parking

The analysis helps identify which rules are out of date and not meeting current best practices, as well as how handling of certain topics may be inconsistent between different parts of land use rules or within one regulation.

Implementing smart land use regulations are critical for creating the communities we want. They can help decide where to build and meet our housing and economic development needs and enables communities to grow sustainably, not create negative impacts. By retaining nature's ability to provide shade and cool our landscape, infiltrate water to reduce flooding and provide base flows in our streams and rivers, and clean runoff to enhance regional water quality, we can avoid expensive retrofits and infrastructure damage.

Learn more about how to conduct a bylaw review using the [Bylaw Review Tool storymap](#) that includes step-by-step instructions on how to use the Bylaw Review Tool.



— Stefanie Covino is the Watershed Program Manager at the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative (BWC). The BWC works alongside other SNEP Network Partners including Mass Audubon, the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, Cape Cod Commission, and the New England Environmental Finance Center to promote and provide technical support to communities in using the Bylaw Review Tool.

About the SNEP Network

The **Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Network** helps meet planners and others where they are at by helping the newcomer and experts alike continue their journey to improve local regulations. The SNEP Network brings together 16 partner entities including local environmental organizations, academic institutions, regional planners, and consultants who work collaboratively to provide municipalities, tribes and organizations access to free training and technical assistance to advance stormwater management and ecological restoration goals across the region, and bring them to the funding and financing phase for implementation. The SNEP Network is administered through EPA's partnership with the New England Environmental Finance Center, a non-profit technical assistance provider for EPA Region 1, located at the University of Southern Maine.

Many SNEP Network partners are working with communities throughout the region to not only identify opportunities for regulations changes to affect future development, but also assisting with on-the-ground retrofits and ways to improve stormwater management with existing sites. You can learn more about stormwater management, buffer restoration, NBS case studies, how to fund and finance resiliency, and everything else the SNEP Network has to offer at snepnetwork.org.



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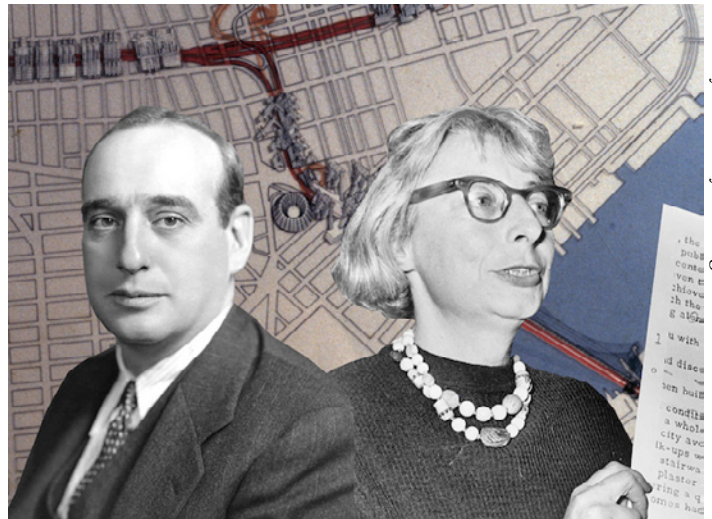
Straight Line Crazy, A Play Based on the Conflict Between Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs

Written by Playwright David Hare, and featuring Ralph Fiennes as Robert Moses

Reviews by Mark Favermann

Throughout the '50s and '60s, neighborhood activist and polemicist Jane Jacobs and mega-builder/planner Robert Moses acted out a good versus evil morality play in New York City. The flexible prerogatives of the neighborhood were set against the inflexible planning of centralized power. The conflict has been raging for nearly 70 years, but this black-and-white scenario has been, in more recent years, looked at with considerable nuanced grey tones. Two influential books set out the earlier face-off: Robert Caro's in-the-weeds biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker* (1974), and Jane Jacobs's own 1961 best-seller, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

From 1920 onward, the Yale and Cambridge University-trained Robert Moses radically changed the landscape of America. First on Long Island, then in Manhattan, and then across the entire U.S. For 40 years, Moses was the most powerful man in New York, creating new parks, new bridges, and 627 miles of expressway. But in the 1950s, grassroots campaigns were organized against him, and they slowly eroded his dictatorial ideas about how



Courtesy of Library of Congress

Adversaries Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs.

a city should be arranged. Moses's fall from grace was about more than an overweening ego that tipped over into self-serving zealotry. It became a model warning about ignoring changing times and public empowerment.

On the other hand, Jacobs was not a college graduate. She was a journalist. Those who wanted to diminish her categorized her as an activist mother rather than a respected author. In 1956, her stand against Moses's plan to destroy what she saw as the best qualities of her beloved Greenwich Village encouraged her to become a very public intellectual. Riding her bike, she became "the sainted neighborhood activist."

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Living, Starring Bill Nighy

Rarely has the role of a planning authority been portrayed in a movie. But here is a film that speaks to the often negatively reactive development process in post WWII England. The 2022 British film, *Living*, is the story of "Williams," an almost painfully ordinary man, diminished by years of oppressive office tedium to a repetitious, even boring existence. His eventual spiritual and personal escape at the eleventh hour demonstrates how he makes a brave effort to turn his dull life into something quite wonderful. Set in the aftermath of a London shattered by WWII, it shows how the devastated metropolis was at times awkwardly recovering. Williams, a senior civil servant played by the brilliantly understated Bill Nighy, is an important but unimaginative management functionary in the rebuilding process.

Living, directed by Oliver Hermanus from a screenplay by Kazuo Ishiguro (*The Remains of the Day*), was skillfully adapted from the 1952 Japanese film *Ikiru*, directed by Akira Kurosawa. This earlier film was inspired by the 1886 Russian novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy. Set in London in 1953, it depicts a planning and building department bureaucrat facing a fatal illness.

Living had its world premiere at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival to a great reception. It opened in theaters in the U.S. on December 22, 2022.

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Criticism of her stance has grown recently. Her rigidity has been pointed out, particularly her adoration of a vision of life on the streets of “the Village” whose appeal was evident to the more educated and affluent, not their poorer neighbors. Unintended consequences were the inevitable result of her thinking. Today Jacobs could be considered the Mother of Gentrification. Seemingly architecturally challenged, she didn’t understand that brownstones were a more powerful contribution to livability than maintaining the hotdog vendor on the corner.

Partly drawing upon Caro’s book, *Straight Line Crazy* dramatizes the NYC battle fought over the integrity of Greenwich Village’s Washington Square Park. Moses, the confident, ambitious, ruthless mid-century civil engineer/urban and regional planner who aimed to drive Fifth Avenue traffic straight through the Square, is pitted against a coalition of neighborhood activists led by Jacobs. Apparently, she figures as the drama’s *deus ex machina*.

Playwright Hare’s notion of Moses is that he was not so much driven by a hunger for power than overcome by an idealism that had curdled over time like a milk of unkind benevolent behavior. To Moses, life was horrible for the working class in tenements, so let’s get them out to enjoy some fresh air, sun at beaches, drive on parkways that did not just belong to the upper classes. Initially, it was a sincere democratic urge. He was later convinced that it was necessary to knock tenements down and move these people into “nice,” clean, Corbusier-inspired blocks. But—and it’s a *big but*—unlike the many sometimes corrupt elected officials that he outlasted, Robert Moses actually got things done.

Unfortunately, with benign intentions, Moses felt no guilt that he was destroying communities that were made up mostly of Hispanics and Blacks and working-class whites. James Baldwin summed up the local anger in a sentence: “Urban renewal means Negro removal.” Moses’s detachment from political realities and lack of empathy led to his professional demise. And that apparently makes for effective drama as well as valuable instruction about urban conflicts. First performed in London’s West End, *Straight Line Crazy* opened to mostly positive London and New York reviews. From October 18 through December 18, 2022, it was performed at The Shed located at Manhattan’s Hudson Yards (ironically the awkward megadevelopment of Mayor Bloomberg’s less than sterling urban design regime).

Mark Favermann is principal of Boston-based Favermann Design, a creative urban design practice involved in community branding and wayfinding, strategic placemaking, civic branding, streetscapes, and public art.

Williams’ life felt empty and meaningless to him. He was buried at work in meaningless paperwork and at home in loneliness. A shattering medical diagnosis forces him to take stock. The story unfolds in his attempt at personal and professional fulfillment in a time before it goes beyond his reach. After a trip to a seaside resort, he flirts with suicide before rejecting it as a personal solution. Back in London he finds himself inspired by the youthful vitality of Margaret, a former employee who is determined to spread her own hopeful wings. Their relationship captures both the polite awkwardness and platonic intimacy of their very British interactions. Soon after, Williams is struck by a revelation underscored by a new energy that joyfully is both practical and profound. Assisted by Peter, an idealistic new staff member in his department, he sets about to create his living legacy for the next generation.

The understated, subdued Williams becomes excited and uplifted by a modest project to actually supervise and construct a needed children’s playground on a devastated bombed-out site. Here is the character’s redeeming virtue delightfully made whole, an 11th-hour attempt to embrace the future positively while being aware of his impending death. In a very human way, Williams can, in his most pleasurable memories, become one of the kids again—even enjoying himself on the swings. This happy ending is a metaphor for 21st-century proactive planning. If only all positive planning projects ended in this way!

Another much less rewarding movie with a planning agency involvement is the 2018 film starring tough guy actor Liam Neeson, *The Commuter* (Prime Video), a complicated action/whodunit about a conspiratorially set-up, laid-off NYC police detective and his efforts to save his family and himself. Most of the action takes place on New York’s Hudson Line commuter train. The focus of the story is his leveraged mission to assassinate another character who witnessed the murder (rather than suicide—pushed out of a Manhattan skyscraper window) of an unseen (of course) New York City senior city planner, caused by a corrupt major development cabal. Of course, Neeson survives as well as the New York City Planning Commission.

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Somerville Struggles with Community Benefits Agreements

by Bill Valletta

In recent years, Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) have been promoted and used, with mixed success in a few cities around the U.S. In Massachusetts since 2018, Somerville has authorized Neighborhood Councils to organize and negotiate CBA, but its experience so far has been limited to one neighborhood – Union Square – and success in delivering benefits is only partially realized.

What is a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)?

The CBA is a two-party contract, in which a developer commits to deliver benefits to nearby residents, enterprises and workers, who in turn pledge to support its project plans (APA 2015). In theory, the “community” can define its own needs and priorities and negotiate independently of the city boards and agencies. The resulting CBA then supplements the other covenants, easements, conditioned permits, or public/private deals by which the city secures developer commitments.

Two features distinguish a CBA: First, the negotiations between developer and neighborhood follow a “collective bargaining” method rather than the usual public comment and advocacy. Second, the Neighborhood Council may ask for funds or in-kind benefits that lie outside the city agencies’ jurisdiction. These may include:

- A developer’s promise to engage in fair labor practices and preferential recruiting and hiring
- Neighborhood improvements that are distinct from the city’s priorities
- Assistance for specific beneficiaries or contracts with providers, chosen without standard budgeting, accounting, or competitive procurement
- Standing in the courts for the Neighborhood Council to enforce the developer’s promises

As detailed in the planning literature, these advantages have not been proven clearly by court rulings or practical outcomes (Berglund 2021, DeBarbieri 2017). Some projects have been completed with developer promises fulfilled; others have stalled and failed. Courts have rejected standing for groups that have tried to enforce CBA and have refused to order city agencies to join in enforcement. Other weakness and abuses have been recognized:

- **Inequity:** Larger-scale developments that offer community benefits usually locate only in a few favored zones of a city, while other neighborhoods, where needs are greater, remain deprived.
- **Sloppy accounting:** Control of funds can escape the normal budget, appropriation, accounting or



Caption: Open space and street trees provided by a small-project developer at Union Square, Somerville (2019).

competitive procurement rules, resulting in self-interested dealings, other abuses, and money sitting unused (BRA Audits 2013/2014).

- **Conflicts of interest:** Neighborhood Council members are not subject to the rules of ethics, open meetings, and open records.

Because of these potential problems, the American Planning Association has given cautious guidance to municipalities considering CBA (APA 2015).

Somerville’s Ordinance #2018-10

Somerville wrote and adopted its ordinance authorizing Neighborhood Councils in conjunction with the large-scale urban redevelopment project at Union Square (LOCUS 2016).

In the deliberations, all parties wanted to achieve Neighborhood Councils that would be independent of city control and not bound by the procedural and subject-matter limitations of “public bodies.” But they wanted the Neighborhood Councils to be more than advisory committees and sought a status of city “designation” so that developers could not ignore or reject their roles. In order to achieve the balance, Ordinance 2018-10 was written carefully:

- Each Neighborhood Council would organize as a non-profit organization, whose members would elect the representatives to speak and negotiate on their behalf.

continued next page

Community Benefits Agreements *cont'd*

- The process of formation would follow multiple steps of outreach and notice, designed to engage all “stakeholders” in the impacted zone.
- When properly formed, the Neighborhood Council would request the City Council for “designation” as the exclusive negotiator for the zone.
- The city would then support the Neighborhood Council with agency cooperation and by creating a stabilization account to receive and disburse developer contributed funds.

Ordinance 2018-10 did not mandate that any developer had to sign a CBA as a condition of permit approvals. But in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (revised in 2019) any applicant for a large-scale project had to engage in preliminary neighborhood meetings before submitting the project plans to the review boards and agencies. The record of developer/neighborhood dealings then would influence the findings and conditions for approval.

Somerville CBA in practice

The first CBA was signed between the Union Square Neighborhood Council and the Union Square master developer in August 2019, after a year of negotiations. It appeared to achieve the desired balance of an independent contract, avoiding an improper exercise of city powers. Two elements illustrate how:

First, the developer promised payments and in-kind improvements totaling \$3.5 million. This value had already been fixed in the urban redevelopment covenants as the community benefits component of the full \$112 million city/developer deal, alongside mitigations, zoning conditions, housing and jobs linkages and a contribution for the Green Line T-Station. By keeping within the city-defined total, the Neighborhood Council was not usurping city powers to impose new obligations on the developer, but only detailing priorities of use and distribution.

Second, among other in-kind benefits, the master developer agreed to make best efforts to recruit construction workers who were Somerville residents, union and minority group members. These clauses likely were outside the jurisdiction of the city agencies, but presumably they could stand or fall on the private-contractual status of the CBA.

In 2020 and 2021, the Union Square Neighborhood Council negotiated and signed similar CBA with the developers of two large-scale projects in Boynton Yards (adjacent to Union Square). By the fall of 2022, all three projects are underway and timely fulfillment of developer promises is expected, including the delivery of affordable housing units for the first phase. Initial linkage fees and other monies have been received and disbursed to assist small businesses in the zone.

However, the Union Square master developer has been unable to fulfill one promise to try to accelerate the delivery of additional affordable housing units to coincide with T-station completion. This required a complex property transfer and financing deal with a non-profit housing entity – it could not be done quickly. Similarly, the status of fulfillment of the promises on recruitment and hiring are not known because no labor force data is compiled or reported.

The proposed 2022 amendment to Somerville Ordinance #2018-10

Based on this record, Ordinance #2018-10 and the CBA mechanism are generally considered to be successful in the Union Square and Boynton Yards zone. But other Somerville neighborhoods have been unable and unwilling to create Neighborhood Councils and negotiate CBA. This situation is frustrating for the local advocates and it reflects a theme of disappointment that can be seen in other cities (DeMause 2022).

In 2022, the Somerville City Council is considering a proposed amended ordinance. It retains the basic rules and procedures but renames the action of the City Council as “recognition” rather than “designation.” It tries to clarify and make routine the process of forming a Neighborhood Council by adding new details:

- More careful delineation of the zone boundaries to insure inclusivity
- Additional documentation about notice and outreach to all residents, owners of businesses, workers and students in the zone

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Community Benefits Agreements *cont'd*

- Mandatory annual membership meetings with notices in multiple languages
- Annual reports to the City Council, describing the work, decisions, and financial dealings of the Neighborhood Council

Debating this draft in November 2022, the city councilors have been eager to include 16- to 18-year-old citizens as Neighborhood Council members, but cannot resolve whether these teens would join in the zone of their residence or of their school. (The 1,500 students of Somerville High could overwhelm other groups in the Gilman Square Neighborhood). Similarly, the councilors are unable to solve the problem of how costs of Neighborhood Council operations might be covered. The city cannot appropriate funds to a non-public body and taking developer money for a Neighborhood Council would risk conflicts of interest. Requiring membership fees would discourage participation by lower-income citizens.

The City Council discussions, therefore, are revealing the dilemma of how to make practical the ideal vision of CBA as grass roots democracy. As they try to insure that Neighborhood Councils will be inclusive and un-biased but also independent, the process is becoming more complex and difficult for smaller neighborhoods.

— Bill Valletta has been a resident of Somerville for 24 years. He is a long-time member of APA and had a 40-year career as an urban planner, land use and municipal law specialist in New York City, and in international development practice (retiring in 2017).

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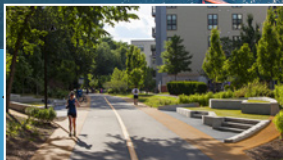
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