

## Needham Street Area Vision Plan

### Community Engagement Group Charter and Operating Protocols

#### **I. Purpose, Objective and Scope**

The Needham Street area is a key gateway to the City of Newton. The area has been and is currently the subject of private development efforts. While many efforts have occurred over the years to study and plan for this area, this work has not coalesced into a broadly shared single vision and strategy as a whole. A clear vision for the area will assist the City in evaluating future plans for the area.

Therefore, the City of Newton, led by the Planning and Development Department, is now seeking to engage the broader community in informing the development of a vision plan for the Needham Street Area to be adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Public voice informs the decisions that must be made to realize the future of this area. To ensure that the Needham Street Area Vision Plan conforms to the values of the City of Newton and the concerns of its residents, businesses and visitors in the adjacent areas and city-wide, the Planning and Development Department is convening a representative Community Engagement Group. The goals of the Community Engagement Group are to:

- Provide a space for an exchange of information, citizen and stakeholder input, and deliberation;
- Consider and explore needs and concerns of all parties regarding the future development of the area;
- Identify key issues and ideas for the future of the area, and
- Jointly provide feedback on the pros and cons of options, and seek to improve these options to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and the city as a whole.

The input developed and synthesized by the Community Engagement Group will inform the Newton Planning and Development Department, who will ultimately write the Needham Street Area Vision Plan, which will be submitted to the City Council for adoption as an amendment to the Newton Comprehensive Plan. The City's Comprehensive Plan is utilized to inform and guide decisions with respect to future development.

#### **II. Community Engagement Group Composition**

- A. The Community Engagement Group is designed to include representation of the key interests and concerns of direct and indirect stakeholders, including:
  - Residents, Business, Community Representatives
- B. A representative for each of these categories will be selected by the Planning and Development Department through an application process or nomination by identified stakeholder organizations.

The following criteria will be used in the selection of representatives for open seats:

- Capacity to represent and articulate the interests and concerns of the constituents/perspective you represent, seek input from related constituents and the broader public, and keep them informed about the discussion and proceedings of the Community Engagement Group.
- Willingness to participate actively in discussions.
- Willingness and ability to work constructively toward a vision of Needham Street, engage in respectful dialogue with other participants, and seek creative options to address the interest of your own and others' perspectives.
- Knowledge, understanding of, and interest in the key substantive areas for exploration including but not limited in economic development, housing, transportation, environmental sustainability, and urban design.
- Preference will be given to applicants who reside in the Community Engagement Group area.

### **III. Representative Roles and Responsibilities**

- A. Representatives are responsible for keeping their constituencies informed to the best of their ability about the deliberations and actively seeking their input, and expressing the views of their constituency in addition to their personal views.
- B. Community Engagement Group members are also expected to help design, facilitate, and synthesize input from public meetings, to help maximize participation and involvement in the planning process.
- C. Representatives are expected to attend all meetings, which will be scheduled in advance.
- D. Participants must be willing to be constructive, strive throughout the process to bridge gaps in understanding, to seek options that meet multiple interests, and commit to the principles of respect, decency, and civility.
- E. In order to facilitate an open and collaborative discussion, the participants agree to abide by the following rules:
  - Only one person will speak at a time and no one will interrupt when another person is speaking
  - Each person shall refrain from speaking for other participants or on behalf of the group as a whole
  - Each person will refrain from raising their voices, making personal attacks, calling names, and other such negative behavior
  - Each person will make every effort to stay on track with the agenda and avoid grandstanding and digressions

- Each person will make every effort to be concise and succinct in their comments and questions
- Each person will make every effort to review available materials and documents prior to each meeting, and be prepared to discuss them.

#### **IV. City of Newton Roles and Responsibilities**

- A. The Community Engagement Group and Public Engagement Process will be managed and facilitated by the Newton Planning and Development Department, who will be responsible for helping to ensure that the process runs smoothly, developing draft meeting agendas, preparing and distributing draft and final summaries, synthesizing input, and guiding deliberations. They may use any number of techniques to help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak, that comments are kept to a reasonable length of time, and that discussion topics are provided sufficient time and focus for progress. The facilitator will be responsible for implementing the agenda and keeping participants on track.
- B. The City will prepare meeting summaries of Community Engagement Group meetings and distribute them in draft to all participants for their review before finalizing. The summaries will identify key points of discussion, action items, points of tentative agreement and next steps, and will generally be written without attribution. The summaries are not intended to be transcripts or detailed meeting minutes, but summaries of key points, issues, and ideas.
- C. The City will also be responsible for providing technical information and substantive expertise, drawing as needed, on their staff and those of other City Departments. Other expertise will be engaged if and when required.
- D. The City will make all meeting materials and final meeting summaries available to the public through their website, <http://www.newtonma.gov/needhamstreet>

#### **V. Group Meetings**

- A. All meetings will be open to the public and posted in advance according to City procedures. Discussion at the meetings will center on members of the Community Engagement Group. There will be a public comment period once during each meeting. Time allowed for public comment will be limited to ensure that other meeting topics can be covered.
- B. In order to achieve our objectives in the allotted time, facilitators and Community Engagement Group may communicate between meetings on administrative matters (e.g. adjusting meeting times, disseminating information, following up on action items) using email and other technology. In the interest of an open process that is transparent to the public, communication between meetings will not include or take the place of group deliberation.
- C. Meetings are tentatively scheduled to take place according to the attached schedule. These dates and times may change based on the project's need, but will be announced in advance.

## **VI. Media and Public Communications**

- A. Individuals are free to speak to the media (print, web, radio, T.V.) and in their own communications about the process in general and their particular interests, concerns, and ideas. However, participants agree not to represent or characterize the views of others in the media or any public communications (newsletters, websites, etc.). Participants also agree not to speak on behalf of the Engagement Group as a whole. In short, people are free to speak for themselves, but agree not to speak for others or on behalf of the group.