

Needham Street Area Vision Plan

Synthesis of Engagement Group Feedback

April 9, 2018

- Overall Statement
- Environmental Health
- Transportation
 - Land Use
 - Design
- Implementation

Vision Plan Outline

Draft Overall Statement

Needham Street Area is a vibrant destination designed for all-ages and connected to transportation options. The area is connected to history and culture that uses cutting edge environmental design and sustainable technologies. The area has a history of industrial and commercial strength, and by adding diverse residential options will be a prosperous mixed use district that emulates many of the positive aspects of Newton's villages.

Environmental Health

The Needham Street Area is an area designed to facilitate ecological health and healthy lifestyles.

Key Ideas:

- Increase sustainability and climate resiliency
- Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure through the employment of sustainable building materials, waste management, and transportation options
- Improve the health of existing open spaces and create diverse new open spaces
- Education about human impacts on the natural environment
- Ready access to trails, parks, open space, other natural amenities, schools, and other cultural amenities

Increase sustainability and climate resiliency

As one of the most developed areas of Newton, this area is at risk for many of the effects of climate change



Short Term Actions 2025

- Encourage property owners on Needham St. to reduce impervious area, improve storm water infrastructure, and increase planting areas (e.g., during permitting for parking improvements)
- Encourage property owners on Needham St. to increase electric vehicle amenities during renovations

Long Term Actions 2040

- Create a “Sustainable Living” theme for the area focused on the Charles River, South Meadow Brook, and the Greenway
- Increase shuttle services to open space, transportation hubs, and other cultural and natural amenities to reduce the need for/use of single occupancy vehicles

Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure

Through the employment of sustainable building materials, waste management, and transportation options when conditioning new development or redevelopment projects



Philadelphia Stormwater Manual

Short Term Actions **2025**

- Require or provide benefits for companies willing to build with sustainable, energy efficient materials, develop sustainable waste management plans (for during and after construction), and use proper soil/erosion for new construction/development

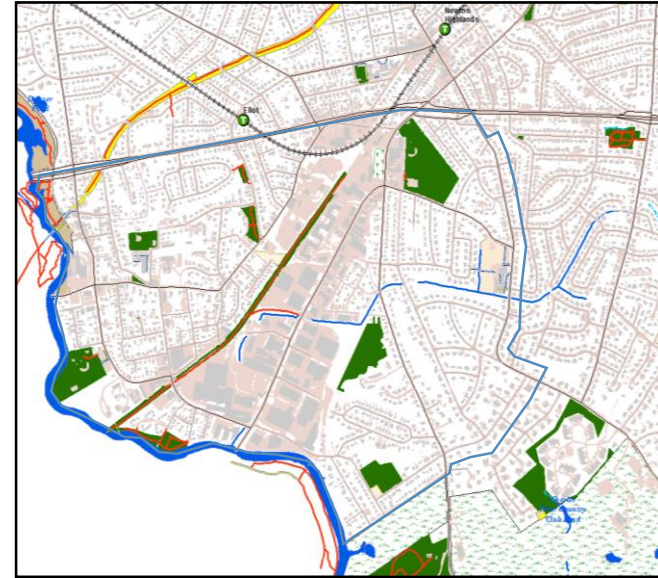
Long Term Actions **2040**

- Require new development to provide a set amount of money to go towards the improvement of open spaces, creation of open space connections, and maintenance of existing open space areas.

A Vision for Environmental Health

Improve Health of Existing Open Space and Diversity of New Open Space

Increase plantings to address: heat island effect, stormwater management needs, street and building shade desires, habitat creation, and aesthetic appeal



Short Term Actions **2025**

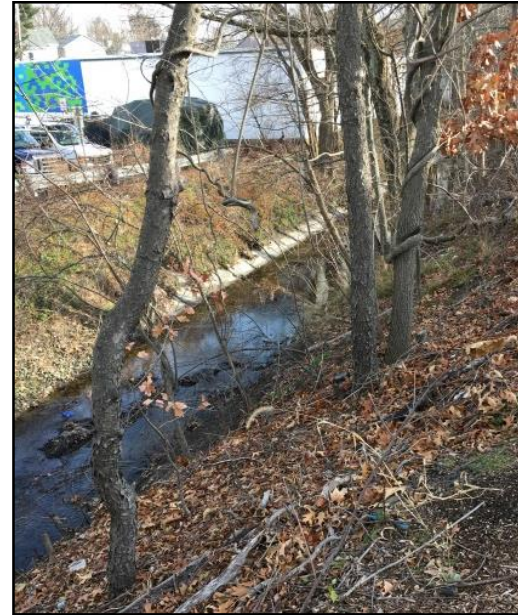
- Plant shade trees and “shrub box filters” along streets after MassDOT construction is finished
- Increase healthy green space along South Meadow Brook through restoration plantings and safe pedestrian access

Long Term Actions **2040**

- Create diverse open spaces to encourage outdoor activity, community bonds, and educational uses (e.g. trails, water features, playgrounds, community gardens, public art space)

Environmental Education

Providing educational opportunities about human impact on the environment and the effects of climate change on humans



Short Term Actions 2025

- Place signs to educate people about ecological systems and point people towards open spaces
- Increase healthy green space along South Meadow Brook through restoration plantings and safe pedestrian access

Long Term Actions 2040

- Construct a space for environmental education/community center facilities with access to open space that provides educational and recreational opportunities

Ready access

Pedestrian access to trails, parks, open space, other natural amenities, schools, and other cultural amenities



Short Term Actions 2025

- Improve amenities along existing trails including adding bike racks, benches, and informational/educational signs.
- Expand trails (loops/connections) on a local level
- Provide access from the Upper Falls Greenway to the Charles River Pathway and along the Charles River to the north of the Greenway.
- Identify opportunities for increased access to the Charles River
- Improve ADA access to outdoor amenity areas

Long Term Actions 2040

- Construct opportunities for increased Charles River access
- Expand trails on a regional level (e.g. into Needham)

Transportation

An area with safe transportation connections in and around the neighborhoods and to regional destinations. Needham Street is a walkable retail spine, supported by diverse options for getting to the street – whether by transit, walking, biking, or driving

Key Ideas:

- Improve safety and accessibility
- Create transit connections
- Extend and connect to Greenway
- Shift Needham Street from isolated to connected roadway
- Manage transportation demand
- Prepare for future technology

Improve Safety & Accessible

The safety of people moving around the Needham Street Area will continue to be the priority until transportation related fatalities and serious-injuries are eliminated. Transportation investments are envisioned to include all-age-friendly design elements to ensure safety for young children, older-adults, and everyone in between.

- Expand traffic calming in neighborhoods
- Improve street and sidewalk lighting
- Incorporate principles of universal design in street projects - wide sidewalks, APS, and accessible curb cuts

Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

Create Transit Connections

The central spine of the area, Needham Street, grows in its role as a transit connector. More MBTA buses and shared shuttles connect to Newton Highlands and Needham Heights, along a route with transit-priority signal technology, allowing transit vehicles to smoothly move through traffic with frequent and reliable service.

- Coordinate publicly accessible shuttle services
- Improve transit stops and station areas
- Advocate for additional MBTA service
- Institute transit signal priority on Winchester and Needham Streets
- Explore transit options along the Greenway connecting to Needham

Short Term Actions _____ **2025**

Long Term Actions _____ **2040**

Extend & Connect to Greenway

The Greenway is a central link in Newton's active transportation and recreation networks, extended and better connected into the neighborhoods for those walking and biking.

- Extend north to Curtis St
- Connecting paths into neighborhoods and properties along Needham St
- Activate edges of the greenway with community gathering spaces and recreation-related commercial activity
- Link to DCR Barnes Trail in Needham via Christina St Bridge

Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

Shift Needham Street from Isolated to Connected Roadway

Needham Street is an isolated roadway with few routing options for driving traffic. As opportunities present themselves, new connections between properties and to public ways should be created.

- Encourage connections between parking lots
- Review possible driving and ‘non-driving’ route connections

Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

Manage Transportation Demand

Any new development in the Needham Street Area is expected to connect with this vision

- Establish standards for transportation demand management
- Consider strategies for parking management

Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

Prepare for Future Technology

Needham Street is at the heart of the N2 Innovation District. Understanding the rapid innovation occurring within the transportation sector, the area is envisioned to welcome fleets of shared electric autonomous vehicles. Several recommended steps are proposed to prepare for this future condition when it is anticipated that parking needs will be greatly reduced, and electric charging stations will be needed wherever there is parking.

- Coordinate with existing and emerging shared fleet companies
- Plan for Electric Vehicle Charging
- Track autonomous vehicle innovations and management strategies

Short Term Actions **2025**

Long Term Actions **2040**

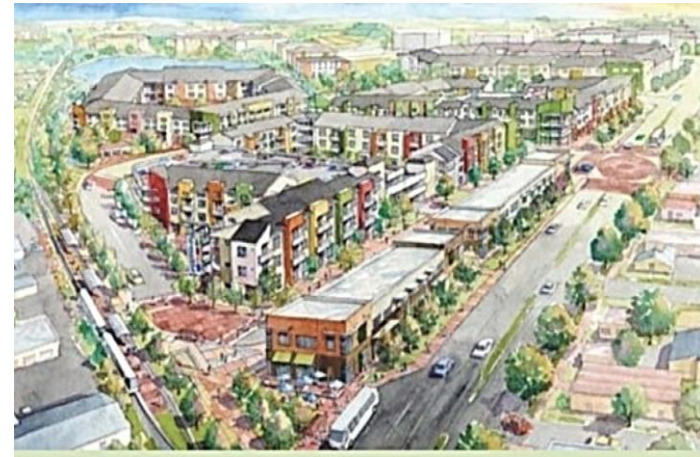
Land Use

A vibrant area with a distinct identity, encouraging a diverse mix of uses with a range of housing and business options and an emphasis on community spaces and connections.

Key Ideas:

- Support and encourage a balanced mix of residential, commercial, entertainment, recreation and production uses
- Diversify housing options
- Increase small retail and specialty uses
- Provide community gathering spaces

Support and encourage a balance mix of residential, commercial, entertainment, recreation and production uses



Short Term Actions

2025

- Amend zoning along Needham Street to better support mixed uses, including housing, community uses, smaller commercial uses, breweries, and compatible production uses
- Allow more uses by-right with clear design requirements and operating standards

Long Term Actions

2040

- Attract employment uses by providing housing and other amenities, such as restaurants and entertainment

Diversify Housing Options



Short Term Actions 2025

- Reduce minimum lot area per unit to encourage housing
- Encourage a range of unit types and sizes to accommodate all ages
- Update inclusionary housing requirements

Long Term Actions 2040

- Improve transit access to appeal to potential car-free residents

Increase small retail and specialty uses



Short Term Actions 2025

- Allow shared parking and reduce parking minimums
- Amend zoning to permit small-scale retail

Long Term Actions 2040

- Locate neighborhood-scale retail and service uses on the ground floor of new developments

Provide community gathering spaces



Short Term Actions **2025**

- Amend zoning to allow broader range of civic and recreational uses such as libraries, museums, and theaters as well as entertainment and recreational uses such as bowling alleys, ice skating rinks, and athletic facilities
- Require public open space in new large developments

Long Term Actions **2040**

- Consider the Needham Street area as a potential site for future public investments in community centers or civic institutions

Design

An area of design excellence focused on promoting an active pedestrian environment in the design of buildings and public spaces

Key Ideas:

- Establish relationships
- Respond to context
- Enhance unique features
- Design the building interface with the public realm
- Use program to support the urban experience
- Support sustainability

Establish relationships between open space and landscape with architecture

- **Express a clear organizing architectural idea**
- **Design public open space as an extension of the streetscape**
- **Organize uses to complement the public environment**
- **Integrate common open space and landscape with architecture**



Respond to context

- **Locate and design public open space to maximize comfort and visual access**
- **Harmonize relationships between buildings, streets, and open spaces**
- **Modulate buildings vertically and horizontally**



Enhance unique features

- Recognize and enhance unique conditions
- Express neighborhood character in public open space
- Harmonize the built form with scale and materials



Design the building interface with the public realm

- Create a defined and active streetwall.
- Harmonize the built form with scale and materials
- Render building facades with texture and depth
- Coordinate building elements
- Design sidewalks to enhance the pedestrian experience
- Shape the roofs of buildings



Use program to support the urban experience

- Design active building fronts
- Design public open space to encourage social activity, play, and rest



Support sustainability

- **Respect and exhibit natural systems and features**
- **Adopt sustainable principles and practices**



A Vision for Design

Short Term Actions 2025

- Amend zoning along Needham Street to better support mixed-uses
- Include all modes of travel while designing public spaces
- Better access to and from walking trails, parks, green space, bridges
- Implement design guidelines :
 - consider ratio between building height and street width,
 - setbacks to encourage plaza and open space in front of buildings and within private development
 - encourage front entrances to Needham Street
 - encourage more entrances to Needham Street
- Design review for developments

Long Term Action 2040

- Underground utilities

Implementation

The Needham Street vision will inform public and private sector decision making – coordinating actions for the long-term improvement and success of the area for its residents and businesses and for the City as a whole

Key Ideas:

- Implementation will occur within an active management framework
- Community engagement will remain a cornerstone of actions taken in the area
- Implementation will occur within an active management framework
- Equity will be an important consideration
- Amendments to zoning will be necessary to realize this vision
- Realizing this vision will require that Newton continue its ongoing successful partnerships

A Vision for Implementation

Implementation will occur within an active management framework, allowing for course corrections as changing circumstances dictate while remaining true to the core directive of the vision

Fiscal impacts, particularly those related to school enrollment, will be an important tool for guiding investment to ensure there are adequate facilities to support new residents while maintaining existing quality of service

Short Term Actions **2025**

Long Term Actions **2040**

A Vision for Implementation

Community engagement will remain a cornerstone of actions taken in the area allowing for ongoing involvement and support from residents and businesses



Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

Equity will be an important consideration, ensuring that those that have been historically disadvantaged will find opportunity

Short Term Actions **2025**

Long Term Actions **2040**

A Vision for Implementation

Amendments to zoning will be necessary to realize this vision



Short Term Actions

2025

Long Term Actions

2040

A Vision for Implementation

Realizing this vision will require that Newton continue its ongoing successful partnerships with the Town of Needham and the Newton/Needham Chamber while also establishing new partnerships towards realizing this vision with such entities as the MBTA/DoT, DCR, the 128 Business Council, and UMass Amherst



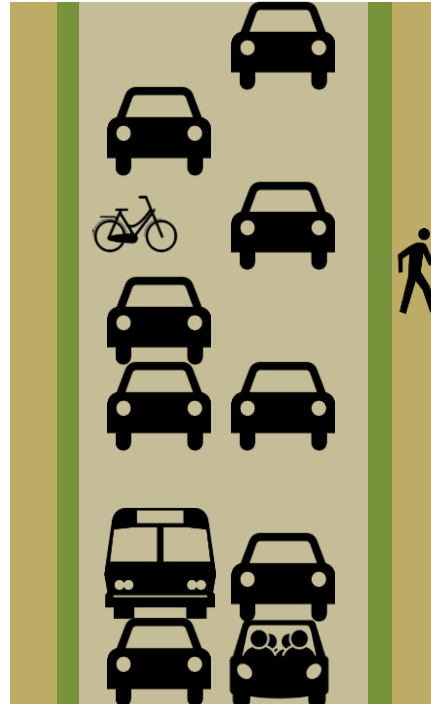
Short Term Actions 2025

Long Term Actions 2040

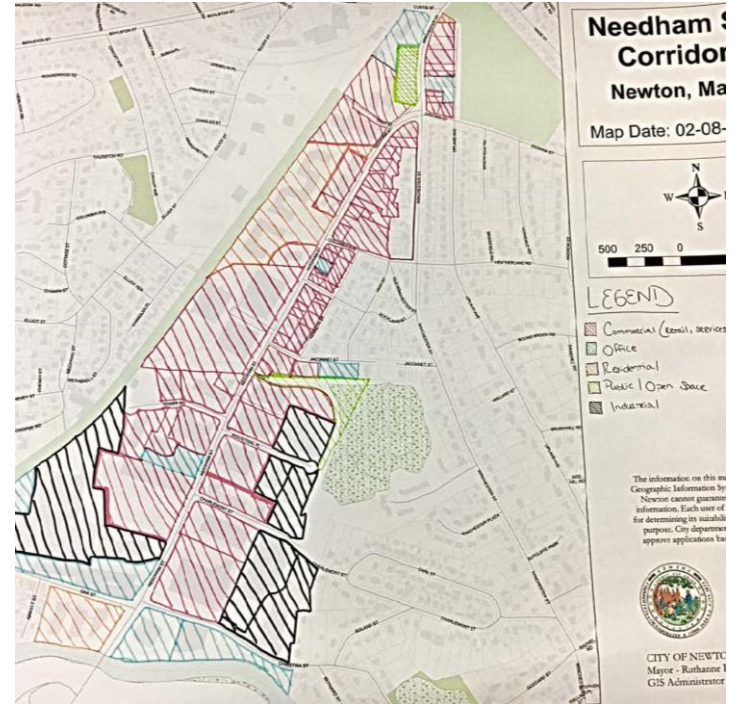
Environmental Health



Transportation



Land Use



Design



Implementation



Public Forum
Monday
April 23rd



NEEDHAM STREET AREA VISION PLAN

“We should provide a clear statement of intentions and goals for the City as a whole and for each of our neighborhoods, village centers, and other places so that proposals and actions can be measured against them.” – City of Newton’s Comprehensive Plan



Open House
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The Barry Price Center
**27 Christina
Street
Newton, MA**

Public Comment