

**City of Newton Planning and Development Department  
Needham Street Area Vision Plan Community Engagement Group  
Final Thoughts and Closing Celebration**

**April 30, 2018**

**5:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Barry Price Center**

**27 Christina St**

**Newton, MA 02461**

**Meeting Summary**

Barney Heath, Director of the Planning and Development Department opened the meeting and thanked the Community Engagement Group members for all of their time and efforts throughout the vision process. Mr. Heath introduced to the group Mayor Ruthanne Fuller.

Mayor Fuller thanked all of the City Staff, as well as the Community Engagement Group members for the time spent on the Needham Street Area Vision Plan. She acknowledged the diversity of the group perspectives.

Mr. Heath informed the group that the next formal step would be to go before the Zoning and Planning Committee of City Council on May 29, 2018. After that a public hearing would be scheduled. In addition, Mr. Heath stated that a more complete draft of the vision plan would be sent out in the next couple of weeks, as well as an exit survey for the members to complete.

Mr. Heath asked the group to individually debrief the process and provide City staff with final thoughts. A summary of responses included:

- The mayor was congratulated for her support of the process.
- It was stated that while it was meant to be a plan for the entire area, it is a difficult one to accumulate for the entire area.
- A comment that the process' approach was liked.
- A suggestion to take each topic and solicit input, and then as planners describe some scenarios to capture quickly.
- A comment that the experience was pleasant.
- The organization was City Staff was commended as well as the ability to absorb the opinions of the group.
- A comment that it was a rich experience and that projects in the future will be held accountable.
- A statement that members of the group had presented great ideas and a lot of what was heard should be incorporated.
- A statement that they were not in favor of the current utility plan for the MassDOT improvements and it would be wise not to accept State funds at this time and do an engineered analysis for undergrounding the utilities.
- A point that everyone in the group offered a rich variety of skills and the conversation was constructive.

- A point that there was more consensus than expected.
- A hope that everyone continues to closely monitor the process.
- Optimism that what was learned as part of the process can be incorporated, and that the group's contributions were deep and well thought out.
- A comment that they were impressed by the collaboration and compromising of the group.
- A statement that not all ideas were fully represented in the draft vision plan and needed to be discussed more and well detailed.
- A comment that was nice to meet neighbors and have a shared interest in the neighborhood.
- A point that they were impressed by city staff, and that it was made sure that all group members were heard.
- A question of how the vision can be maintained through a complicated development process.
- A point that meeting summaries helped to fully understand what was being said.
- A question of how does the City get the property owners along Needham Street to buy into the process.
- A point that it was great to meet so many people, and that it can be a danger to work hard on something and then never see it again; incumbent on everyone to make sure they are vigilant about the success of the vision plan.
- A comment that the process was amazing, and the discussions were wonderful, and that they should be distilled and shared with all City workers.
- A question of if there is a way for the group members to continue to be connected and notified in the future.
- A point that a tremendous amount was learned.
- A concern about what happens after the community engagement group stops meeting.
- A question of how to measure the success of the vision plan 5 to 10 years from now.
- A comment that it is important to undertake sustainability initiatives as environmental metrics and sustainability covers all areas discussed.
- A point that everyone involved was very responsive, receptive, and synthesized a lot of information.
- A comment that the process was very interesting, and it was great to meeting everyone.
- A comment that the zoning redesign meetings are a little easier to respond to since information is provided in advance and people can come to the meetings prepared.
- A comment that they were impressed how the material was presented, how organized the process was, and how nicely everyone behaved.
- A concern about the upcoming Northland project as people at the public forum didn't understand how this vision plan for the future related to what is happening now; and people at the public forum were disappointed that the vision plan will not stop the proposed Northland project and traffic.
- A point that the Planning and Development Department deserves credit, specifically as things were quickly put into document form for the group to discuss at a future meeting.
- A notion that they got a sense that City staff were incorporating opinions from the community engagement group members as much as possible.
- A comment that the group was great and enjoyable to work with.
- A comment that it was amazing that so many group members had similar ideas.
- A point that City staff can put this together and let's see if it happens.

- A comment that transit should be brought to the corridor, and there should be a new zoning overlay district.
- A comment that the area is fortunate that the proposed Northland project is actually a good project as it could be a lot worse.

Mayor Fuller addressed a few of the comments from the group. Specifically, the need to underground the utilities, business owners along Needham Street, and zoning.

Mr. Heath thanked the group for patience with City staff, and that they are always accessible.

### **Meeting Adjourned.**

#### **Community Engagement Group Attendees**

Ellen Katz  
Beth Wilkinson  
Dennis Tourse  
Claudine Ellyin  
Leo Hannenberg  
Deborah Crossley  
Linda Green  
Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic  
Marian Knapp  
William Roesner  
Joyce Plotkin  
Glenn Vanaman  
Jo-Louise Allen  
Jean Klugman  
Irina Serdobova Freeman  
Greg Reibman  
Becky Schwartz

#### **City Staff Attendees:**

Barney Heath, Director Planning and Development Department  
James Freas, Deputy Director Planning and Development Department  
Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager  
Rachel Nadkarni, Long Range Planner  
Shubee Sikka, Urban Design Planner