

Technical Assistance Panel – APPLICATION

Please provide the following information and submit to Sara Marsh at ULI Boston (Sara.marsh@uli.org).

Applicant Organization: **Town of Maynard**

Date: **September 10, 2019**

Contact Person: **Bill Nemser**

Title: **Town Planner**

Address: **Office of Municipal Services, 195 Main Street**

City/State/Zip: **Maynard, MA 01754**

Phone: **978-897-1329**

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Please attach the following:

1. Statement of the problem/issue.

Provide a brief description of the major problems or issues that you wish the Panel to address. Include a brief history and current status of the project/study area/issue.

2. Municipality information

Please describe a basic overview of the community and its recent history of the study area.

3. Questions to be addressed by the Panel

List three concrete essential questions/issues to be evaluated by the Panel. Be as specific as possible. Please organize questions/issues by major topic, such as market issues; planning and design issues; feasibility and financing issues; management and implementation issues; and so on.

4. Responsibilities - planning and logistics

Please identify the point of contact within the community who will be responsible for working with ULI Boston to prepare background and briefing documents; organizing and scheduling interviews; conducting a project/area tour; providing physical facilities for panel work sessions and presentation; and providing general logistical support. Also identify to extent known the key people whom you believe can contribute to the panel's understanding of issues. Please provide name, organization and title, and telephone numbers for all individuals listed.

5. Fee

The ULI Boston/New England TAP fee is \$7,500.00. This fee includes the administration of the TAP, initial findings in the presentation and the final report. If this is a MassDevelopment sponsored TAP, the \$7,500 fee will be covered by MassDevelopment. In addition to this fee the municipality is responsible for: meals for the panel the day of the TAP, briefing material and other logistical costs including site tour transportation and meeting space. Please note panelists donate all their time in preparing for the panel, conducting the TAP, and contributing to the final report, a \$30,000 - \$40,000 value.

1. Statement of the problem/issue.

The Town of Maynard is requesting a Technical Assistance Panel to assist in the development of a revitalization strategy and conceptual plan for the town-owned parking lot, and surrounding area immediately south of Veterans' Memorial Park (VMP), commonly known as "the Basin."

Currently, the Basin is a confusing conglomerate of several public and private parking areas, driveways, restaurants, storefronts (as well as some unappealing rear building exits), offices, outdoor storage, and the aforementioned VMP.

The area is aesthetically unattractive, lacks cohesion, and is dangerous for pedestrians; yet it possesses an undeniable vibrancy, viability, and atmosphere that is not readily described, but is irrefutably present. With strategically located nodes to Main, Nason, and Summer Streets, the Basin contains several key destinations and is located in the heart of Downtown Maynard. At one time, VMP actually encompassed the bulk of this area, but it was later converted into the present parking lot. The decades' long erosion of the park was slow, incremental, and ad hoc, lending itself to today's palpable inefficiency.

The inefficiency of vehicle circulation is central to the problem. Over-wide travel lanes consume a disproportionate amount of the area. Aesthetic improvement is at least partially dependent upon solving the underlying problem of traffic circulation. Furthermore, a parking garage once located on site was removed several years ago, and 50+ spaces were lost. Because of this, preservation of the remaining parking is paramount.

Maynard Cultural District

In 2017, the Massachusetts Cultural Council designated downtown Maynard a "Cultural District". Maynard's Cultural District offers numerous creative outlets and cultural assets, along with a distinctive historical character. The Basin is entirely encompassed in the Maynard Cultural District, which is increasingly recognized as a destination for arts, dining and cultural activities. The Town currently has numerous cultural programs and events underway:

- Historical walking tours sponsored by the Maynard Historical Commission.
- ArtSpace Exhibits and Art Sales.
- Maynard Community Band and Library sponsored Concerts at Memorial Park.
- A Taste of Maynard, where local restaurants present samples of their specialties.
- Spring Art Walk
- Sip 'n Stroll Holiday Shopping
- Garden Club Plant Sale
- Maynard Book Festival
- MaynardFest
- Octoberfest
- Farmers Market
- OARS Wild and Scenic Film Festival
- Parades: Christmas, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, Pop Warner Football, Little League.
- Maynard Road Race (annual).
- Jingle all the way 5K (annual).
- Maynard Annual Litter League clean up.
- Light it up Blue, Clock Tower.
- Veterans Honor Flight fundraiser pub crawl (annual).

Because it is the epicenter of downtown (See "Exhibit A"), part of the Cultural District, and is already situated as a natural gathering place due to its proximity to the VMP, the Basin has the potential of playing a larger role in each of these events while potentially increasing cultural offerings.

The goals for the Cultural District include strategic place-making by strengthening existing assets, establishing new assets, and enhancing connections between key destinations that will bolster the cultural offerings of Downtown. Because of its location and its potential for increased outdoor activity, such as outdoor dining or community gathering space, the Basin can play a role in forwarding these goals.

Parking Challenges and the DOD

The Basin is located in the core of Maynard's "Downtown Overlay Zoning District" [DOD] which was adopted by the Town in 2010. The Town Zoning By-laws state the purpose of the DOD is to:

1. Foster a vibrant, attractive, and durable downtown.
2. To encourage quality development in the downtown that shall include site and architectural features consistent with the best development within the DOD as well as those standards set forth by the Planning Board through Site Plan Regulations.
3. To enable a modest increase in density of development in the downtown.
4. To enable mixed retail, commercial, and residential uses.
5. To increase the effectiveness of the allocation of parking spaces.
6. To improve the pedestrian experience in the downtown.
7. To provide greater flexibility in uses allowed that could enhance how downtown functions.
8. To recognize the Assabet River as a significant economic development asset to the downtown.
9. To significantly increase views and physical access to the river while fostering low-impact development that proactively protects the River from contaminated runoff.
10. To maintain and encourage appropriate massing and height of buildings that blend in and enhance the building elevations already in existence, in most cases a two-story street front facade.

The DOD has fostered projects including 200 residential units and new commercial space built or in the development pipeline in Maynard's Downtown. Additionally, there is approval in place to allow up to 600,000 ft.² of residential units in existing Mill and Main campus (located less than 1,000 feet from the Basin).

The current regulatory framework recognizes that parking requirements for new projects within the high-density DOD should be significantly less than other zoning districts. Thus the DOD allows:

- Reduced parking requirements for projects.
- The Planning Board to waive any parking requirements for projects.
- Use of shared parking plans to meet requirements for project proposals.
- Provision of off-site parking to meet requirements for project proposals.

Nonetheless, despite the success of the DOD, a challenge to redevelopment of the Basin is the Town's reluctance to remove any existing parking spaces. This is primarily due to four factors:

- The recent loss of approximately 56 parking spaces resulting from the removal of a parking garage in the Basin.
- The recent loss of approximately 30 parking spaces adjacent to the Basin for construction of the Assabet River Rail Trail.
- The popularity of the Basin parking area due to its proximity to area destinations.
- Concerns of parking inadequacy due to increased development downtown, including two retail marijuana distributors scheduled to open within the year.

While the Town's 2018 parking study conducted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) demonstrated there is currently adequate parking capacity, it also showed that parking is concentrated in the Basin area. The factors cited above have resulted in concerns among the business community for efforts that will result in a further net loss of parking.

Although the Town cannot envision a plan that further reduces the number of parking spaces, there may be potential remedies for a redesign of the Basin that achieves plan goals while preserving the overall number of parking spaces such as the restriping of Basin parking spaces at a reduced width, the re-designation of spaces as compact spaces, or offsetting any loss of Basin parking with the creation of new parking in the vicinity.

Essential to recognizing the context of DOD development is the unusual street layout of downtown Maynard. The absence of any sort of grid system has resulted in many unorthodox configurations. This may provide some unique opportunities in the Basin: turning Town-owned portions of the area currently paved, but not utilized for parking or circulation, into green space or pedestrian amenities.

The Town believes the development of a plan and correlating strategy will create a “place”, further encourage private investment in the area, and develop an economic engine that is consistent with **ULI Content Pillars**:

- **Real Estate Finance and Investment:** Implementation of strategies can advance planning and pre-development activities to a level where the private sector is motivated to invest in the project area to capitalize upon anticipated vitality. The development of a cohesive plan will further incentivize private investment, thus increasing the desirability of the area as a location for business, residential, and community activity.

- **Housing and Communities:** This initiative will foster housing opportunities. The area is currently zoned under the Town's “Downtown Overlay District”. This zoning designation provides a regulatory framework for the creation of mixed-use and multi-family residential units. Through a combination of development incentives and Maynard's “Inclusionary Zoning” By-law, the initiative fosters the private creation of affordable units. Several mixed-use projects – some completed and some just beginning construction - reflect the increasing interest in the development of residential uses downtown.

- **Sustainability and Economic Performance:** *Attract/retain jobs:* The project area is already bustling and provides a variety of employment opportunities ranging from the medical industry (Emerson Hospital Medical offices), high-tech positions (Stratus Technology, Acacia Communications) as well as service industry positions and professional office staffing. Enhancement of this area will encourage both the expansion and creation of employment opportunities while further developing its identity as an employment destination.

- **Shaping Successful Cities and Regions:** This effort can result in the redevelopment of a blighted urban area while creating new value for public property. Portions of this densely populated area have been designated as “blighted”, and have been the subjects of past and upcoming Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant requests by the Town. The incremental improvement of the area and the awarding of a Cultural District designation have positioned Downtown Maynard to continually evolve into a regional arts and entertainment destination. Additionally, the proximity of mixed-use development will allow Maynard to become a location with high-wage employment and adjacent residential options.

- **Innovation in Development Practice:** Through the Downtown Overlay Zoning District, there is potential to reinvent a collection of adjacent -yet unconnected- community assets in the Basin vicinity and repurpose the location as a vibrant core of Downtown.

2. Municipality information

Maynard is a small suburban town (5.4 square miles) in Middlesex County, located 22 miles west of Boston. As of the 2010 federal census, the town population was 10,106. Wrapped inside the cozy neighborhoods of this leafy mill town, Maynard's Downtown is a dynamic micro-city. Unlike its colonial neighbors, Maynard came of age during the Industrial Revolution and has a unique, compact, and walkable town center clustered around its iconic Mill (in fact, Maynard has been recognized as the most walkable town in the greater Boston area by “Boston” magazine). The Mill buildings known as “Mill and Main” have a rich history: producing wool for the Union Army during the Civil War; now headquarters for the computer server and networking manufacturer Stratus Technologies and a the leader in hi-speed fiber optic network switching, Acacia Communications.

Key initiatives completed or underway in the Basin include:

- Veterans’ Memorial Park (VMP) Master Plan 2016 series of community workshops and outreach sessions to revision the park. Resulted in park master plan and construction documents (\$35,000). Note: the 2016 VMP plan can be incorporated –as is- into the Plan resulting from this request.
- VMP – 2018 construction of a performance area (\$30,000).
- VMP– 2019 construction of handicapped accessible ramp for park (\$130,000)
- Public dining area construction – 2017 construction of an outdoor public dining area on town-owned land: currently leased to “El Huipil” restaurant which has successfully added an outdoor dining component to the Basin (\$12,000).
- 2018 Sidewalk and ramp for “Open Table” community pantry - the Town funded construction of this ramp to provide handicapped access from the Basin parking lot to the facility. Open Table provides groceries, meals and services to “in need” populations (\$10,000).
- Drainage improvements in 2016 throughout Basin (\$20,000).

3. Responsibilities - planning and logistics

Key Town of Maynard Contacts for ULI Boston Panel			
Bill Nemser	Maynard Town Planner	978-897-1329	Bnemser@townofmaymand.net
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Jack MacKeen	Chair Economic Development Committee	978-758-7447	Jmackeen@verizon.net
Julie Love Gagen	Chair Maynard Business Alliance	978-637-2165	julielovegagen@gmail.com
Tim Hess	Town Design Consultant	508 517 6289	tim@studioinsitu.com
Greg Tuzzolo	Chair, Maynard Planning Board	718 753-9061	gtuzzolo@gmail.com
Kaitlin Young	Assistant Town Planner/Conservation Agent	978-897-1360	kyoung@TownofMaynard.net

4. Questions to be addressed by the Panel

The grant request and the resulting questions to be addressed by the panel are based on the idea that redevelopment of the Basin can provide strategic planning opportunities to:

- Encourage further mixed-use development/redevelopment within the DOD and the Basin; by increasing non-automobile dependent lifestyle options, particularly for Downtown residents and businesses.
- Improve the aesthetics of the Basin through public and private efforts.
- Increase the commercial viability of the properties within the Basin, including outdoor service areas for restaurants, and other businesses at its perimeter.

- Further develop the Basin as a community destination, thus attracting customers into the downtown shopping and dining area.
- Design a safe and effective pedestrian network throughout the Basin.
- Improve efficiency of vehicular circulation.
- Achieve a net reduction of impervious surface while adding public green space, thus providing both civic and environmental benefits.
- Demonstrate the value of redevelopment components contained in the existing plan for VMP by educating the public about the benefits of the furthering of VMP as an active “conduit” between Summer Street destinations and Main Street.
- Enhance connections to the Basin through wayfinding, public art, and other identifying features.
- Provide a safe and attractive location for users of the Maynard/Acton Commuter Shuttle.
- Promote cultural and recreational activities within VMP/the Basin.
- Identify ways to utilize the Town’s Cultural District designation to further leverage for sustained funding efforts for the Basin and the surrounding area.
- Improve integration of the Basin with VMP, as well as other area destinations including ArtSpace, Maynard Library, the Fine Arts Theater and area businesses.

Questions for the Panel:

- I. What strategies can be implemented to encourage private investment to supplement the Town’s targeted place-making initiatives in the Basin, such as: the permitting of outdoor dining; enhanced pedestrian features; VMP improvements and the offering of “Business Enhancement Environment Program” (BEEP) grants? Examples of desirable initiatives by the business community participation may include:
 - Improvement of the rear-facing facades of buildings on Main and Nason Streets;
 - Development of common amenity areas for businesses;
 - The creation of areas for outdoor activity;
 - The creation of an “adopt a spot” program
- II. How can the Town activate the Basin as an arts and culture destination to further the goals of the Cultural District?
- III. How can the Town balance the preservation of parking while creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment and reducing impervious surface in the Basin?

Town of Maynard Application
Real Estate Services Technical Assistance Call for Proposals FY20
Master Plan for "The Basin"



Veterans'
Memorial
Park (outlined
in green)

Project Area
(outlined in
gold)

Nason Street

Main Street

Summer Street



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Zoning Districts



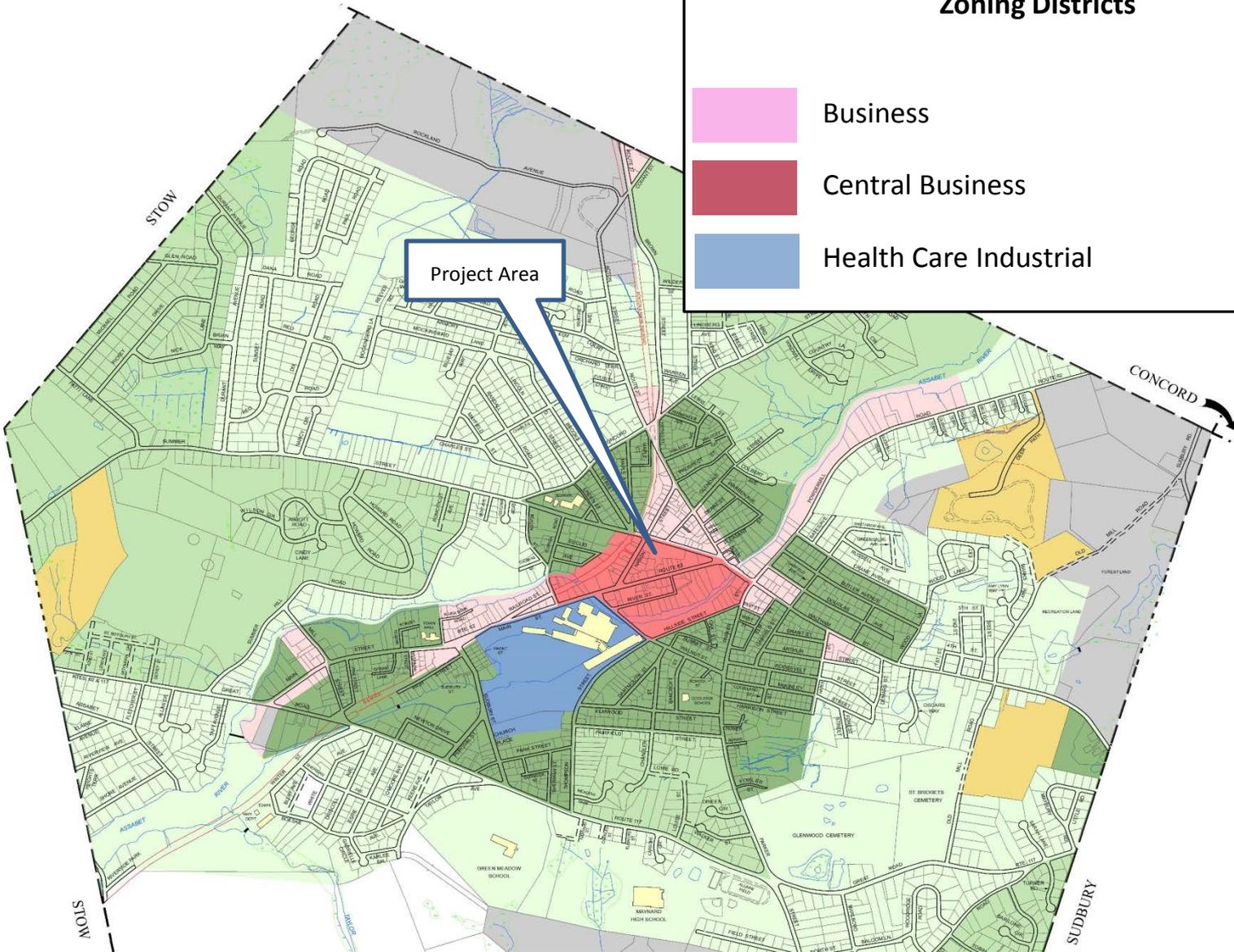
Business



Central Business



Health Care Industrial



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