TOWN OF ARLINGTON
AmpUp!
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

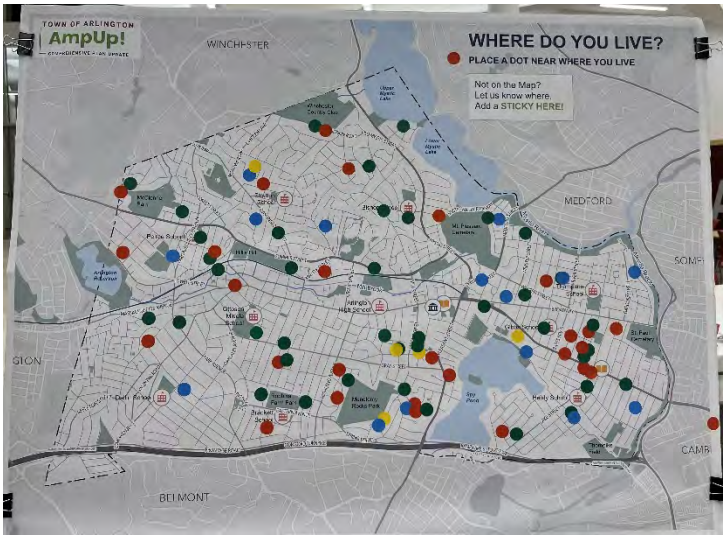
Arlington Kick-off Meeting: Community Visioning Feedback Summary

April 3, 2025



The Town of Arlington's AmpUp! comprehensive plan update process launched with a public event at Arlington High School on Thursday, April 3. A total of 112 people signed in and more participated. A map asking attendees where they live indicated broad representation from many neighborhoods.

The event began with an introductory presentation that explained the purpose of the Town's comprehensive plan, how the public can participate throughout the planning process, and provided a brief snapshot of recent trends influencing Arlington. The presentation is available on the project website. After the presentation, attendees talked in small groups about a series of questions and recorded their input on individual worksheets and maps at each table. That input is summarized below.



Places in Arlington

Attendees participated in small group discussions to identify the best and most important places in Arlington as well as areas that are in need of change or improvement. The groups were asked to identify up to five places in each category on a provided map. The following highlights some of the top locations identified:

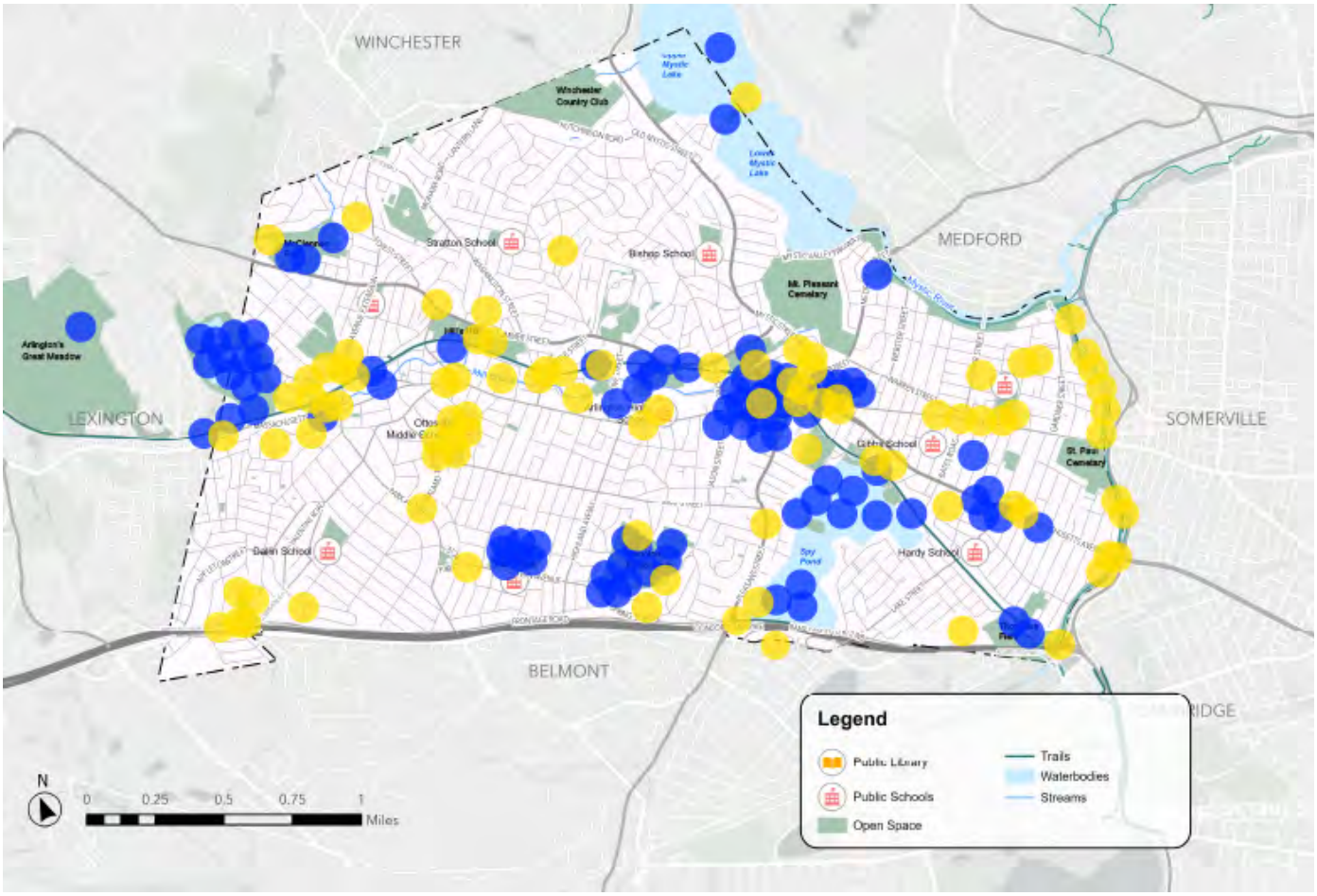
- Important Places:
    - Arlington Reservoir
    - Minuteman Bikeway/ Path
    - Arlington Center
    - Robbins Farm Park
    - Spy Pond
    - Robbin's Library
    - Others: Menotomy Rocks Park, Theatres, Arlington High School, Civic Block, Mystic Lakes, Old Schwamb Mill

- Places in need of change/improvement:
    - Alewife Brook
        - Outfalls and combined sewer overflows (CSOs)
        - Poor water quality
        - Lighting along paths
    - Poet's Corner
    - Ottoson Middle School
    - Arlington Heights
    - Underutilized parking lots (Russell Common, Astound lot, lot behind Lahey in East Arlington, bank parking lots, High School)
    - Industrial districts
    - Spy Pond
    - Thorndike Field
    - Mystic Lake- waste clean-up
    - Fox Library
        - Make mixed-use housing
    - Arlington Center
        - Business vacancy and stagnancy
        - Safety
    - Minuteman Bikeway
        - Dilapidated buildings
        - Need for lighting
    - Broadway Corridor
        - Enhance Public Transit Connections
        - Better bus services and access to the Red and Green MBTA lines
        - Renovate garage into affordable and mixed housing
    - Route 2/ Frontage Rd
        - Traffic Congestion
        - Noise Pollution
        - Pedestrian access
    - East Arlington
        - Heat Islands - Need more trees
        - Public housing

- Mass Ave/ Park Ave/ Eastern Ave / Other busy corridors
  - Sidewalks
  - Crosswalks
  - Bike lanes

Map of Important Places and Places to Change/Improve

This map combines all the places identified in the table map exercise.



Important Places

Places to Change/Improve

Shared Priorities
Groups were then asked to discuss and identify five shared priorities for the future. These priorities could include general comprehensive plan topics to address, specific issues to explore during the planning process, or specific places to focus on. Top themes from these shared priorities include:

- *Increasing Affordable and Multifamily Housing:* Many groups expressed the need for more affordable housing that is truly affordable to a variety of income levels. Many suggested repurposing underutilized spaces to accommodate more housing.

- *Prioritizing Mixed-use Development:* Several groups highlighted the need to foster greater mixed-use development both in existing commercial nodes and in industrial areas. Some mentioned how more mixed-use development could be a pathway for achieving greater housing equity and maintaining the town's character.

- *Improving Public Transportation and Accessibility:* Improving public (sustainable) transportation and enhancing the pedestrian environment and biking infrastructure was a top priority for many groups. Many discussed the need to provide safer access to amenities and nature through well-lit streets, improved sidewalks, and "complete streets" designs.

- *Enhancing Natural and Open Spaces:* Many recorded priorities involved preserving and enhancing Arlington's open/green spaces, tree canopy, and native plants and wildlife. Increasing accessibility and public education on environmentally conscious and more sustainable practices was also cited.

- *Strengthening the Economy and Businesses:* Reducing commercial vacancies, supporting existing businesses, and increasing the Town's capacity for local commerce were another reoccurring priority.

- *Creating a Strong Community, Culture, and Quality of Life:* Priorities mentioned the need to establish and promote a strong community identity and to create greater community vibrancy through diverse public places and third spaces [social space that is not home (first space) or work (second space)]. Many priorities also stressed inclusivity especially for seniors and people with disabilities.

Imagine Arlington in 2035 Headline Exercise
Meeting participants were asked to imagine Arlington ten years from now, in the year 2035, and write a brief social media post or newspaper headline they would like to see. This exercise aimed to capture aspirational visions across the key planning topics: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, open space and recreation, public services and facilities, natural and cultural resources, and sustainability and climate resilience. The top themes from the submitted headlines reflect many of the shared group priorities described above and highlight visions for:

- *Sustainability & Climate Resilience:* Many responses envision Arlington as a green, climate-smart town, emphasizing clean energy, carbon neutrality, natural resource protection, and environmental leadership, especially in green innovation.

- *Affordable & Inclusive Housing:* There is a strong desire for diverse and affordable housing options that support equity, a spectrum of incomes, and allow residents to age in place.

- *Multi-modal Transportation Investment:* Responses highlight visions of a walkable, bikeable, and transit-forward community with reduced car dependency and accessible, sustainable transportation infrastructure.

- *Economic Vitality & Strong Local Business Community:* Responses expressed desire for a thriving local business community, innovation districts, and a vibrant mixed-use downtown that celebrates Arlington's historic charm while creating new and expanded opportunities.

- *Enhancing Open Space and Recreation Opportunities:* There is a significant emphasis on preserving green space, improving access to recreational opportunities for all users, and improving the quality of Arlington's natural environment and resources, particularly its tree canopy, parks, and rivers and streams.

- *An Equitable and Inclusive Community:* Many headlines express a vision for Arlington as a welcoming, diverse, and equitable town that values and can support those from all lived experiences.

- *Arlington as a Leader:* Several headlines highlight Arlington as a regional, state, and national leader in a variety of areas such as natural resource preservation, walkability, quality of life, longevity, and housing affordability.

Other key themes mentioned include:

- Support for strong public schools and lifelong learning.
- A desire for a more defined and vibrant community culture and celebration of local heritage.
- A transparent and visionary government supported by an empowered and engaged community.

Example Headlines:

- "Arlington: A model of equity and sustainability in 2035"
- "Small Business Booms in Arlington's Revitalized Downtown"
- "Safe, Walkable Streets in Every Neighborhood"
- "Arlington Aging Well" / "Arlington – Longevity Hub"
- "Arlington Center Achieves all 3-story minimum buildings on Mass Ave"
- "Arlington: Jazz Capital of New England"
- "Arlington Thrives: Play and Stay in Arlington where Nature, Culture, and Community Engagement Co-exist"
- "There is something for everyone!"
- "Arlington is selected as most livable in national survey"
- "Arlington Class of 2035 sends scientific experiments into space!"
- "Arlington plants 1 million trees, becomes an urban forest"
- "Arlington goes car-free: mono-rail a success!"
- "Arlington achieves economic diversity for the first time in decades"
- "A vibrant community with its own personality and passion for work, education, and fun!"
- "No one is lonely in Arlington"
- "New middle school opens along with red line stop"
- "Town celebrates tall trees and low rents"
- "East Arlington survives flood just fine: resilient new housing, resilient upgrades to Thorndike/Magnolia and Alewife Brook payoff"

- "Arlington embraces growth to build a town where people can build the lives and families they want"
- "Arlington achieves Vision Zero for 2035"
- Arlington leads the way in welcoming residents of all backgrounds and lived experiences"

Other Public Input Opportunities

An online survey was posted on the project website for anyone who could not attend the meeting. The survey is available from April 4 through May 11, 2025. Results from the survey will be summarized after it closes, and combined with feedback from the kickoff meeting.

The Town's AmpUp! Advisory Committee will continue outreach efforts to gather additional feedback.

How Feedback Will Be Used

Public input will inform the creation of a draft vision statement for the future of Arlington which will guide the comprehensive plan development. It will also inform a set of draft goals in support of the vision. Both the vision and goals will be shared publicly for additional feedback prior to being finalized.

Event Photos

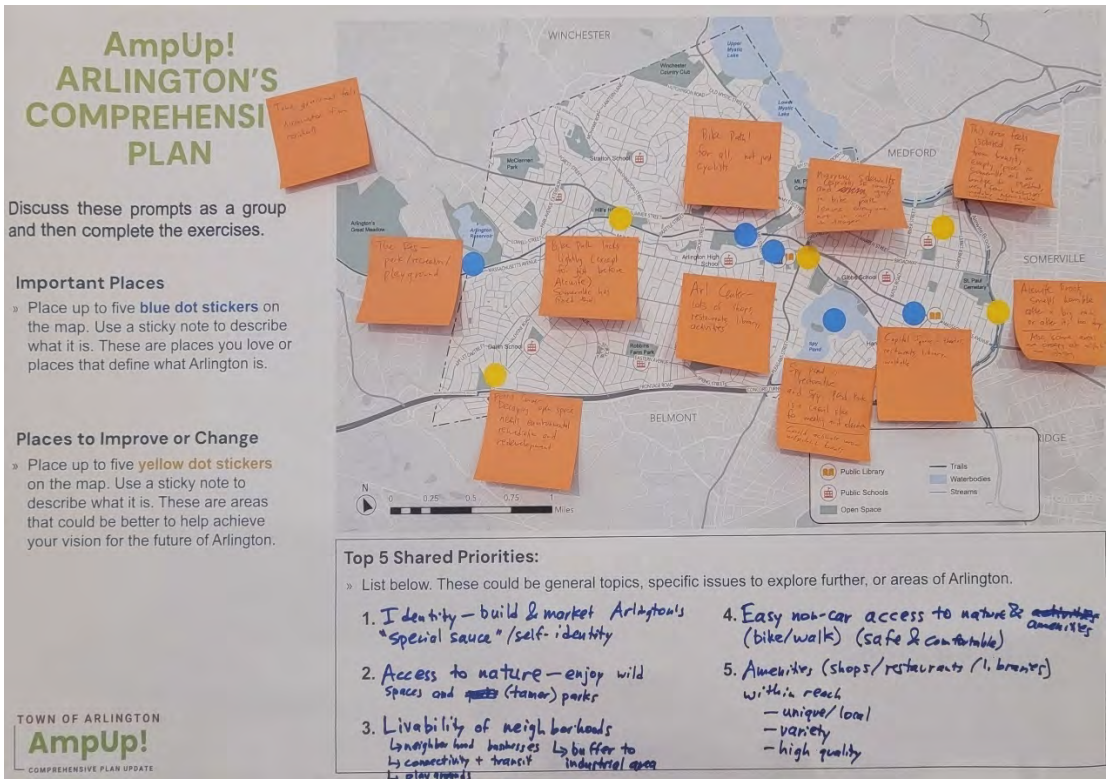


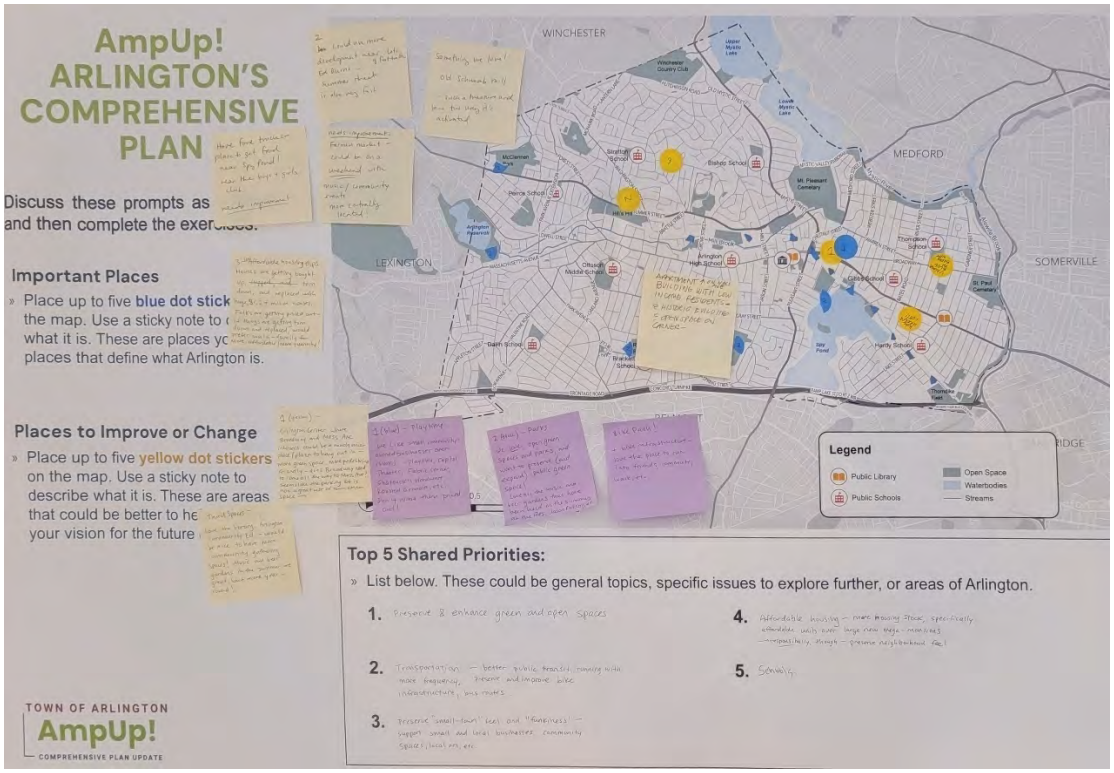
Sample headlines were shared aloud so participants could hear what others wrote.





Attendees worked in small groups to discuss prompts and record their observations on large maps.





Two example table maps illustrating how groups recorded their feedback.