



## **Community Engagement Strategy**

Updated 9/22/2023

### **Introduction**

The following community engagement strategy is designed to support the Town of Milton's East Milton Square zoning and design guideline recommendations process. The community's feedback and guidance throughout this process will be a foundation for the recommendations. This document provides additional details about the design of this process, including:

- Partners, Roles, and Responsibilities
- Community Engagement Events
- Community Outreach and Communication with Stakeholders

The community engagement strategy defines a process that is open, inclusive, and transparent. This strategy outlines the processes to be employed to ensure meaningful participation in the public process of defining zoning recommendations and design guidance for East Milton Square. The goal of this process is to build support as the zoning recommendations are developed so that the Planning Board can effectively advance the zoning changes to successful adoption at Town Meeting with the support of community members who have been engaged and are well-informed about the recommendations.

The engagement strategy provides a framework for community discourse and defines meaningful opportunities for community members to engage in the process. The community engagement strategy defines a variety of engagement opportunities to broaden and deepen outreach and includes interviews, focus groups, large public forums, open houses, and outreach through social media and the press. Each engagement opportunity is strategically designed to provide community members with appropriate opportunities for feedback. For example, the scope of discussion will start more general and broader and get more specific and narrower as the process advances.

Events and materials will be accessible to as many community members as possible. In support of this, we work to communicate in plain language, provide interpretation and translation (if requested), and utilize best practices for community members who have hearing or visual impairments. Events will be held in locations that are as convenient as possible to the target audience and appropriate to the event. For example, interviews will be conducted via phone or Zoom. Community Forums will be hosted in East Milton Square, as possible, and providing a virtual hybrid option for in-person meetings. Data gathered through engagement will be used anonymously and utilize thorough qualitative methodology to analyze and understand themes and patterns in the feedback provided.

## **Partners, Roles, and Responsibilities**

The following descriptions outline engagement roles for the partners in this process. The partners include: the Milton Planning Board, Milton Planning and Community Development Department, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and members of previous East Milton planning processes.

### **Planning Board**

This planning process is intended to result in zoning recommendations. As the Town board that will advance recommendations to Town Meeting in the form of a zoning warrant article, it is critical that the Planning Board guide all aspects of this work. The Planning Board will need to be fully aware of the process of developing recommendations and the details of the proposed zoning and design guidance. The Milton Planning Board will be designated as the Advisory Committee to this project. The Planning Board will be guiding MAPC's work through regular check-ins at the Board's regularly scheduled meetings. A portion of the agenda at regular Planning Board meetings will be used to discuss the progress of the work and to guide development of the content of zoning recommendations and design guidelines. The Planning Board's meetings are posted and open to the public. Each of the Board's discussions of this process will be a part of this transparent process.

The Planning Board will be expected to aid in outreach for public events, provide support at public events, and provide input on zoning and design guideline recommendations. The Community Engagement Strategy establishes regular Planning Board meetings that will occur throughout the duration of the study. The frequency of these meetings can be adapted to suit the needs of the work. The first meeting with the Planning Board occurred on 8/10/2023. It is anticipated that MAPC will attend Planning Board meetings through a combination of Zoom and in-person attendance. The scope of work defines a baseline of Planning Board meetings as follows:

- Planning Board Meeting 1 – Initial meeting (Phase 1) (8/10/2023)
- Planning Board Meeting 2 – Meeting to discuss initial concepts (Phase 2) (9/28/2023)
- Planning Board Meeting 3 – Meetings to develop zoning (Phase 2/3) (12/2023, 2/2024, and 4/2024)
- Planning Board Meeting 4 – Meeting to define zoning application (Phase 3/4) (5/2024)
- Planning Board Meeting 5 – Public Hearing for zoning (Phase 4) (6/2024, or later)

Communication between MAPC and the Planning Board will be through Town staff from the Planning and Community Development Department or will occur directly in Planning Board meetings.

### **Planning and Community Development Department**

The Director of Planning and Community Development and Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development will be the primary point of contact with the Planning Board and MAPC. The work will be closely coordinated with and supported by the Planning Department. Coordination and conversation between the Planning Department and MAPC Project Manager will take place throughout the study process on an as-needed basis and is likely to occur at a frequency of a coordination call or meeting once every few weeks with more frequent meetings as needed to prepare for upcoming meetings or to review content and analyses that may be underway. In support of engagement efforts, the Planning Department will help to schedule engagement events, reserve suitable venues, promote the event through Town websites, email lists,

social media, or other outreach channels, provide support at public events, and provide input on zoning and design guideline recommendations.

### **Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)**

MAPC will define the engagement events and clearly communicate the intention and needs of those events with enough advance notice for partners to contribute. MAPC will prepare the content for the events including any presentations, surveys, handouts, exercises, or other materials that will be needed. MAPC will prepare flyers for public events that clearly state the meeting purpose, location, date, and time. A note will be placed on each flyer with instructions for how to request any special accommodations or translation services for a meeting. United States Census Data (2017-2021 American Community Survey Estimates) shows that 18.6% of Milton's population speak a language other than English at home. In Census Tract 4146, which includes East Milton Square, 5.3% of people identify as speaking English less than "very well." The most significant language identified as spoken within this group is "Asian and Pacific Islander languages" at 5.1%. MAPC will work with the Planning and Community Development Department to accommodate requests. MAPC will facilitate meetings to foster constructive and respectful community discourse and to recognize as many voices in the meetings as possible. To expand the feedback which can be gathered, MAPC will design meetings to engage participants through exercises, polling questions, or other tools, while also providing time for open comments and questions. MAPC will compile all feedback from all types of engagement events. MAPC will analyze and synthesize feedback to identify recurring themes and patterns, and shared community priorities, among other insights to guide the process and recommendations.

### **Members of previous East Milton planning processes**

To retain continuity and connection with previous planning processes, the Steering Committee and Working Group members of the "Looking Forward: East Milton Square" (March 2021) study will be engaged in this process. The "Looking Forward" report provides a community vision and outlined zoning recommendations that form the foundation for this work. Members of the group included East Milton Square residents, Milton residents not living in East Milton Square, and members of the East Milton Square Neighborhood Association. Residents previously involved in this effort will be engaged through emails and interviews to share their perspectives and insights on past efforts and future concerns. Members of this group who are interested will be invited to help with outreach for community engagement events.

### **Residents of Milton**

Residents of Milton will be invited to be a part of the community engagement events and take part in the process of developing the zoning and design guidance recommendations. Residents of Milton who live in East Milton Square will be more directly engaged by posted flyers, hosting of events in the area, and direct outreach and interviews. Residents of the Town who live outside of East Milton Square have an interest in the largest commercial district in the Town and will be invited to be a part of the community engagement events. However, direct engagement, additional outreach efforts, or locally hosted events will not occur in other neighborhoods of Milton, except for posting information at Town Hall or Milton Public Library.

### **Town Meeting Members**

Town Meeting Members will be invited to be a part of the community engagement events and take part in the process of developing the zoning and design guidance recommendations. Town Meeting Members may be more directly engaged as the zoning recommendations take shape to help inform the members of the purpose of the proposed zoning and provide background information and context for the potential zoning warrant article in advance of Town Meeting.

### **Community Engagement Events**

This process is designed to leverage several types of engagement events to create a variety of opportunities to provide meaningful feedback. Residents may take part in a single event, or all events, with every event providing the opportunity to bring all participants to the same level of information with a clearly defined purpose and goal for each meeting.

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

Interviews are often the most effective way to provide a safe and comfortable way for residents to offer thoughts and opinions. MAPC will conduct interviews for this process and will report out any themes from these interviews anonymously and without attribution to an individual. It is not possible to interview all members of the community individually. This method of engagement will be used to supplement other methods that are intended to reach a wider audience.

### **Community Meetings**

A series of community meetings will provide a foundation of information for this study. The study is scoped to include a first community forum, a second community forum, and a public hearing. Each of these public programs are described below, including the goals, approach, and format projected for each program.

- **Community Forum #1 – Exploration of Zoning Concepts**
  - Date – Beginning of November 2023 (TBD)
  - Location – East Milton Square (TBD) and Zoom. Forums are intended to be hosted at an appropriate venue in East Milton Square as an in-person event that is recorded for later viewing.
  - Purpose – Explore and gather feedback on initial zoning concepts. MAPC and the Town will host a forum to provide information to the residents related to introducing the study, the existing conditions of the district, potential zoning concepts, potential design guidelines, examples, and next steps in the process. MAPC will integrate interactive polling and exercises into the meeting to gather specific feedback on each component of the zoning concepts.
  - Outcome – Gather feedback on how best to advance the zoning concepts and narrow the potential recommendations.
- **Community Forum #2 – Refinement of Zoning Concepts**
  - Date – Projected for March 2024 (TBD)
  - Location – East Milton Square (TBD) and Zoom. Forums are intended to be hosted at an appropriate venue in East Milton Square as an in-person event that is recorded for later viewing.
  - Purpose – Explore and gather feedback on refined zoning concepts. MAPC and the Town will host a forum to provide information to the residents related to

feedback received at the first community forum and refined zoning concepts based on that feedback, including initial draft zoning and design guidelines to gather additional feedback, and next steps in the process.

- Outcome – Gather feedback on refinement of initial zoning and design guidelines.
- **Public Hearing – Presentation of Zoning and Design Guidelines**
  - Date – Projected for June 2024 (TBD)
  - Location – Town Hall (TBD) and Zoom. Following typical procedures of a Planning Board hosted Public Hearing for zoning.
  - Purpose – Present the zoning and design guidelines for final public comment prior to finalizing for the Town Meeting warrant article.
  - Outcome – Gather feedback on zoning and design guideline recommendations.
- **Town Meeting**
  - Date – The earliest possible Town Meeting this work may be available for a warrant article would be Fall 2024. However, a specific Town Meeting has not yet been determined.
  - Location – (TBD)
  - Purpose – MAPC will assist in providing materials that summarize the recommendations, or answer frequently asked questions, that can be available at Town Meeting.

### **Community Surveys**

To broaden the reach of the event and the opportunity for engagement, the community forums will be paired with community surveys. The surveys will be open for about 1 month after the community forum and will be available for anyone, particularly those who were unable to attend the event in-person. The surveys will be designed to parallel the type of feedback that was gathered in the meeting. The surveys will be posted on the Town website with a recording of the meeting, and the meeting presentation, and will be promoted with assistance from the Planning Department. The results of the survey will be combined with the results of the in-meeting feedback to provide a compiled set of feedback that will be integrated with the development of the zoning and design guideline content.

### **Small Group Meetings**

Like the individual interviews, small group meetings may be used to gather insights from a group of stakeholders that has been noted as absent from the engagement events. In previous planning processes the types of groups this may include are property owners, developers, renters, residents of color, youth, younger households, or other groups that may not be fully represented at other community engagement events. These sessions are also an effective way to provide a safe and comfortable space for residents or other stakeholders to offer thoughts and opinions. MAPC will also conduct small group meetings for this process and will report out any themes from these meetings anonymously and without attribution to an individual. This method of engagement will be used to supplement other methods that are intended to reach a wider audience. It also provides an opportunity to further explain the technical and nuanced aspects of zoning in smaller settings.

### **Open Houses or other events**

To supplement the other community events, open houses, office hours, or other types of less formal engagement opportunities may be provided. These events will be determined in consultation with the Planning Department, Planning Board, and community feedback to help meet the needs of the community discourse and provide the space and opportunity for additional discussion, if it is needed.

### **Community Outreach and Communication with Stakeholders**

Outreach for the community engagement opportunities is a critical part of the process. It is important that the community is aware of the process in general, and aware of specific opportunities to engage. Outreach through several channels is anticipated to create this type of awareness.

#### **Outreach Channels**

The following outreach channels will be important for publicizing community events:

- Milton Times
- Physical flyers – letter size flyers will be created in digital and print versions for each of the major events, MAPC will work with stakeholders to get flyers posted in East Milton including major destinations such as the Fruit Center Marketplace and Milton Art Center.
- Town Facebook pages
- Town website
- Email lists
- Stakeholder emails and word of mouth

#### **Understanding Participation Patterns**

General demographic information will be gathered at each of the primary engagement events (community forums and community surveys). The data gathered will include characteristics such as what neighborhoods residents live in, how long they have lived there, race and ethnicity, household income, age, whether they own or rent their home, and if they have children at home, a senior in the household, or a veteran in the household. This general data on who is participating in the process allows for more targeted outreach to potentially underrepresented groups as the process continues. The data gathered will be compared against demographic data from Census Tract 4164 which includes East Milton Square. Some examples of that data for comparison include (U.S. Census ACS 5-year estimates, 2011-2017):

- Race and Ethnicity – 90% White, 4% Asian, 4% Two or More Races, 1% Hispanic, 1% Native American, 0% Black, 0% Pacific Islander, 0% Other Race in the Census Tract
- Household income - \$178,007 in the Census Tract
- Age – median age of 37.8 in the Census Tract
- Housing tenure – 97% owner occupied; 3% renter occupied in the Census Tract
- How long in location – 96% in the same house a year ago in the Census Tract
- Veteran status – 3.2% of the population with veteran status in the Census Tract