

Director of Planning & Community Development Department 2023 Annual Report

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Director of Planning & Community Development Department is to collaborate with residents, town officials and business owners by following best practices of urban planning and development to progress short- and long-range plans that identify and prioritize the needs of the municipality while promoting a well-designed, livable and thriving community.

Department Overview:

The Director of Planning and Community Development Department consists of one employee who provides technical support and leadership regarding land use and development to all Town Departments, Committees and Boards as requested. She contributes guidance and expertise with civic-minded volunteers on the Stoneham Square Strategic Action Plan, advocacy through the Transportation Advisory Subcommittee, and leads regionally with conversations about first and last mile mobility solutions for Stoneham residents and employers. Professional involvement, noteworthy department emphasis, and financial awards over the last year are detailed below.

Professional Leadership & Affiliations:

- Immediate Past President, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Stoneham Representative, MAPC
- Delegate, North Suburban Planning Council
- Member, Stoneham Transportation Advocacy Committee
- Member, MAPC Executive Committee
- Member, Metro Common 2050 External Advisory Committee
- Immediate Past Chair & Member, MetroFuture Inc. Board of Directors
- Member, Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors
- Member, American Planning Association: Massachusetts Chapter

Department Highlights:

- Professional Planning Review – Oversight and assessment of all proposed special permit requests, zoning language, and site plan applications to the Town of Stoneham.
- Stoneham Commercial Improvement Program – Continued to facilitate the financial program for businesses in the Central Business District to improve its signage, windows and storefront esthetic.
- Green Communities Program – Received and spent \$200,000 from the Massachusetts Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources, and \$55,800 in utility incentives. Projects include Town Hall Auditorium air handler, Police Department AHU-2 Demand Control Ventilation, and LED lighting upgrades at Town Hall exterior, South Elementary School exterior, and inside the Fire Department. Projected annual operating savings is over \$40,000.
- Community Compact IT Grant – The Town was awarded \$25,000 from the Division of Local Services to migrate its existing planimetric geospatial data to an ArcGIS Online driven environment. Work is now live on town website.
- Outdoor seating dining review – Worked with department heads to create an outdoor seating permitting process for restaurants during COVID-19.
- Stoneham Traffic Commission – Participates in monthly meetings to address traffic and safety issues throughout the municipality. Topics include requests from residents, infrastructure complaints, and larger municipal-wide policy changes and project proposals.
- Stoneham High School Project Sustainability Subcommittee – Participates in bi-weekly standing meeting to discuss green initiatives including but not limited to: rooftop solar, parking lot canopy solar, and on-site battery storage at the proposed, new high school site.
- Downtown Redesign Project – After public engagement sessions with residents and the business community, the Town finalized and forwarded a 25% design of a complete downtown redesign on Main Street from Maple Street to Minot and including the adjacent Central Street area to MassDOT. The project goals are to improve safety at the intersection and surrounding areas of Franklin Street, Main Street/Route 28, and Central Street in Stoneham Square as well as improve pedestrian accessibility.

- Mobility improvements – In conjunction with the Downtown Redesign Project, the Town has submitted a project need form to MassDOT for the intersection at Marble/Summer/Main Street including the stretch of Main Street to Maple Street. The project received a project number and the Town is able to move forward with the intersection redesign and multi-modal improvements in the scope area.
- Rooftop Solar at Central Middle School – Finalized with Solect and received approval at Town Meeting to execute agreements including PILOT, install solar panels, and submit all necessary paperwork to achieve a high performing PPA for the next twenty years. Solar has been installed and turned on at the property.
- MOTT Grant with the Chamber of Commerce – Worked with the Chamber of Commerce via the MOTT (Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism) Grant on a branding project. Met regularly with the committee to finalize color, taglines, and design suite for future use. Branding will be officially unveiled in spring 2023.
- Zoning Articles – Drafted and received approval at Town Meeting for eight zoning articles including but not limited to: lowering multi-family parking requirements, inclusionary zoning update, multi-family by-right zoning, and lowering the parking requirements in the Central Business District.
- Chapter 40 A 3A legislation – The Town has held numerous public meetings and approved language to work toward legislative compliance. Additionally, the Town was awarded funding through Mass Housing Partnership to receive technical assistance to calculate unit capacity within its districts. The Town has received interim compliance until December 31, 2024 and will work toward final compliance in the upcoming months.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant – The Town was awarded \$108,700 through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for a wetland restoration and trails enhancement on the conservation land adjacent to Stoneham High School. Work is underway and will be completed in 2023.
- Shared Streets Program – The Town received \$44,463.10 through MassDOT Shared Streets Program to update the pedestrian crossing in front of the Post Office to the Town Common. The work will move the existing crosswalk to a safer location with bump outs and rapid flashing beacons be completed in spring 2023.
- Mystic Highland Greenway – Meets bimonthly with Senator Lewis’ office, Representative Donato, Representative Lipper-Garabedian, MassDOT, MAPC, and the communities of Melrose, Malden, and Wakefield on the development of a new regional greenway.
- Spot Pond Loop Feasibility Study – Sat on the RFP Selection Committee and successfully selected a vendor through a competitive process. Continues to work with vendor VHB on outreach, data gathering, and design. Study is expected to be completed by June 2023.
- EV Stations at Stoneham Arena – Collaborated with Eversource and Voltrek to install electric vehicle charging stations at Stoneham Arena. After building capacity, the Town began charging users in December 2022.
- Stoneham Shuttle Pilot – Submitted and was awarded \$796,817 over the next three federal fiscal years through Boston MPO’s Community Connections Program to pilot a local shuttle service that will connect Stoneham residents and employees of Stoneham businesses to transportation options. A RFP process will need to be done to select the vendor and that work will begin in 2023.
- Aggregation – Spearheaded both municipal and community electricity aggregation agreement work with partners Good Energy, Constellation, and Power Options. These two programs allowed residents and the municipality to have predictable, competitive supply rates during a volatile market. Contract will conclude in December 2023 so the Town will need to work toward new procurement for the upcoming cycle.