NEEDHAM STREET UPDATE SUMMER 2011

City Planning staff has been busy on several fronts, preparing a Draft Master Plan for Needham Street. After holding two community meetings at which interests and ideas were collected, staff is continuing to develop the themes into a comprehensive and doable scheme, working alongside MassDOT, which is preparing roadway plans. Although a draft is not yet ready for public review, here’s what’s been happening over the summer of 2011:

- **Business Survey.** Staff has distributed a survey to businesses on Needham Street to get a greater sense of where their interests lie relative to changes they would find desirable on Needham Street. The results of the study are expected to be complete by November, 2011 and a summary will be posted online at that time.

- **Roadway design.** MassDOT completed its Functional Design Review, which is a collection of data about the existing roadway conditions and projections for the future that will be used to guide design of the roadway. A three-lane roadway with bike lanes and pedestrian improvements is preferred and designs will explore the best ways to calm and organize traffic in the Corridor. “25% design drawings” are expected to be complete in the spring of 2012, at which time a public hearing will be held to gather community feedback. In the meantime, City staff will continue to discuss options with property owners along the Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods.

- **Grant Applications.** Various state and federal agencies issued notices of availability of funds in August and the City of Newton applied for assistance in the planning and reconstruction efforts for Needham Street. The City partnered with the Town of Needham to request technical assistance in evaluating alternative uses for the abandoned rail bed that runs parallel to Needham Street and Highland Avenue in Needham. This information will greatly enhance the City’s ability to assess viable options for improving the number of ways people can get around the Corridor, as well as to relieve the flow of traffic on Needham Street itself. The City also requested funding for reconstruction of the street, so when design work is done, the roadway can be improved according to approved plans. By the end of October 2011, decisions about these grants will be announced, which will signal the nature of work to move forward.