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Wellesley Comprehensive Plan

2005-2015 UPDATE

PHASE ONE:

- Goals and Priorities
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Land Use



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Wellesley Planning Board
Wellesley Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee



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Introduction:

A Comprehensive Plan for a New Century

Wellesley is a mature suburban community that owes much of its success over the last century to its commitment to planning. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as Wellesley became an affluent residential suburb, many of the attractive neighborhoods created from farms and estates were planned communities. The Town's leaders took care to direct and shape development in the Town. In 1912 the Town instituted a Town Building Law, which specified the size and location of homes for fire protection purposes. The Town passed a zoning law in 1925 and was a pioneer in the development of a planning board, a board of survey, and a billboard by-law. Unlike other towns with their colonial mansions, Wellesley was originally a poor farm town, and the community's attention to planning for the future is one the reasons it has remained an appealing and attractive community for over 100 years. As a journalist commented in the 1920s, the reason Wellesley was such a nice place to live was that they "planned it that way."

The Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

This is Wellesley's fourth Comprehensive Plan. The first plan was adopted by the Planning Board in 1965 and, like many plans of that era, took a pro-growth approach to future development. The second Comprehensive Plan, prepared by the Planning Board and its staff between 1977 and 1981, emphasized growth management, conservation, and building reuse. The Town's most recent Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1994. The time horizon for this comprehensive plan is 10 years.

A comprehensive plan is both a process and a framework for future decision making. The planning process provides the opportunity for community residents and others to articulate and review their values and goals through public discussion,



agree on what they want to see the town be like in the future, and identify the key areas where the town must act to preserve enduring character and to seize opportunities to shape change. The framework is a guidance document that sets forth a set of strategies, tools, and specific actions to make the plan a reality. Recommendations can include zoning amendments, design and development standards, management plans, neighborhood plans, and other efforts.

Structure of this Plan

In 2004, the Planning Board and the Town agreed to update the Comprehensive Plan and to allocate funding for a two-phase planning process. Phase One was undertaken in 2004-2005 and is represented by this document.

The Planning Board commissioned a resident survey in early 2004 from Davidson-Peterson Associates and in the fall of 2004 contracted with a team led by Goody Clancy & Associates to assist the Board in creating the plan. Phase One included the following elements:

- An evaluation of the 1994 Plan
- Public Meetings
- Goals and Policies
- Housing
- Framework for Affordable Housing Planned Production
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- A Scope for Phase Two

This document describes the planning process for Phase One and includes chapters on Goals and Priorities, Population and Land Use Trends, Housing, Economic Development, and Managing Land Use for the Future. An appendix contains the Framework for Affordable Housing Production, powerpoint presentations and fact sheets handed distributed at public meetings, and illustrative examples related to the Plan's recommendations.

Phase Two will add chapters on natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Services and Facilities, Circulation, and Implementation.

Building on the 1994 Plan

Wellesley has implemented a number of the recommendations in the 1994 Plan and accomplished some of the actions called for in the Plan, particularly in the area of economic development. An extensive public process and large steering committee worked with consultants and focused on the degree to which the Town should take an active role in shaping future land use and development in three areas:

- The future of the few large open parcels remaining in Town.

- Changes in the village commercial districts.
- Accommodating new needs and circumstances in neighborhoods while protecting neighborhood character

The 1994 Plan acknowledged that the planning process produced valuable discussions about certain key choices facing Wellesley but ultimately did not result in a full consensus to resolve them. A large number of goals, policies and implementation actions made the plan very comprehensive but also obscured a sense of priorities.

The approach for this Comprehensive Plan is slightly different. Because Wellesley is a well-run town with a strong professional staff and sophisticated volunteer town officials, the approach is to focus most effort on issues that are the most difficult to resolve, particularly (though not exclusively) if they have multiple and overlapping board and commission authorities. However, Wellesley can take satisfaction in accomplishing a number of the goals of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan:

HOUSING

Three goals were paramount in the housing section of the Plan: protecting and enhancing the residential character of Wellesley; expanding the diversity of housing types; and expanding housing affordability for senior citizens and families with children. The booming real estate market since the late 1990s has tended to reduce the diversity of housing types and sizes in Wellesley and proposals to further regulate residential redevelopment and growth have not been accepted. It was difficult to reach consensus on affordable housing for families, so the plan focused especially on senior housing because it had more widespread support. However, a senior housing strategy was not created, as recommended.

Accomplishments:

- The Plan set a goal of moving from 4.5% affordable housing to 5%. The Town is now at 4.8% and that goal will soon be met with the construction of 52 apartments in the Hastings Village 40B project.
- The recommendation to revitalize the Wellesley Housing Partnership was fulfilled through the creation of the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation, which has been leading affordable housing efforts.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Because the 1994 Plan was written when the region was still in a serious economic recession, there was a strong focus on fostering economic vitality in the Town's business districts, ensuring the continued prosperity of the commercial villages that serve Town residents, enhancing the Town's commercial gateways, and planning proactively for redevelopment of commercial sites.

Accomplishments:

- Rezoning of the office park district on Route 9 to Dearborn Street
- Rezoning to extend the business district at the Natick line to the Cochituate Aqueduct.
- Charrette and successful planning process for the MassHighway Route 9 depot site.
- Commercial district plans for Lower Falls, Wellesley Square, Wellesley Hills, Linden Street, and Cedar Street.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section of the 1994 Plan drew on the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. The natural resource focus was on developing protection strategies for specific open space parcels and on protecting and improving the water quality of both surface water and groundwater. Compared to previous plans, the Plan also added a more detailed consideration of cultural resources.

Accomplishments:

- Improvement and beautification project for Fuller Brook Parkway.
- Sewering of small lots at Morse's Pond to eliminate pollution from septic failure
- Nonpoint source pollution reduction programs under development as part of the Town's efforts to comply with the US EPA Phase II Stormwater Regulations.
- Updating of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (currently in progress).

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The Plan found that Wellesley has a strong system in place to meet Town needs for maintenance and replacement of physical facilities, so the Plan focused more on program recommendations for seniors and for youth.

Accomplishments:

- Creation of a new Recreation Center and a Youth Services Director position.
- Senior bus service.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The major goals of this section were to preserve open space that is significant because of its size or its location; expand the trail system to link destinations town-wide; and provide recreation facilities to meet town needs.

Accomplishments:

- Creation of a new Recreation Center.
- Active Trails Committee that has opened and marked new trails and offers guided walks.
- Trails Committee web page with trail maps.
- Natural Resource Commission web page with information on open space accessible to the public.
- Lower Falls Riverway Plan.
- Post Office Square Framework Plan.

CIRCULATION

Improvement in traffic and parking management, pedestrian improvements in commercial districts, town-wide pedestrian and bicycle planning, intersection improvements at selected locations, creation of an intra-town public transportation service, and creation of a transportation coordinator position in town government were among the goals of the 1994 Plan.

Accomplishments:

- Improvements to Route 9 are underway.
- The Board of Selectmen created the position of Transportation Program Coordinator.
- Route 16 streetscape improvements.
- Parking studies in commercial districts.
- Traffic calming projects.
- Tailby Lot Committee.

The Phase One Plan and Planning in Phase Two

Part of the Phase One planning process was to develop goals and policies for all the plan elements, including those that would be pursued in depth during Phase Two. Yet the final chapter of the Phase One document, Managing Land Use for the Future, is based primarily on the results of planning for housing and economic development. This chapter and the Goals and Policies should remain open to review and revision as the Town embarks on Phase Two of the planning process to discuss issues such as transportation, open space, and community facilities that will also affect the final character of recommendations on land use.

2 Wellesley's Goals for the Next Ten Years

Because all communities experience change, every update of the comprehensive plan requires a reevaluation of Town goals for the next ten years. In every plan there will be enduring goals that represent critical elements of Wellesley's identity as a town, while other goals will recede in importance because the Town will have worked hard to reach them. Changing circumstances and trends can create the need for new goals. It is therefore essential to engage residents and others in a discussion about what kinds of issues the Town should focus on in the next ten years.

The 1994 Plan included a large number of often overlapping goals and objectives. Although very thorough and comprehensive, the plan did not provide a clear set of priorities across all the elements or categories in the plan. For the current update of the comprehensive plan, the Planning Board wanted to identify a set of priorities for the next ten years. As a result, priority-setting exercises were incorporated into the public participation process.

A. THE COMMUNITY SPEAKS: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Town and consulting team undertook a variety of activities designed to elicit ideas and recommendations from residents, business people, institutional representatives, and property owners. These activities began with a town-wide survey and continued through a series of public meetings, workshops, and one-on-one conversations.

The Survey

The Planning Board commissioned a community survey from Davidson-Peterson Associates. The purpose of the survey was to find out how satisfied Town residents and officials are with town services, what their perceptions are about the community, and their priority concerns.

In February 2004, a sample of Wellesley households received a letter with a unique code giving them access to an on-line survey. (Those without access to a computer were invited to complete the survey at the library or obtain a paper survey at Town Hall.) The sample included 500 households in each of Wellesley's seven precincts, 240 Town Meeting members, and 84 Town officials. Twenty-nine percent of the precinct sample (1,004 persons) completed the survey and 31% of the Town Meeting and Town official sample responded. The consultants weighted the precinct responses to ensure geographical representation, but the response rates were quite similar across precincts, so little weighting was required. As is often the case in surveys of this kind, the respondent group tended to be somewhat older than the population as a whole, but in other respects the survey respondents were representative of Wellesley households. The survey asked respondents to rank or rate a set list of issues. The questions did not offer the option of "other" and there were no "free answer" questions in which respondents could write in their own responses.

WELLESLEY AS A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE

Essential/very Important Characteristics	Resident Respondents (%)	Town Officials Respondents (%)
Quality of education	85	85
Neighborhood character	79	79
Neighborhood parks and green spaces	77	72
Easy access to Boston	68	67
Town centers with in-town shopping	60	77
Biking and walking trails for recreation	57	61
Increasing real estate values	54	53
Educational insitutional with interesting cultural activites	50	43
Senior services available	44	40

PROBLEM ISSUES IN WELLESLEY

Serious Problem	Resident Respondents (%)	Town Officials Respondents (%)
Traffic on Washington Street	52	50
Availabilty of parking at stores	40	37
Traffic in my neighborhood	22	25
Availability of public transportation in town	19	19
Available of diverse types of housing in town	17	36
Parking at train stations	17	18
Mix of stores/services	11	15
No serious problems	26	22

In responding to the question of “What makes Wellesley a nice place to live?” survey respondents ranked a series of characteristics.

Residents and town officials were in substantial agreement about why Wellesley is a good place to live. The Town’s excellent school system is at the top of the list and three other characteristics that 60% or more respondents identified as “essential” or “very important” are central to the Comprehensive Plan: neighborhood character, parks and green spaces, and the village commercial districts. The interplay of these physical characteristics is what gives Wellesley its identity as a place.

Most Wellesley residents expressed satisfaction with Town services. With the exception of cable television service, all Town services were regarded as satisfactory by at least 70% of respondents. (Cable TV was thought satisfactory by 66% of residents and 50% of Town officials.) The same general level of satisfaction is evident in the results of a question asking respondents to rank the importance of seven issues as a serious problem for Wellesley. Town officials were more apt to see the lack of housing diversity as a serious problem, but in general, similar percentages of residents and officials otherwise tended to agree.

Survey respondents were asked to identify priorities for services, transportation, and housing. Residents and Town officials had somewhat different priorities, with Town officials giving more importance to building garages in commercial districts, providing affordable housing, and providing services for seniors to stay in single family homes.

TOWN PRIORITIES RANKED

	<i>Resident</i>	<i>Town Officials</i>
1	Perserve existing parks and green spaces for pasive recreation	Building park garages as part of retail areas in village centers
2	Enact restrictions on single family home size to maintain neighbohood character	Preserve existing parks and green spaces for passive recreation
3	Complete bike paths/trails to/through all neighborhoods	Enact restrictions on single family home size to maintain neighbohood character
4	Building park garages as part of retail areas in village centers	Promote development of affordable hosuing choices
5	Improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow on Linden Street	Develop ways for shoppers to get to village centers without cars
6	Open teen center for afternoon/evening use	Provide services for seniors so they can stay in their single family homes
7	Develop ways for commuters to reach train stations easily without cars	Complete bike paths/trails to/through all neighborhoods
8	Encourage adding public buses through town	Encourage adding public buses through town
9	Develop ways for shoppers to get to village centers without cars	Develop ways for commuters to reach train stations easily without cars
10	Provide services for seniors so they can stay in their single family homes	Open teen center for afternoon/evening use
11	Provide more services for more seniors at senior centers	Build more sports fields and areas for active recreation
12	Widen Washington Street to four lanes to improve traffic flow	Improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow on Linden Street
13	Build more sidewalks	Promote the development of age-restricted housing for “empty nesters”
14	Promote development of affordable hosuing choices	Increase the amount of housing within walking distance of the train
15	Build more sports fields and areas for active recreation	Encourage the development of assisted living facilites
16	Encourage the development of assisted living facilities	Build more sidewalks
17	Promote the development of age-restricted housing for “empty nesters”	Widen Washington Street to four lanes to improve traffic flow
18	increase the amount of housing within walking distance of the train	Provide more services for more seniors at senior centers

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements about Wellesley, significant majorities of both residents and officials agreed with statements that implied a desire to “tame” the car within Town. A majority also acknowledged that they could not afford to enter the residential market in Wellesley today.

Public Meetings

In mid-October 2004, a series of four Comprehensive Plan public meetings were held in quick succession to create widespread public awareness of the Comprehensive Plan process: one Town-wide workshop on a Saturday morning, and three workshops

STATEMENTS ABOUT LIVING IN WELLESLEY

<i>Agree Completely or Somewhat</i>	<i>Resident Respondents (%)</i>	<i>Town Officials Respondents (%)</i>
I would like to have a more pedestrian-friendly commercial area in Wellesley	71	60
I would love to see more historic buildings preserved in Wellesley	66	57
I could not afford to move to Wellesley today	61	64
I would love to leave my car at home if there were a convenient way to shop or commute without a car	58	69
One of the hobbies I really enjoy is bird watching or walking in natural areas	60	57
I wish I could bike to the village center or the train station on safe bikeways	56	52
I/we would like to retire in a smaller home right here in Wellesley	47	51
I'd do more walking if there were more sidewalks in my area	35	29
If the sidewalks were safe, I would let my children walk to school more often	33	34

aimed at residents of three sets of individual precincts on weekday evenings. A week later, there was an early morning meeting for business and institutional stakeholders. Altogether, these meetings attracted nearly 170 members of the Wellesley community. The meetings were widely publicized through inserts in electric bills, flyers, and the Wellesley Townsman.

The primary focus of the workshops for residents was (1) to review and discuss the basic goals of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan in order to confirm, delete, revise, or add new goals and (2) to identify priorities among the goals. Analytical maps prepared by the Wellesley GIS and Planning Departments were displayed at each meeting. A

The result of the survey showed that Wellesley residents are fundamentally satisfied with most aspects of life in the Town. They want to preserve their high quality of life, particularly by preserving neighborhood character, including the Town's network of open space, and they experience the impacts of the automobile as one of the major threats to quality of life and town character.

set of fact sheets on Wellesley was also available. At the sign-in table at each workshop, participants were asked to identify their homes with a star on a large map. The maps that resulted from this exercise demonstrated that the participants in the workshops represented all parts of the Town in the case of the Town-wide meeting and different parts of the various precincts in the case of the precinct meetings.



Each meeting began with a presentation by the consultants that provided an overview of current conditions and trends in Wellesley, a review of the major goals of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, and the Town's accomplishments towards meeting those goals, and a summary of the results from the survey. The purpose of the presentation was to provide participants with a broad context of information about change and continuity over the last decade and about Town activities implementing the last Comprehensive Plan. After the presentation, the participants worked in small groups with a facilitator and a map. In the precinct meetings, the groups were organized by precinct. In addition to reviewing the goals from the 1994 plan, participants also discussed other concerns and precinct-specific issues.

For the purposes of the workshops, the 1994 goals were consolidated as follows:

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Restore, preserve, and enhance open space and sensitive natural resources for habitat protection and enrichment of community character
- Encourage sustainable use of resources
- Maintain and improve architectural image of the community

Open Space and Recreation

- Preserve open space significant for size or location
- Expand the trail system to link destinations Town-wide
- Provide recreation facilities to meet Town needs

Housing

- Protect and enhance the residential character of Wellesley
- Expand housing diversity to respond to changing community needs and demographics
- Expand housing affordability for senior and families with children

Economic Vitality

- Foster community-focused retail and service activities
- Enhance unique role and character of commercial areas

Circulation and Transportation

- Improve traffic and parking management
- Improve pedestrian circulation in commercial districts
- Implement Town-wide pedestrian and bicycle planning
- Improve safety at key intersections
- Create intra-Town public transportation services



Service and Facilities

- Plan for future Town recreational, educational, infrastructure, safety, and service needs

Land Use

- Protect and enhance Wellesley’s residential and village character
- Strengthen neighborhood planning
- Maintain high standards of design excellence
- Pay special attention to Town gateways – the major entrance corridors
- Retain Wellesley’s unique identity while working cooperatively with regional partners to solve common problems.

These goals were provided to each group for discussion and were also printed on poster-size sheets. After the small group sessions, each group reported on the goals that they would like to see retained, modified, or eliminated and which new goals they would like to add. These were written on the poster sheets and at the end of the meeting each person was given three adhesive dots to “vote” on the goals that he or she considered the top three priorities (the votes could be distributed in any manner, from all on one item to three different items). The purpose



of this exercise was to get a sense from the meetings of the goals that attracted the most attention.

In many respects the 1994 goals still served as the foundation for the participants’ thinking about Wellesley. But they brought the experience of recent trends to refine the goals and provide examples. The priority-setting exercise reflected the small group discussions and was instructive in refining the focus of the general planning goals. For each general category below, the total number of “votes” is indicated, as well as votes in certain subcategories of the overall issue.

Housing (including character, diversity, affordability, and historic resources as a version of character): 92

- Regulation of bulk/mass to protect neighborhood character—45
- Diversity of housing type—29
- Affordability issues—3

Transportation issues: 71

- Safety and enforcement issues—15
- Promote alternatives to the car—14

Natural Resources and Open Space/ Recreation: 48

- Manage Morses Pond to avoid eutrophication and keep it a swimming pond: 12

Economic Development: 44

- Combination of maintaining non-chain businesses and preserving retail character that serves residents’ daily needs—33

Services and Facilities: 15

- Master plan for Town-owned improvements, including a plan to improve school facilities and other public buildings to allow flexible uses—10

Land Use: 6

What these numbers show is that the residential character of Wellesley, and particularly the threat to that character from “mansionization,” captured the highest proportion of the votes. Although affordability was discussed and in many cases acknowledged as an issue that that Town needed to work on, participants in the workshops did not want to spend their priority votes on affordable housing. In contrast to the concentration of attention on a few issues in the housing category, transportation in general attracted a lot of attention, but participant concerns were spread over a larger number of issues. Similarly, natural resources combined with open space and recreation was clearly important in the aggregate, but there was no one issue that focused the majority of attention. Economic development issues were quite a contrast: workshop participants were emphatic about their desire to see the Town’s commercial districts retain independent stores as well as the kind of retail and services that serve the everyday needs of the population—rather than a majority of chains and boutiques.

Meeting for Businesses and Institutions

Representatives of Wellesley businesses and educational institutions were invited to an early morning weekday meeting to discuss their concerns. An abbreviated version of the powerpoint presentation was given and then the participants were invited to give their views on how businesses, institutions, and the Town could work together better on issues of mutual concern. The major goal that emerged from the discussion was the evergreen issue of improving communication. Creating a systematic way to exchange information about upcoming changes or concerns was the most important goal.

Stakeholder Interviews

A series of interviews with precinct representatives on the Plan’s Steering Committee helped to identify the ingredients that make up the Town’s

character as well as—in some cases—the individual precincts themselves. Again, there was consistency among those interviewed regarding the fact of Wellesley as a family- and school-oriented, neighborhood-based community that, in the words of one precinct representative, is a “residential village” mixing homes, businesses, and access to public transportation.

At the same time, the interviews almost uniformly pointed out the difficulties associated with an increase in the size of homes being built—“mansionization”—and their economic and physical impact on Town character.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Like many communities, Wellesley is seeking to balance important values embedded in three different arenas: the Town as a whole, the neighborhood, and the interests of individual property owners. The Goals, Objectives, and Policies of this plan reflect a balance of those interests that in some ways goes beyond the priorities and preferences expressed by residents.

Two examples illustrate this. Affordable housing received support but was not seen as a priority issue by most respondents to the survey or participants in the public workshops. Nonetheless, affordable housing creation is an important issue for the Town as a whole, which may be why Town officials gave it much higher importance than residents in the survey. A successful approach to creating affordable housing will help the Town meet some of its other goals, such as preserving neighborhood character. Another example is the question of how new construction in established neighborhoods changes their character. This has been an issue of intense interest to Wellesley residents for quite some time, but attempts to pass zoning

amendments to constrain the size of new houses have failed repeatedly in Town Meeting. Many people are still very concerned about it, so the Town may have to try other approaches to balance neighborhood character with individual property rights.

As was reinforced in follow-up interviews, many of these items were couched in the context of maintaining Wellesley’s “character”—whether the issue was housing and the dangers of building out of scale; economic development and the need to maintain community-focused retail;

transportation and the impact of traffic on major Town arterials; or open space and the desire to enhance the major natural assets that are already a signature of Wellesley’s character. Housing received particular attention as the focus turned to Wellesley’s desire—and ability—to support housing that is affordable and housing that serves diverse populations, including empty nesters and first-time buyers. The set of goals, objectives, and policy recommendations listed below represent a distillation of the ideas and priorities, put forth by survey respondents, workshop participants, and interviewees.

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS
Land Use		
Strengthen Town zoning regulations and design guidelines, and their enforcement, to ensure continuity of Town character and quality of life.	Establish common ground among property owners, builders, and Town government to ensure consensus agreement.	Eliminate zoning provisions that are barriers to creation of mixed use and diversified housing in commercial districts. Create on-going design and regulatory marketing and information strategy to educate stakeholders on land use issues related to Town character.
Improve the appearance of Town gateways that need enhancement.	Distinguish Wellesley’s identity at the major entrance corridors to Town .	Focus on enhancements to the Lower Falls gateway and creating a plan for the Natick Line area.
Promote a mixture of land uses, including diverse types of residences, in commercial areas.	Identify town landmarks for protection and preservation.	Create guidelines for mixed-use land uses and pursue projects appropriate for Wellesley.
Natural and Cultural Resources		
Restore, preserve, and enhance open space and sensitive natural resources for habitat protection and enrichment of community character.	Identify town landmarks for protection and preservation.	Manage Morses Pond to avoid eutrophication and to maintain its use as a swimming destination. Apply appropriate Best Management Practices to ensure preservation of natural resources.

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS
Open Space and Recreation		
Ensure continuation of Wellesley's recreational facilities as major community assets.	Retain Moses Pond as recreational asset.	Preserve a balance between active and passive recreation.
Continue expansion of the trail system to link open space to town destinations.	Identify opportunities for new trails and enhancement of existing trails.	Support volunteer trail creation and enhancement.
Housing		
Maintain the primarily single-family character of Wellesley's housing stock.	Preserve the existing housing type on neighborhood streets of single family homes.	Focus additional multifamily housing in mixed-use areas or arterial roads.
Maintain the physical form of Wellesley's residential neighborhoods by balancing community standards with individual interests.	Define neighborhood character through a set of neighborhood character studies in collaboration with residents to identify the distinctive physical characteristics of each neighborhood.	Explore new ways to maintain neighborhood character such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts, form-based zoning, advisory design guidelines, zoning changes, and other options ranging from advisory to regulatory.
Promote the creation of housing units other than single family homes to provide housing options for people across a range of income, age, family size, and needs, while complementing Town character.	Work towards creating town house, condominium, and rental units in commercial districts and other appropriate locations.	Encourage developers to create mixed-use projects and residential projects that diversify the housing stock in Wellesley and provide residential options for elderly and young family households.
Promote the creation of a moderate number of housing units permanently affordable to households with incomes at 80% or below the area median income.	Adopt a plan with numerical targets to meet the Chapter 40B goal of ten percent affordable units.	Support the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation and seek developers who will develop mixed-income housing that meets the Town's needs and complements Town character.
Economic Development		
Maintain a diverse array of independent businesses.	Maintain businesses that serve the daily needs of residents.	Promote and support small business development to serve local residents.
Create mixed-use environments in commercial areas.	Leverage development and redevelopment opportunities to support both retailers and town housing goals.	Promote mixed-use development and redevelopment at key sites in commercial areas.

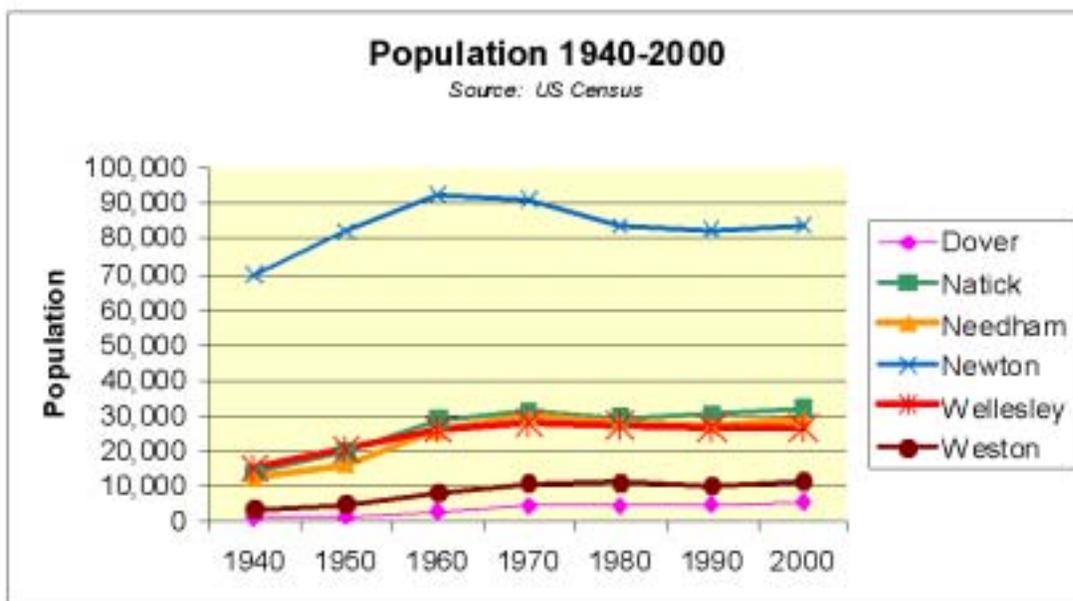
GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS
Economic Development (continued)		
Fund an economic development specialist to work more closely with business and institutional property owners.	Ensure dedicated attention to commercial areas and other nonresidential development.	Provide funding for an economic development half-time position.
Create a system of regular communication among Town government, the business community, and local institutions.	Leverage opportunities for new public-private-institutional partnerships to provide mutual benefits to all stakeholders.	Support use of staff and committee time to create and sustain Town-Business-Institution communication links and partnership strategies.
Support and enhance the build-out potential of non-residential property.	Increase tax revenue from non-residential property.	Consider increasing density in existing nonresidential areas based on a study of potential benefits and adverse impacts.
Transportation and Circulation		
Manage traffic to enhance traffic flow on Washington Street and other high-traffic roads.	Reduce the impact of local or through-traffic on local road network.	Support traffic calming programs.
Create intra-town routes as alternatives to vehicular traffic.	<p>Increase the safety of and links in existing pedestrian network.</p> <p>Create a town-wide pedestrian/bicycle plan.</p> <p>Explore shared use of shuttles as part of an intra-town transit system.</p>	Include pedestrian and bicycle needs in all traffic and transportation improvement studies and projects.
Manage parking to support commercial districts.	Enhance customer access and traffic flow.	Identify opportunities for new structured parking and shared parking near commercial areas.
Seek improvement of traffic flow on regional routes.	Reduce the rate of increase of traffic congestion.	Work with state and neighboring towns to identify further opportunities for improvement of through-traffic flow.
Community Services and Facilities		
Maintain school quality.	Provide an excellent education for Town young people.	Continue supporting the Town's strong school department.
Create a ten-year plan to fix schools and other public buildings and to allow for flexible uses.	Accommodate the changing needs of the Town, including use of schools as neighborhood community centers.	Explore innovative use of school facilities for after school activities and other community needs.

3 Population and Land Use Trends

Wellesley is a stable community that is barely growing. The challenges that the Town faces are not the result of population growth in itself. However, there may be changes in the demographic composition of this generally stable population, such as increases or decreases in the number of school children or elderly persons, that the Town should consider in planning for the future. Similarly, the fundamental land use decisions about the Town were made many decades ago and are not likely to change. It will remain predominantly residential and most of the land will be occupied by single-family homes. Of course, construction continues in various forms, as it does in almost all communities, and residents are often very sensitive to the change that a relatively small amount of construction activity can bring to an established neighborhood.

A. POPULATION

Like many suburban towns, Wellesley grew rapidly during the generation after World War II. The Town's population increased by 85% between 1940 and 1970. From its peak population in 1970 of 28,051, the Town's population has declined by 5% but seems to be stabilizing around 25,000. During the 1990s the Town experienced a net loss of two persons from 26,615 to 26,613. This population trend is not unusual and can also be seen in Wellesley's neighboring towns. At the time of the census, approximately forty percent of Wellesley residents had moved to Town within the last five years. The overall stability of the total population number, therefore, does not mean that people are not moving in and out of Wellesley all the time.



POPULATION—WHO ARE WE?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Wellesley's population has stabilized between 26,000 and 27,000 since 1980.

- Population decreased 5% from 1970 (28,051) to 2000.
- While Wellesley population decreased by two persons from 1990 to 2000, Norfolk County grew 5.5%

Compared to the population of Norfolk County, Wellesley

- has a larger proportion of residents under 19 years old
- has a slightly smaller proportion 65 and over
- has a smaller proportion of residents between 20 and 34 years old
- has a smaller proportion of non-family and single person households
- has a slightly younger median age
- has a median household income that is nearly double that of the county

Total Population (2000): 26,613 (vs. 26,615 in 1990)

Age Composition

- 25.1% under 18 years old
- 15.2 % 20 – 34 years old
- 30.6% 35-54 years old
- 14% 65 years and over

Total Number of Households (2000): 8,594 households (vs. 8,472 in 1990)

- 76.1% family households (persons related by blood or marriage)
- 39.2% of total are families with own children under 18
- 23.9% of total are non-family households
- 20.7% of total are single person households
- 40.5% of households include people under 18 years
- 28.3% of households include people 65 years and over
- 12.9% of the population does not live in households but in group quarters such as educational institutions
- Increase of 122 households 1990-2000 despite no population growth

Racial/Ethnic Composition (race alone or in combination)

- 90% white
- 1.6% African American
- 6.4% Asian
- 1.4% Two or more races
- 2.3% Hispanic/Latino (of any race)

Language spoken at home

- 14.2% speak a language other than English
- 3.4% percent speak English less than "very well"

Disability

- 4.6% of people 5-20 years
- 6.4% of people 21-64 years
- 21.8% of people 65 years and over

Income (1999)

- \$113,686 median household income
- \$134,769 median family income
- 56% of households have income of \$100,000-plus
- 15.8% of households have income below \$35,000

- 2.4% of families have incomes below poverty level
- 3.8% of the individuals are in households with incomes below poverty level

Educational Attainment

- 75.7% of the population over 25 years old has a Bachelor's or advanced degree

Public school population

- 87.3% white; 6.3% Asian; 3.9% African American; 2.2% Hispanic
- 3.2% eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 1.2% with limited English proficiency; 14.2% enrolled in special education classes

Sources: US Census 2000; Warren Group; MAPC

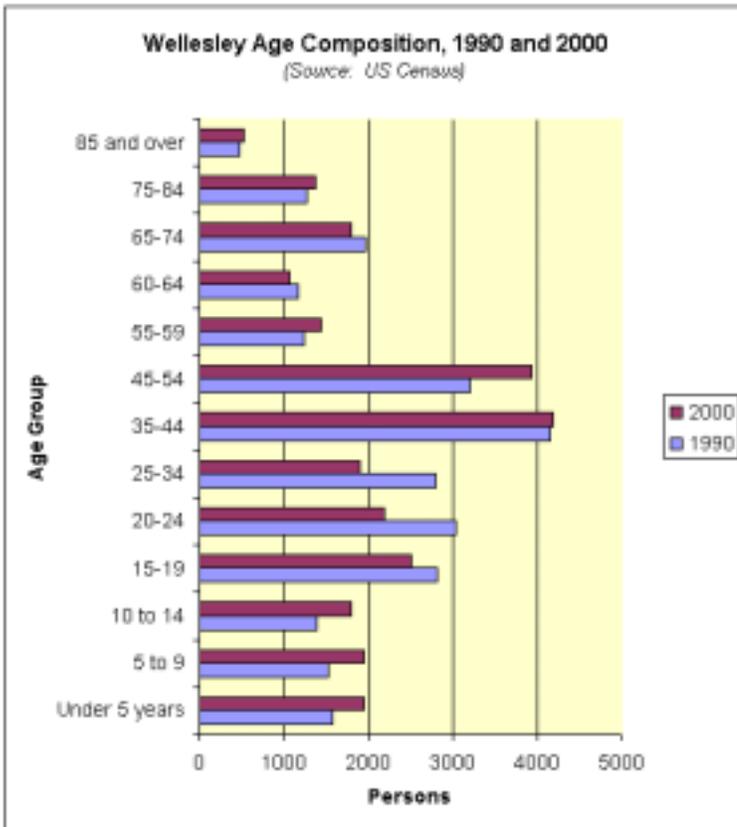
Household and Age Composition

Although Wellesley's total population declined slightly over the course of the 1990s, the number of households increased by 122 or 1% to a total of 8,594. This reflects the long-term national trend towards fewer people in each household. In 2000, 76 percent of the households were family households (related by blood or marriage, but not necessarily with children) and 21 percent were single person households. The remainder lived in households with nonrelatives or in group quarters such as college dormitories. (Almost 13% of the Town's population in 2000 was in group quarters, reflecting the presence of residential schools and colleges.) The average number of people per household was 2.7, while the average size of family households was 3.1.

Although Wellesley continues to be a predominantly family-oriented town, it also has significant numbers of empty-nesters and elderly persons. Households including children under

18 accounted for 41% of all households and 89 percent of these households have two parents present (the statewide figure is 76 percent). Twenty-eight percent of households included someone 65 or older—a larger percentage than Norfolk County, the MetroWest Region, or the state as a whole. Wellesley's median age in 2000 was 37.6, slightly younger than Norfolk County (38.1).

An examination of the Town's age composition in 1990 and 2000 suggests several trends. The age data show the expected shift upwards of the large baby-boom generation. However, they have brought with them the baby boom "echo" which shows up in greater numbers of children to age 14. During the 1990s, the under-five population grew 25% and the age 5 to 9 populations grew 27%. The number of households with members age 65 and over dropped by one percent but the number of families with children under the age of 18 increased by more than 20 percent. The small-



er number of persons in the older age categories suggests that Wellesley seniors are leaving town. The Town has a much smaller population of 20-34 year olds than the state as a whole, and it has experienced a greater decline in this group since 1990, perhaps reflecting the very high cost of housing in Wellesley.

Racial composition

Over the course of the 1990s, Wellesley's population became slightly more diverse. From a 94% white population in 1990, the town in 2000 had a white population of 90%. The difference is primarily due to an increase in the Asian population from 3.9% of the total in 1990 to 6.4% in 2000; Black or African American residents represented 1.6% in 2000, up slightly from 1.5% in 1990.

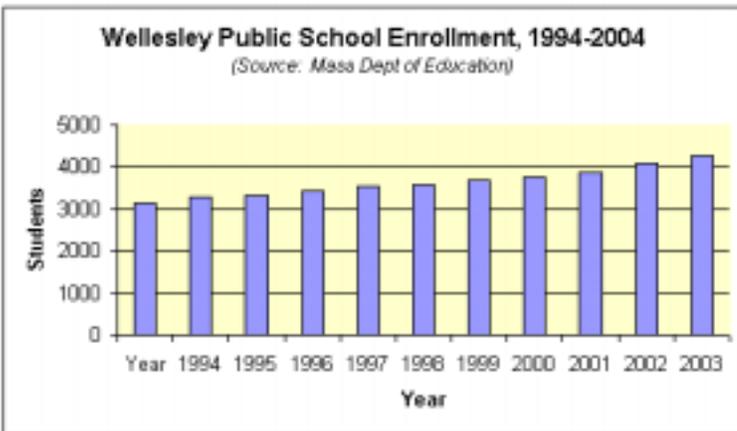
School population

Wellesley's public elementary and high school enrollment totals 4,252 for the school year 2003-2004. Approximately 85% of the school-aged children attend the public schools. Since the 1994 enrollment of 3,141, public school enrollment has been increasing approximately 3.5% annually. In the 2003-2004 academic year, 3.2% of the students were low-income.

Income profile

Wellesley's median household income of \$113,686, as reported in the 2000 census, is 44% higher than Norfolk County's median of \$63,432 and 55% higher than the statewide median of \$50,502. The Town's median family income of \$134,769 is the fifth highest in the state.

Over half of Wellesley's households have incomes of \$100,000 or more. At the same time, 16% of the Town's households have incomes between \$35,000 and \$50,000. Median family income was even higher at



\$134,769. The number of families below the poverty level total 158, or 2.4%, compared to 2.9% for Norfolk County and 6.4% for Massachusetts. The number of individuals in households with incomes below the poverty level total 3.7%, compared to 4.6% for Norfolk County and 9.3% for Massachusetts.

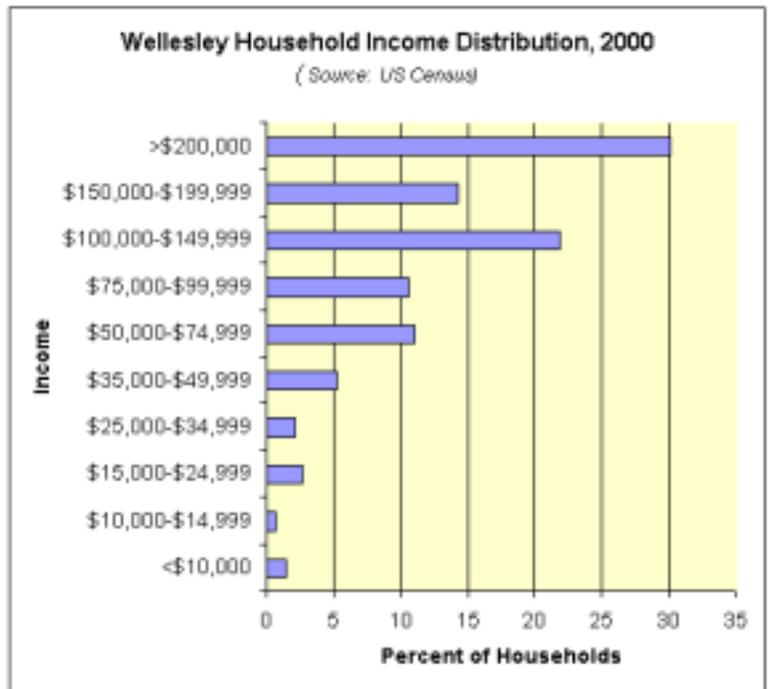
Population Projections

Projections of future population by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Massachusetts Institute of Economic and Social Research (MISER), differ significantly. According to MAPC, Wellesley will experience a 2% decline between 2000 and 2005, followed by an average annual growth of .6% per year over the following 20 years, for a population of 29,466 by 2025. MAPC projects a 10.7% increase in population between the 2000 base year and 2025. Most of that increase is expected between 2010 and 2020. The reason for a nearly 9 percent increase between 2010 and 2020 is not self-evident. In stark contrast, the MISER projection for Wellesley up to 2020 foresees a continuing trend of population decline. Perhaps the lesson of these differing projections is that relatively small changes in small populations in nearly built-out communities are very difficult to predict.

2000 COMPARATIVE INCOME DISTRIBUTION:
WELLESLEY, NORFOLK COUNTY AND MASSACHUSETTS

<i>Income Categories</i>	<i>Wellesley % of households</i>	<i>County % of households</i>	<i>State % of households</i>
<\$10,000	1.4	5.6	8.8
\$10,000-\$14,999	.7	3.9	5.6
\$15,000-\$24,999	2.7	7.6	10.2
\$25,000-\$34,999	2.1	8.5	10.4
\$35,000-\$49,999	5.2	12.8	14.5
\$50,000-\$74,999	11.0	20.1	20.1
\$75,000-\$99,999	10.6	15.1	12.8
\$100,000-\$149,999	21.8	15.0	10.9
\$150,000-\$199,999	14.3	5.3	3.3
>\$200,000	30.1	6.1	3.5

Source: US Census 2000



POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR WELLESLEY

	<i>2000*</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2025</i>
MAPC Projection	26,613	26,707	29,094	29,466
MISER Projection	26,613	26,002	24,291	N/A

Source: US Census 2000

MAPC = Metropolitan Area Planning Commission;

MISER =Massachusetts Institute of Economic and Social Research

B. EXISTING LAND USE

Over half of Wellesley’s land is used for residential purposes. Another 36% is in various tax-exempt land use categories, including churches, nonprofits, schools and colleges, and government-owned property. Commercial and industrial

LAND USE DISTRIBUTION, 2004

Residential Buildings	3152.27
• developable or potentially developable residential land	182.55
• undevelopable residential land	92.79
Commercial/industrial with buildings	245.61
• developable or potentially developable comm/indust land	0.75
• undevelopable comm/indust land	0.21
Tax exempt land	2043.56
TOTAL	5717.74

Source: Assessor’s Data

land uses occupy less than 5% of the land. A few mixed-use properties are included in these categories, but they represent the fundamental distribution of land uses in Wellesley. Land use, of course, is not the same thing as zoning and, like all communities, Wellesley has some properties

whose use does not conform to zoning. For the most part, however, the overall distribution of land uses throughout the town is not likely to change significantly. Significant new development to Wellesley could occur in specific places, but the likelihood of such change is relatively remote, with few exceptions:

- **Educational land uses.** If the colleges or Dana Hall were ever to sell off large areas of land, they would have to be rezoned for noneducational uses before a private owner could develop them. As a state-owned property, Mass Bay Community College is probably the most likely to be considered for land sales.
- **Country Club.** Unlike the educational institutions, the country club is zoned for residential use. There is no reason to believe that the land will not continue as a golf

course and country club, it is never impossible for a club to have financial difficulties. The Town may wish to put some precautionary measures in place.

- **Mixed Uses.** Another kind of land use change is much more likely to occur. This is the intensification of mixed uses in the commercial districts of Wellesley. Although there are some mixed-use buildings in Wellesley today, many of the community’s goals for change focus attention on promoting residential uses along with retail and services in Wellesley’s commercial districts.

Zoning

Wellesley has a somewhat complex zoning system that reflects its relatively built-out character. Six single-family residential districts account for most of the land area and are differentiated by minimum lot sizes ranging from 10,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet. There are five residential districts that allow town house or multifamily residential use, but, with the exception of the General Residence (GR) district, which allows for two-family and townhouse buildings, and the Limited Residence district, all the multifamily districts are quite small and give the impression that they were intended to accommodate a few specific and known projects. Four zoning districts cover commercial development (including offices) and two allow industrial uses. Three educational districts cover lands owned by Wellesley College, Dana Hall School, Babson College, and Mass Bay Community College. These district differ in that the Educational A allows parking lots in addition to the residential, academic, and dormitory buildings allowed in the Educational District and Educational B adds recreational facilities to the uses allowed in the other educational districts.

LAND AREA IN ZONING DISTRICTS

Zones	Acres
Administrative and professional	62.07
Business	58.01
Business A	48.99
Conservation	389.74
Educational	549.13
Educational A	44.08
Educational B	27.15
General Residence	78.66
Industrial	21
Industrial A	17.95
Limited Apartment	7.23
Limited Business	10.81
Limited Residential	8.37
Lower Falls Village Commercial District	8.93
Multi-Family	6.05
Single Residence District 10	1551.54
Single Residence District 15	654.32
Single Residence District 20	1517.89
Single Residence District 30	228.32
Single Residence District 40	661.29
Single Residence A	6.01
Townhouse	4.12
Transportation	58.72
Total	6020.38

Source: Wellesley Planning Department

Commercial districts include an office park zoning district, which was designed for the office parks on Route 128, and six business districts, including one focused on Lower Falls and one on Wellesley Square.

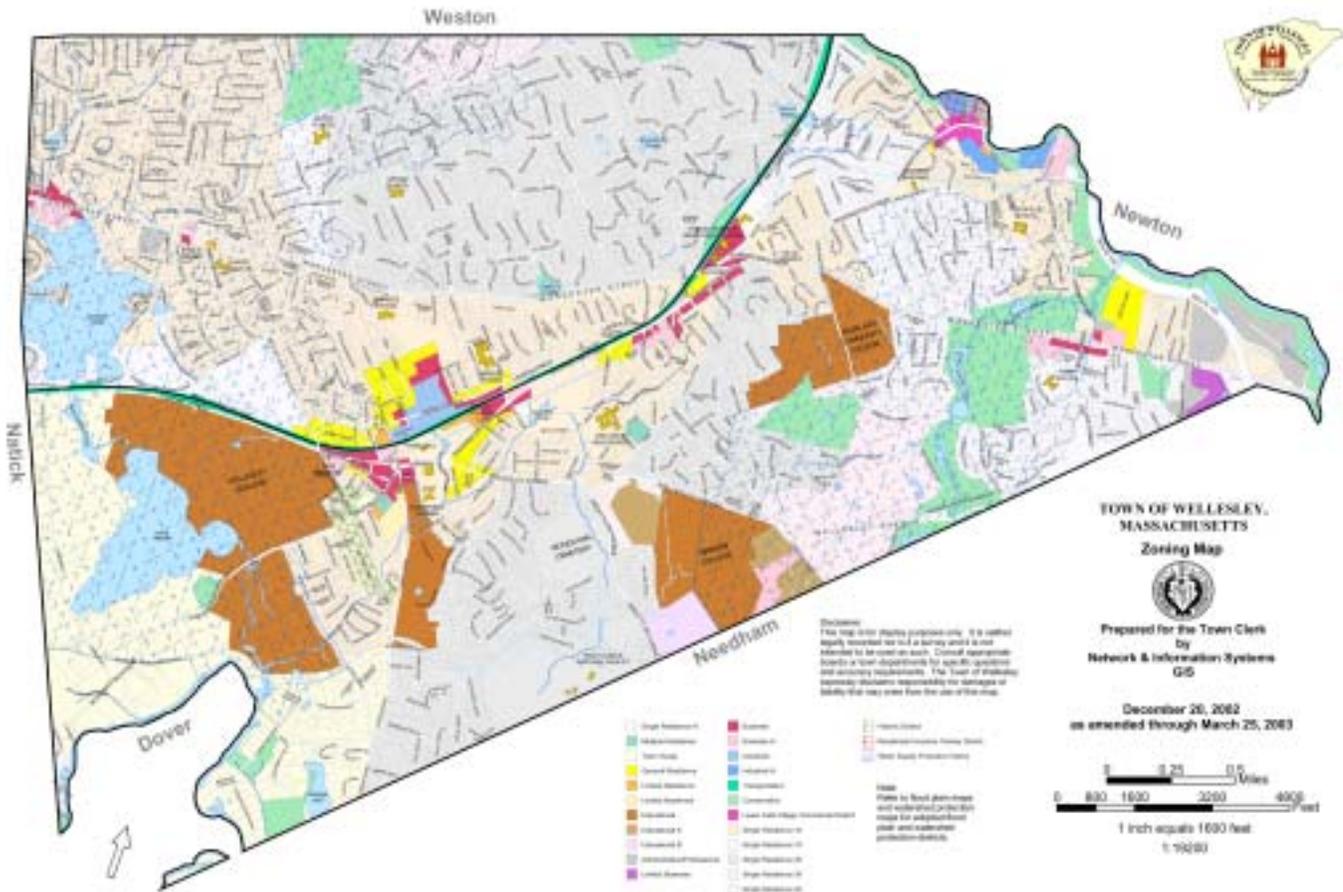
Industrial districts are located at Linden Street, in the back parcels behind the Lower Falls frontage on Washington Street, and in the back parcels behind Walnut Street frontage north of Cedar Street. Despite the “industrial” zoning, the land

uses on these parcels are office or commercial. Finally, a Transportation District covers the commuter rail right of way and train platforms.

Several overlay districts protect sensitive resources in Wellesley: Flood Plain and Watershed Protection District; Conservation District; Historic District; and Water Supply Protection District. These overlay districts constrain uses in order to protect specific environmental or cultural resources. In addition, the Residential Incentive Overlay District was intended to promote residential use on the Grossman’s site and adjacent parcels on the Charles River.

Site plan approval is required for projects that meet certain size thresholds, excluding single family and two-family homes. Major Construction Projects include new construction of over 2,500 square feet gross floor area or an increase by 50% or more to result in a gross floor area of at least 2,500 square feet; grading or vegetation removal over 5,000 square feet or more; activities in flood plain or watershed protection and water supply protection districts. These projects go to Town boards for review including the Design Review Board. Minor Construction Projects are below the size of Major Projects but involve exterior changes requiring a building permit and/or changes to parking. Minor Projects require only Design Review. A Project of Significant Impact is one with at least 10,000 square feet of new construction or, if there is 15,000 square feet or more altered, renovated or replacement floor area for a change of use in a building of at least 15,000 square feet. Projects of Significant Impact require a special Use Permit, Site Plan Review, and Design Review.

The Zoning Board of Appeals is the Special Permit Granting Authority in Wellesley. Design Review is required for all façade renovations, new construction, and new signs, with the exception of single and two-family houses.



Development Trends

Single family residential development in Wellesley is limited to very rare small subdivisions when an estate or institutional property is sold, infill on a few buildable vacant lots, and tear-down and replacement construction, which is by far the most common. Commercial development is also not very common, but there are redevelopment opportunities in a number of the Town's commercial districts, particularly those areas that have been built to a more suburban, car-oriented character. The current development project for the Linden Street commercial district is an example of new development that the Town actively planned for in its last Comprehensive Plan.

In this Comprehensive Plan, the land use issues reflect the development trends. Tear-downs and replacement houses, how to provide more variety of housing types without adversely affecting the character of single family neighborhoods, how to provide more affordable housing, and how to make the car-oriented commercial districts more appealing and attractive for redevelopment will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

4 Housing and Residential Character

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICIES
<p>Maintain the primarily single family character of Wellesley's housing stock.</p>	<p>Preserve existing character on single family neighborhood streets.</p>	<p>Focus any additional multifamily housing in mixed-use areas or arterial roads.</p>
<p>Maintain the physical form of Wellesley's residential neighborhoods by balancing community standards with individual interests.</p>	<p>Define neighborhood character through a set of neighborhood character studies in collaboration with residents to identify the distinctive physical characteristics of each neighborhood.</p>	<p>Explore new ways to maintain neighborhood character such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts, form-based zoning, advisory design guidelines, zoning changes, and other options ranging from advisory to regulatory.</p>
<p>Promote the creation of housing units other than single family homes to provide housing options for people across a range of income, age, family size and needs while complementing town character.</p>	<p>Work towards creating town house, condominium, and rental units in commercial districts and other appropriate locations.</p>	<p>Encourage developers to create mixed-use projects and residential projects that diversify the housing stock in Wellesley and provide residential options for elderly and young family households.</p>
<p>Promote the creation of a moderate number of housing units permanently affordable to households with incomes at 80% or below the area median income.</p>	<p>Adopt a plan with numerical targets to meet the Chapter 40B goal of ten percent affordable units.</p>	<p>Support the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation and seek developers who will develop mixed-income housing that meets the Town's needs and complements Town character.</p>



Findings

- Wellesley is a mature residential community with relatively little open land available for development.
- Wellesley has a large number of small households in large homes: 53% of households have one or two people and 51% of homes have 8 or more rooms.
- Most new housing units are created through redevelopment of previously developed sites.
- Replacement houses are 2.5 to 3 times bigger on average than the “tear-downs” they replace.
- The median price of a single family house has increased almost 75% in the last five years.

- A limited number of permanently affordable housing units have been created since the Town first adopted an affordable housing policy in 1989.
- The Town needs to add approximately 500 deed-restricted affordable housing units in order to meet the state affordable housing goal of 10% of year-round housing.

Key Challenges

- Efforts to manage the mansionization trend have not been successful and there is resistance to establishing more dimensional constraints on building.
- Achieving more diversified housing types and more affordable housing will require active leadership and commitment from the town.



HOUSING FACTS—HOW DO WE LIVE?

Total Number of Housing Units (2000): 8,861

- 74.7% single family owner-occupied homes
- 5.1% of units in buildings with 2-4 units
- Over 92% of residential land is occupied by single-family housing.

Housing Construction Trends

- Annual average of 34 new single family homes 1996-2003
- 201 demolitions 1999-2003 and 189 replacement houses

Age of Housing

- 76.5% of the residential buildings were built before 1960
- 15.9% were built between 1960 and 1979
- 7.3% were built between 1980 and March 2000

Length of Time in Current Residence (2000)

- 59% of the population lived in the same house in 1995 as in 2000, the same as in the 1985-2000 period
- 41% lived in a different house in 1995 (and a quarter of them lived in Norfolk county - some possibly in Wellesley)

Ownership and Rental Housing (2000)

- 83.1% of housing units are owner-occupied
- 16.9% of housing units are renter-occupied

Affordability

- 2003 median single family home sales price: \$750,000
- 2003 maximum home price affordable to a Wellesley median income household: \$593,007
- 2003 maximum home price affordable to first time homebuyer: \$397,470
- 2000 median gross monthly rent: \$1,063
- 20.9 percent of owners pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing
- 23.6 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing
- As of March 2004, 4.6% percent of housing units are considered affordable by the state for the purposes of Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Most Wellesley residents are home-owners and live in single-family houses
- Fewer than 17% are renters.
- Approximately two out of five Wellesley residents have moved to Town within the last five years.

Housing is very expensive:

- Median housing sales prices for single-family homes increased 18.3% (adjusted for inflation) between 2000 and 2003.

Fewer new housing units are being created than in previous years:

- Annual construction of new housing units has declined from an average of 69 in the 1970s to 36 in 2002.

MEDIAN HOUSING SALES PRICES

Year	1-Family \$	Condo \$
2003	750,000	448,750
2002	721,250	445,000
2001	699,000	507,000
2000	589,000	390,000
1999	517,500	335,000
1998	462,000	375,000
1997	435,000	330,000
1996	390,000	272,500
1995	385,000	300,000
1994	365,000	264,750
1993	327,000	255,000
1992	310,000	210,000
1991	285,000	162,500
1990	311,000	245,000

Source: The Warren Group

Sources: Census 2000; Warren Group; MAPC; Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2004

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

The fundamentally residential character of Wellesley has been established for many decades and is not anticipated to change. The Town's housing is composed predominantly of single family homes that are owner-occupied, well-maintained, and expensive. Of Wellesley's 10.49 square miles, 69% is zoned residential, and of that total, over 92% of the land is occupied by single-family homes. While the number of housing units grew substantially between 1940 and 1960, the rate of new housing creation has declined in every decade since. By the time of the 2000 census, the town's 8,861 housing units (of which 72 are seasonal units) represented an increase of only 97, or just over 1% more units than in 1990. Although the town continues to add new housing units even as its population has stabilized, by any measure, Wellesley is a very slow-growing community.

people, yet 51 percent of the homes contain 8 or more rooms. A similar trend is occurring in many suburban communities—it reflects the aging of the population—but Wellesley's disparity of small households in large homes is striking. A generational turnover of housing stock appears to have begun in Wellesley.

Number and type of housing units

Data on the number and type of housing units are available from two sources, the 2000 census and the Town Assessor. The census data are estimated from a sample and the assessor does not provide full data on the number of units in multi-family structures because the primary focus of assessment is the property, not the number of units. Together, however, they provide a snapshot of housing in Wellesley. Three quarters of the nearly 8,900 Wellesley housing units enumerated in the 2000 Census were single family owner-occupied homes. A little over five percent, or 466, were in 2-4 unit structures.

Approximately eighty-five percent of Wellesley housing units are single family homes, the vast majority of which are owner-occupied. There are 166 two- and three-family buildings, accounting for 353 housing units. If each of these buildings were owner-occupied, the two- and three-family buildings would account for 188 rental units. A

WELLESLEY HOUSING UNITS

Year	Housing Units	% Change
1940	3,905	--
1950	5,199	33.1
1960	6,930	33.3
1970	7,785	12.3
1980	8,389	7.8
1990	8,764	4.4
2000	8,861	1.0

Source: US Census

This does not mean that Wellesley has no housing issues. As a community becomes more built out, residents in established neighborhoods often become more sensitive to the impact of new construction on the few remaining open parcels or subdividable parcels and to the impact of the replacement of older houses by new, larger houses. In a climate of very high housing prices, the renovation of the housing stock has had the effect of reducing income diversity because there are fewer smaller houses left and their prices reflect their value as “tear-downs” rather than as less-expensive housing.

Changing population dynamics also pose some housing-related questions. Fifty-three percent of all Wellesley households consist of just one or two

HOUSING STOCK

	Structures	Units
Single family	7231	7231
Two-family	143	284
Three-family	23	69
4 to 8 unit buildings	18	*78-102
8+ unit buildings	16	455
Condominium units	34	372
		*8489-8513

* insufficient data on number of units in 4-8 unit bldgs

Source: 2004 Assessor's Data

small number of apartment buildings, including buildings with Housing Authority and subsidized units, contain approximately 450 rental apartments. Finally, there are 372 condominiums.

Housing Tenure

Based on the estimates above, there are fewer than 700 housing units in Wellesley that are consistently managed for rental income. This is less than half the number of renter-occupied units recorded in the 2000 census. Most of the additional units are single family homes and condominiums whose owners have rented their homes while they are temporarily away.

HOUSING TENURE 2000 (OCCUPIED UNITS)

Tenure	Number	Percent
Owner-occupied	7,140	83
Renter-occupied	1,454	17

Source: US Census 2000

Age of housing

The well-established character of Wellesley's residential neighborhoods is evident in the age of the housing stock. Over three-quarters of Wellesley's residential buildings were built before 1960. Wellesley participated in the post-World War II suburban building boom with over a third of Wellesley's housing built in the twenty years between 1940 and 1959. From that peak period of housing construction, the numbers of new units created in each subsequent 20-year period has declined. About 16% of Wellesley's current housing was built between 1960 and 1979 and 7.6% between 1980 and March 2000. From an average of 69 new units in the 1970s, annual construction has declined to 36 in 2002, or an average of 34 new single family homes in the period 1996-2003. More than two-thirds of the new housing units created during the 1990s replaced existing units. As noted earlier, between 1990 and 2000 there was a net increase of only 97 housing units in Wellesley.

AGE OF HOUSING STOCK: WELLESLEY AND NORFOLK COUNTY

Year Built	Wellesley (Number)	Wellesley (Percent)	Norfolk County (Percent)
1990-2000	318	3.7%	8.0%
1980-1989	335	3.9%	10.4%
1970-1979	677	7.9%	13.0%
1960-1969	688	8.0%	13.5%
1940-1959	2,989	34.8%	24.6%
1939 or before	3,587	41.7%	30.5%

Source: US Census

Residential Buildout Capacity

In 2000, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, through the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, prepared a buildout study for Wellesley. A build out study analyzes the amount of development that would be possible under existing zoning if every developable parcel in the town were to be built out under by-right zoning. The study found that there were 647 acres of developable land in Wellesley with the potential for 2,209 residential units. However, 1,759 of those "housing units" would be academic housing in the Educational zoning districts. The number of non-academic housing units is much smaller, 450 in total, of which only 218 would be single family homes. The remainder would be apartments permitted in the Central



Downtown district. This exercise illustrates the extent to which Wellesley is nearing residential buildout. Of course, the analysis does not take into account potential Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit projects, which can have more units than permitted by zoning. Communities rarely reach full buildout and there are always opportunities for redevelopment.

Wellesley’s buildout data simply show that, absent significant ownership or zoning changes in the Education zoning district, the Town’s residential construction activity will be focused on redevelopment and small infill projects for single family homes and, potentially, townhouse, condo, or rental apartment development in mixed-use projects in commercial areas or when unusual redevelopment opportunities become available, such as the planned closing of St. James parish church.

The Wellesley Planning Department has also prepared a different kind of buildout exercise which calculated the amount of land on which property owners could expand existing houses to the maximum lot coverage and setbacks allowed in zoning. This buildout was not aimed at estimating the number of housing units that could be built by-right under current zoning, but rather at estimating the potential for additional impervious surfaces and change in private open spaces. The analysis showed that a total of 426 additional acres of land could theoretically be covered by buildings if every lot were built out to the maximum allowed coverage.

Residential Taxes

As residential real estate values have risen in recent years, the average real estate tax bill has

AVERAGE SINGLE-FAMILY TAX BILLS FOR WELLESLEY AND ITS NEIGHBORS (FY 2004)

Community	Average Single-Family Tax Bill
Dover	\$8,412
Natick	\$4,108
Needham	\$5,202
Newton	\$6,831
Wellesley	\$7,320
Weston	\$11,238

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

also been increasing. The Town’s 2004 tax rate of \$8.56 produced an average single-family tax bill of \$7,320, making it the 11th highest in the Commonwealth, higher than most of its neighbors but similar to towns in its general income group such as Wayland and Brookline. Neighboring Weston ranked number one, at \$11,238.

B. TRENDS IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Rate of Residential Development

CREATION OF NEW HOUSING

Because there is so little unbuilt land in Wellesley, most new housing results from redevelopment of existing lots and occasional, small subdivisions. While building permits for single

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS

Year	Single Family	Multi-Family (units)
2003	59	0
2002	36	0
2001	48	0
2000	36	0
1999	20	0
1998	21	5
1997	24	0
1996	30	0
Average	34	0.6

Source: US Census Bureau

family houses averaged 34 from 1996 to 2003, the number of permits has been rising in recent years. By September 2004, the building inspector reported a 15-year high: 95 units permitted, of which 42 were single family homes (fewer than in 2003) and 52 were multifamily units produced under a Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit. Over the course of the 1990s, there were 8 subdivisions in Wellesley with an average of 4 units.

With the exception of a four-unit subdivision on 24 acres of estate land that was accompanied by a conservation restriction, none of the subdivisions were on more than 3 acres of land.





Many new housing units created in Wellesley result from redevelopment—more popularly known as “tear-downs.” Smaller houses built in earlier decades—sound, but with functional and stylistic obsolescence—have become less valuable than the land they occupy and purchasers often want a bigger house. Both developers and individual purchasers participate in the teardown phenomenon. Between 1999 and September 2004, there were 201 demolitions (including several nonresidential structures) with 189 replacement houses in Wellesley. As the map on page 32 indicates, the demolitions were scattered throughout the Town, with clusters in proximity to Hundreds Road and to Cliff Road. As of November 2004, based on completed permits as well as expected permit applications, the assessor's department expected at least 65 demolitions in 2004.

Replacement houses and community character

Larger replacement houses typically take the place of demolished houses. A comparison of the average size of the old houses with the average size of the new houses in the 1990-2003 period shows that the new houses are two and a half to three times larger, on average, than the houses they replace. Of course, in individual cases, the new house may be many times larger than the old one, for example, a 6,207 sf house that replaced a 460 sf house in 2001.

INCREASE IN AVERAGE TOTAL LIVING AREA OF REPLACEMENT HOUSES (IN SF)

<i>Year of Demo</i>	<i>Old House</i>	<i>New House</i>	<i>Multiplier</i>
1999	1492	4591	3.1
2000	1887	4614	2.4
2001	1507	4978	3.3
2002	1650	4190	2.5
2003	1751	4253	2.4
2004*	1537	3982	2.6

*Sample of completed demolitions and replacements.

Source: Wellesley Assessors Dept

DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTIAL DEMOLITIONS, 1999-2003

<i>Lot Size</i>	<i>Number of demolitions</i>	<i>% of total sample</i>
under 10,000 sf	6	5.1%
over 10,000 to 15,000 sf	39	33.3%
over 15,000 to 20,000 sf	18	15.4%
over 20,000 to 30,000 sf	31	26.5%
over 30,000 to 40,000 sf	11	9.4%
over 40,000 sf	12	10.3%
TOTAL	117	100.0%

Many Wellesley residents are concerned about the impact of teardowns and large replacement houses on the character of streets and neighborhoods.



Unlike communities where the majority of single family homes are on lots of one acre or more, large houses in Wellesley can have an immediate visual impact in neighborhoods with smaller lot sizes and modest setback requirements. Older capes and ranches are the prime candidates for teardowns and many are sited on smaller lots. An analysis of 117 residential demolitions in the 1999-2003 period

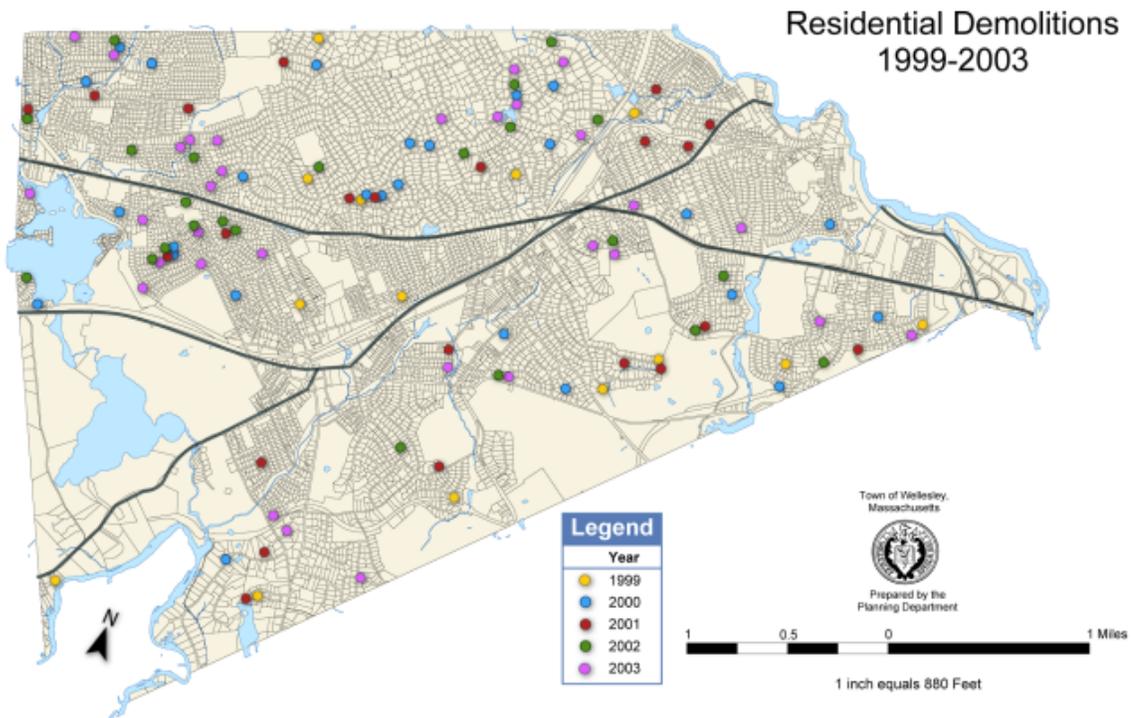
shows that over a third of the demolitions occurred on lots smaller than 15,000 sf, where rear yards are 10 to 15 feet. All Wellesley lots have side yards of only 20 feet, regardless of the size of the lot. On larger lots these dimensions are mitigated by the fact that there are limitations on the amount of land that can be covered by buildings. Smaller lots allow proportionately more lot coverage. Smaller, older homes were built well within the setback minimums, so when new houses build up to the setback limits, they can give the appearance of noncompliance with zoning because they seem out of scale with neighboring houses.

This issue is a complex one, because if the process of demolition and replacement continues, it is the smaller, older homes that will increasingly seem out of character. What in one era is called “mansionization” may in another be seen as renovation of the housing stock through infill and redevelopment. Another aspect of this trend is its impact on

income diversity in Wellesley. The disappearance of single family homes of modest size and price means that the Town no longer has “starter houses” or homes for Town employees, craftsmen, and others who historically contributed to the community and could afford to live there. In many communities, condominiums have become entry-level housing, but Wellesley's few condominiums also have high prices.

Cost of Housing

Housing prices in Wellesley, as in all of eastern Massachusetts, began to rise steeply in the late 1990s. Wellesley has been a sought-after, trade-up community for decades, but until about twenty years ago, there was a fairly good match between family income of local residents and income required to purchase the typical, or median priced, home. Housing prices are continuing to rise in recent years: the price of a single family home has increased 73% between 1999 and the fall of 2004.





Sales and prices of both single family homes and condominiums are up over 2002 and 2003 levels. Generally turnover averages a stable 5 percent per year in Wellesley. There were 114 single family homes listed with the Municipal Listing Service (MLS) in November 2004, with a median asking price of \$1,345,000; the 10 condominiums listed had a median asking price of \$699,900. Fifty percent of the single family listings fell into the \$720,000–\$1,895,000 price range. Even at these high prices, inventory is moving. The average time to sell for the single-family homes was less than 3 months. More than one third of the single family properties currently listed with MLS have been on the market for six months or more, and several have languished for over a year, suggesting that some sellers may be testing the market, but are not highly motivated. The least expensive listing at this time is a three-bedroom home for \$519,000.

There are relatively few rental properties in Wellesley. A search of www.realtor.com and discussions with real estate brokers identified 28 properties available for rent in December 2004. More than three quarters of these were single-family homes; the balance was split among apartments, duplexes, and accessory apartments.

The units range from a small one-bedroom apartment with an asking rent of \$1,000 per month to a six-bedroom home for \$10,000. Fifty percent of the available units had asking rents in the \$2,000–\$3,000 per month range. Most did not include heat, an expense that would boost the effective rent.

AFFORDABILITY IMPLICATIONS

As elsewhere in the region, home prices in Wellesley have recently risen faster than incomes. Median household income in the Town was estimated to be a comfortable \$127,000 in 2003.¹ To afford the median priced home sold that year—for \$751,000—would have required an income of nearly \$162,000. An income of more than \$185,000 would be required to afford the \$880,000 price tag on the median home sold through October 2004. Condominiums can hardly be considered an affordable alternative, with a median sales price through October 2004 of \$567,000.

With homes rarely available now for less than \$500,000, affordability is a major problem in Wellesley for teachers, municipal workers, public safety personnel, and others who don't already live in town but would like to. The highest paid municipal employee—the superintendent of schools, with a 2003 salary of nearly \$166,000—would have been able to purchase the median priced home last year (assuming a 20% down payment and normal underwriting criteria), but just barely. No other public official had the income to purchase the median priced home.² Wellesley compensates its school and municipal employees comparatively well. Still, teachers, police, and fire fighters earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year would likely be able to qualify for a mortgage³ of \$230,000 to \$350,000, well

¹ *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2003*, Bluestone, Helmrich, Heudorfer. Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Northeastern University, April 2004.

² These municipal employees, and categories of employees, are used only for illustrative purposes. Personal financial information is not available other than salaries published in the Annual Town Report. Affordability was calculated based on those incomes and standard mortgage industry guidelines.

below the least expensive housing offering in town. Assuming an 80% mortgage at today's favorable low rates (5.5%), and allowing 33 % of income for principal, interest, real estate taxes, and homeowners insurance, a home-buyer would need an income of nearly \$112,000—and \$120,000 in cash—to purchase the least expensive home currently available for sale in Wellesley.

Housing Affordable to Households with Moderate Incomes

DEFINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

“Affordable housing” is a term with many meanings. For government purposes, it usually means subsidized housing that is deed-restricted to remain affordable over many years to households earning below a certain income threshold, typically 80% of the area median income. To others, it simply means housing with modest costs in the market.

For legal purposes, the definition of housing affordability is based on three statistics: median household income, the percentage of household income spent on housing, and the median cost of housing. Under most subsidy programs,

housing produced with government financial assistance is targeted to people whose household income is 80% or less of the median for an area. The median income level set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] for the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for FY2004 is \$82,600, and 80% of median for a family of four is \$66,150. Housing is considered affordable by HUD if households with incomes at or below 80% of the median can obtain it while paying no more than 30% of their total income. An affordable home, therefore, could be one that a family of four making no more than \$66,150 a year could buy or rent with 30% of their income

WHAT DOES AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOOK LIKE?

Many people have an image of affordable housing that is based on an outdated image of high-rise, urban, public housing projects built in the 1960s or 70s. In fact, affordable housing today takes many other forms, from single family homes to garden apartments. It fits in so well with local character that people in many communities pass by affordable housing every day without realizing it. Mixed-income developments,



Affordable housing in Massachusetts cities and towns now takes many forms, from adaptive reuse of historic buildings to new construction.

³ Assuming only one salary per household

where the affordable units are indistinguishable from the market rate units, and scattered-site affordable housing, in which affordable housing is scattered in small groupings throughout the community, are now the preferred ways of developing and siting affordable housing. In Wellesley, the greatest opportunities for affordable housing creation lie in the Town's commercial districts where mixed-use projects could be located close to the train stations and to shops.

CHAPTER 40B—THE COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT LAW

For many suburban communities, the face of affordable housing is the state's Comprehensive Permit Law (Chapter 40B). This law is intended to promote affordable housing creation by allowing developers who agree to include at least 25% below-market-rate units in their projects to go through a streamlined permitting process (the comprehensive permit) and override local zoning if the community does not have 10% of its year-round housing units designated as permanently affordable. If the permit is denied by a municipality, then the developers can appeal the denial to the state's Housing Appeals Committee.

Housing units created under Chapter 40B must meet four tests in order to be counted toward the 10 percent goal:

- The units must be part of a “subsidized” development built or operated by a public agency, non-profit, or limited dividend organization. The must be approved for direct state or federal subsidy: for example, through the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, or the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). With the exception of the Local Initiative Program (LIP), the subsidies are financial. In the case of the LIP, towns work directly with developers but receive technical assistance from DHCD

and receive standing as Chapter 40B projects. LIP projects allow towns more flexibility in making decisions about the design and site plan of a project. The state merely has to approve the affordability elements of the project: the incomes of the persons to be housed, the minimum quality of the units, fair marketing, and a maximum level of profit.

- At least 25% of the units must be restricted to households having incomes at or below 80% of the area median income. The units must have rents or sales prices that limit housing costs to no more than 30% of the residents' household income. For newly constructed housing, the affordability restrictions must remain in place for at least 30 years.
- The development must be subject to use restrictions and deed restrictions ensuring that the units will remain available only to people who have qualifying incomes, and these requirements must be monitored by a public agency or a non-profit organization.
- The units must be openly marketed according to fair housing laws. However, towns can establish a local preference for their own residents.

In addition, part of Chapter 40B's purpose was to create new permanently affordable housing units. One of the reasons Massachusetts housing costs have skyrocketed in the last decade is that production of new housing for almost all income levels has been lower than the demand, and temporary affordability in existing units does not increase the amount of housing in the state.

CHANGES TO CHAPTER 40B

In 2002 the state issued new regulations for Chapter 40B. These regulations provide for more rapid counting of approved units and of more types of units; more leeway for a town to deny a permit or include conditions if it has an approved affordable housing plan and has made recent progress towards the 10 percent affordable units or if the project is very large in relation to

the town's population; and consideration by the Housing Appeals Committee of a community's master plan or comprehensive plan and affordable housing creation efforts.

Communities may submit an affordable housing plan for approval by DHCD. An approved plan must be a "planned production" plan; that is, it must have goals, a timeline, and strategies to produce affordable housing units to reach 10 percent of the community's total housing units. If a town demonstrates that it has produced 40B-eligible units in the amount of three-fourths of one percent of total housing units (about 66 units per year for Wellesley), it can ask DHCD for certification of its plan. A certified plan permits a town to deny a comprehensive permit, or grant one with conditions, for one year (two years if it produced 1.5 percent of total housing units). The Housing Appeals Committee is also empowered to take into account a town's master plan or comp plan in any decision on a developer's appeal of a denial or a conditional comprehensive permit.

Chapter 40B may also be subject to change by the legislature or through further administrative changes as a result of the 40B Task Force that met in spring 2003. The Task Force made a series of recommendations that have been incorporated into legislation, but no changes have yet been made as of this writing. Among the recommendations are:

- In 40B homeownership developments, twice the number of affordable units will be counted towards a community's 10% goal.
- Communities can deny a 40B application if 40B units pending during the prior nine-month period equal at least 2% of total housing units or .5% if the community has a state-approved housing plan.
- Communities with an approved housing plan can deny a 40B application if they have permitted qualifying units equaling .5% of total housing units during the prior 12 months (this is a

reduction in the current regulation of .75%).

- The agencies that provide subsidies to proposed Chapter 40B projects must take new criteria into consideration when determining project eligibility: density and size; degree of affordability; principles of sustainable development and smart growth; community impact and consistency with housing need; impact on historical resources; and the impact of other pending applications for housing development.
- The Legislature and the Governor should establish a new "growth aid" fund to provide financial assistance to communities commensurate with the costs of housing growth.

PLANNING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WELLESLEY

The high cost of housing in Wellesley and its effect on community diversity has been noticeable for a number of years. During the post-World War II boom in suburban housing, new neighborhoods in Wellesley were constructed for affluent families, and by the 1960s Wellesley was already becoming too expensive for most first time homebuyers. The real estate boom of the 1980s consolidated the escalation of Wellesley housing prices and in 1989 Town Meeting adopted an Affordable Housing Policy. This policy was amended in 1997 and now takes the following form:

Wellesley is an outstandingly attractive residential community, enriched by the diversity of its residents. Wellesley seeks to maintain and enhance its present character by preserving a mix of housing stock that includes low income, moderate income, and market rate housing. In establishing this Affordable Housing Policy, Wellesley seeks to control its own growth and development.

Affordable Housing is housing which, under the guidelines and regulations promulgated by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, is defined as low or moderate income

housing, or housing which may otherwise be determined by vote of Wellesley Town Meeting to be affordable housing.

Criteria for the Development of Affordable Housing:

1. The predominantly single-family residential character of Wellesley shall be preserved.
2. Urban-scale projects are to be avoided.
3. Preferences shall be given to projects where 100% of the units satisfy Town housing goals; however, the Town recognized the potential necessity of including mixed income housing in order to ensure a development's overall economic viability.
4. Any affordable housing shall, to the maximum extent possible, remain affordable in perpetuity.
5. Insofar as it is legal, Wellesley residents shall be given priority in the marketing of affordable housing units.
 - a. Preservation of open space and protection of natural resources shall be important considerations in the Town's land use planning.
 - b. Development of affordable housing should not overburden existing utility systems or other public facilities that serve the Town, including services, streets, the public water supply and sewers to a greater extent than would any other development.
 - c. Wellesley's Fair Housing Policy shall be respected.

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan devoted substantial space to affordable housing, focusing particularly on opportunities to create elderly housing. The Plan called for the Town to diversify its affordable housing supply (then at 396 units, or 4.54% of the year round housing stock) by 375 units over a 5-10 year period, by adding the following:

- Family units—half to be subsidized :
 - 131 family apartments or small scale condominiums (3 and 4 bedroom) for young families, 100 rental and 31 homeownership
 - 44 family apartments or small scale condominiums specifically targeted to single parents, 39 rental and 5 homeownership
- Elderly units—three-quarters to be subsidized:
 - 200 rental units in a range of type (independent and assisted living) for seniors/elderly (age 65 and over)

In the fifteen years since Wellesley Town Meeting first adopted its affordable housing policy, numerous Town-appointed and volunteer committees have attempted to expand and diversify the Town's supply of affordable housing, but their efforts have met with limited success. Only seven units have been added since 1994: three ownership units in a recently completed 12-unit townhouse developed under the comprehensive permit provisions of MGL Chapter 40B and an existing four unit group home.⁴ Some proposals have been stymied by a lack of funding, but for the most part, the Town has not participated in those programs where funding has been available, such as state and federally funded homebuyer assistance and home repair programs.

New resources have been identified for affordable housing in Wellesley with the creation of the Housing Development Corporation and adoption of the Community Preservation Act. In 1998, the Town established the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation whose mission is "to sponsor and assist in the development of affordable housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income in the Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts in order to implement the Town's Affordable Housing Policy." With Town adoption

⁴ Due to a change in regulations, communities are now able to count group homes for special needs populations (e.g., psychologically or cognitively disabled clients of the state's Departments of Mental Health or Mental Retardation).

of the Community Preservation Act in 2003, Wellesley gained a dedicated revenue source for affordable housing creation because a minimum of 10% of the funds collected under the CPA must be applied to affordable housing. In its first report to the Town, the Community Preservation Committee articulated a set of goals for its affordable housing (which the CPC calls “community housing”) funding program:

- Create new and preserve existing community housing that is consistent with the Town’s affordable housing policy adopted under Article 31 of the 1989 Annual Town Meeting and modified under Article 4 of the 1997 Annual Town Meeting.
- Create new and preserve existing community housing that is well designed and maintained, is of high quality and based on sound planning principles.
- Disperse community housing throughout the Town by siting new community housing in neighborhoods that currently have little or no affordable housing.
- Provide and preserve community housing that promotes age and income diversity.
- Ensure the long-term affordability of community housing, and in perpetuity wherever possible.
- Create new and preserve existing community housing that will contribute to the state’s mandated target of having 10% of the Town’s housing stock affordable to households with incomes at or below 80% of the Boston area’s median income.
- Provide a mix of low income, moderate income, and market rate housing.
- Provide community housing opportunities that give priority to local residents, Town employees, and families of students enrolled in the Town’s public schools.
- Reuse existing buildings or use previously developed or Town-owned sites for new community housing.

- Acquire and convert market rate housing into community housing.

EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Currently 4.7 percent of Wellesley’s year round housing stock (416 units) is certified for inclusion on the state’s list of subsidized housing according to the inventory dated January 19, 2005. The Wellesley Housing Authority owns and manages 235 units of housing, 102 of which are for families in two developments and 133 units for elderly and disabled persons. One of the family developments was modernized several years ago.⁵ The town also has 125 units of privately-owned, publicly subsidized elderly housing, making a total of 258 subsidized units available for elderly/disable persons. In addition, Wellesley has a 4-unit group home leased by the Department of Mental Retardation and the Hastings Village development currently under construction adds 52 units.

Additional units will soon be added to Wellesley’s inventory. The state mistakenly omitted 36 existing rental units at Ardmere, privately-owned and publicly subsidized development. The recently-approved Townhouses at Edgemoor Circle will also contribute three new permanently affordable ownership units. The Town’s total will then rise to 455 units or 5.2 percent of its year-round housing inventory. In addition, a 32-unit age-restricted development with 8 affordable units has been proposed. If approved, this development would boost the total to 5.3 percent (463 units).

The Wellesley Housing Development Corporation has issued a Request for Proposals for creation of three market-rate and one affordable condominium unit in the Walnut Street Fire Station building. In addition, the Town’s Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting voted in spring 204 to transfer

⁵ Elderly/disabled properties: 41 River Street (26 units); 315 Weston Road (31 units); 48-513 Washington Street (76 units). Family housing properties: Barton Road (89 units); 50 Linden Street (12 units).

\$200,000 to the Housing Development Corporation for the buy-down of an existing home or condo or the construction of one unit of affordable housing.

THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WELLESLEY

Although Wellesley is one of the wealthiest communities in the state,¹⁸ 18 percent of the town's households are considered extremely low, very low, or low income⁶ by federal Department of Housing and Urban Development definitions and three percent live below the federal poverty level. The income of renter households is just 45 percent of what it is for owner occupants, roughly \$56,923 compared to \$127,130 in 1999.⁷ More than 600 low-income homeowners and more than 200 low income renters experience housing problems, mostly affordability problems. The affordability challenge affects all age groups. Fifty-five percent of the low income, cost-burdened renters are under the age of 65 as are 47 percent of the cost burdened homeowners. In addition to those already facing cost burdens, more than 100 additional households are deemed at risk of becoming cost burdened because of low incomes

High housing costs have made housing affordability an issue even for middle and upper income households. Five percent of the middle and upper income renters and 15% of the middle and upper income homeowners in Wellesley also face cost burdens. The rise in property taxes and homeowners insurance that have accompanied the rapid rise in home values account for much of the increasing burden for those with little or no mortgage outstanding on their property. The average single family tax bill increased by more than 55 % in Wellesley between 1998 and 2004.

Notwithstanding near record low mortgage interest rates, home prices increasingly outstrip income gains. In 1998, Wellesley's median household income was sufficient to purchase a home priced at 94% of what the typical (median priced) single family home that year sold for. By 2003, the median family income would have covered only 78% of the median price. (In other words, the median home price in 2003 would have to have been priced \$158,000 less than it was to be affordable to an existing Wellesley family earning the median household income, which was estimated to be \$128,000 in 2003.)

CREATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN WELLESLEY

An Appendix to this Comprehensive Plan contains a framework for a planned production approach to affordable housing. If the Town wishes to take an aggressive approach to meeting the state's 10% goals for affordable housing, planned production could help Wellesley avoid future unwanted Chapter 40B projects—if the Town is able to meet the yearly targets for affordable housing creation. This would be an ambitious goal and require strong support to identify potential sites and attract developers.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Residential Character: New Large Houses in Old Neighborhoods

In both the survey and the public meetings for this Plan, Wellesley residents expressed a strong desire that the Town do something about the impact of new or expanded houses that are out of character with the surrounding neighbor-

⁶ Current HUD income classifications are as follows: extremely low income—household income 30 percent or less of the HUD area median family income; very low income—household income greater than 30 percent but not more than 50 percent of area median family income; low income—household income greater than 50 percent but not more than 80 percent of area median family income; and moderate income—household income greater than 80 percent but not more than 95 percent of area median family income.

⁷ Recent estimates suggest that renter incomes have increased by only 9 percent and homeowner incomes by just 12.5 percent since that time. (*The Greater Boston Housing Report Card*, 2003, Bluestone et al.)

hood. Many communities in the greater Boston region have been wrestling with the issue of “mansionization” since the mid-1990s. This is when housing prices began to skyrocket and the land in desirable, close-in communities with little open land for development began to exceed the value of the small, older houses that had been built on the land.

Single family houses are typically subject to minimum requirements for lot frontage and building setbacks from the lot boundary and often to maximum heights or numbers of stories. In some cases, communities have imposed a maximum percentage of the lot that can be covered by buildings (sometimes including other impervious surfaces such as driveways). Cities and a few larger towns have established Floor Area Ratio maximums for residences. Massachusetts prohibits zoning ordinances from regulating the interior area of a single family building (MGL Chapter 40A, sec. 3). This law was originally intended as an “anti-snob” law that would keep towns from setting a high minimum floor area. (An attempt to change the law to allow towns to establish a maximum floor area has not passed the legislature.) Because of this state law, most communities have focused on dimensional changes in their approach to the “mansionization” question.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO MANAGE "MANSIONIZATION" IN WELLESLEY

Wellesley was one of the first communities to attempt to constrain the size, bulk, and siting of new residential construction by amending the zoning bylaw in 1996. By establishing maximum lot coverage percentages for all single family residential lots, reducing the maximum height to three stories or 36 feet from 45 feet, and establishing wider frontage and setback regulations for new lots created after January 16, 1997, the Town reduced the number of larger lots that

could be subdivided and limited the maximum size of new houses that could be built.

The new regulations did not affect certain siting and design choices, such as “sideways” houses sited with the front door to the side, “snout” houses with prominent garage doors facing the street, and side garages built up to the setback line. Setback regulations for existing lots remained unchanged and despite the tightening of dimensional constraints, it was still possible to build large replacement houses that many people find to be out of character with neighboring houses.

In 2002, the Wellesley Planning Board proposed a series of additional zoning amendments designed to constrain the impact of large home redevelopment in existing neighborhoods:

- Restrictions on the height of roof soffits and the effect of dormers
- Reduction in the allowed maximum building coverage
- Requirement for a landscape plan for houses with a footprint of 3,000 square feet or more
- Restrictions on placement of HVAC and similar equipment in setbacks as well as visual and acoustical screening if required by the building inspector
- Requirement for a 30 foot minimum setback for garages when the entrance faces the side lot line

With the exception of the last two, these zoning amendments did not pass. There are a number of considerations that typically result in the defeat of these kinds of initiatives. First, while people often wish they could regulate more closely the activities of other property owners, they think twice because the regulations will also have an impact on their own property. Second, many people do not believe that changing dimensional or site requirements will change the fact that the impact of some new houses on neighborhood character is often really a matter of design rather than simply bulk or size.

Attempts to constrain the size of large homes in other communities have also proven to have limited effect or have gone down to defeat. In 1997, Newton reduced the height of single family and two-family houses from 36 to 30 feet and defined height in such a way to encourage sloped roofs. Newton also introduced the concept of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to apply to new single family and two-family houses or additions that require demolition of 50% or more of the structure. One of the main objectives of these changes was to slow the demolition of single family homes for construction of newer, bulkier duplexes. In 2004, Newton once again considered zoning amendments to address the aesthetic and neighborhood character impacts of “snout houses” and large replacement houses, discussing combining design review and additional FAR restrictions. The Town of Lexington studied this matter for several years in great detail and its Planning Board proposed a site plan review process for large homes according to a set of graduated lot and size thresholds; Town Meeting, however, declined to approve this proposal.

There are four ways to approach the impacts of new large homes in existing neighborhoods:

- **Adjustments to dimensional constraints.** This is the most common way to address the problem and is the easiest to apply. However, even when communities are willing to reduce heights, setbacks, lot coverage, and other easily-measured elements of a building project, residents want to preserve flexibility for their own potential additions. New construction that meets all the zoning requirements still may seem incompatible with neighborhood character to some residents.
- **Site plan review of proposed new construction or additions that meet certain threshold requirements.** Site plan review does not prohibit the construction of large homes that meet certain criteria, but simply brings discussion of new large homes and additions into the public forum of a Planning Board hearing so that

impacts on abutting properties and the neighborhood can be understood and mitigated.

- **Historic or neighborhood commission review.** Demolition and exterior changes to houses in local historic districts are subject to review by the Historical Commission and changes require a Certificate of Appropriateness. The Cottage Street Historic District is Wellesley's only local historic district. A less stringent form of neighborhood character review can be implemented by creating Neighborhood Conservation Districts. These geographically defined districts typically have an identifiable architectural character that can be documented. When the conservation district is established, decisions are made on what kinds of exterior changes will be subject to mandatory or advisory review.
- **Design guidelines for voluntary application.** Single family neighborhoods are generally not subject to the authority of design review committees, which focus on commercial and mixed-use projects. However, design guidelines that explain the valued elements of neighborhood character to potential builders and new residents can be useful in communicating a desired approach to creating new or substantially altered houses. In many cases, concerns expressed about the size and bulk of new large houses are really design issues that cannot be effectively addressed simply by changing dimensional requirements in the zoning. Voluntary design guidelines, which could be made available in a number of ways, including through realtors, will encourage designers and builders to look beyond the building lot in order to fit into the neighborhood while meeting the needs of their clients.

MORE DIMENSIONAL CHANGES FOR WELLESLEY NOT RECOMMENDED

Although Town Meeting passed dimensional changes in 1997 that reduced lot coverage and height for all single family districts and expand-

ed frontage and setback requirements for newly created lots, in 2002 Town Meeting was not persuaded to establish additional restrictions except for those that affected side garages and placement of HVAC units. It is possible that a combination of more complex zoning rules, including establishing FAR limits for residential areas and setbacks calculated to be proportional to the height of the new construction, could be more effective in regulating the size of new houses relative to their neighborhood environment. However, more complicated rules would make it harder for homeowners to understand how the proposed changes would affect their own properties and their ability to build additions without getting variances, and the additional complexity would encourage many to oppose such new regulations. It is also the case that although size and location on the lot is part of the problem, sometimes what people really do not like about a particular new house is its design. Dimensional requirements alone do not have significant impact on design.

Below are a set of recommended options for Wellesley to consider as new ways to approach the problem of incorporating replacement houses more harmoniously into existing neighborhoods.

Recommended Option 1: Site Plan Review for Large Houses

The Town of Weston devised a site plan review process that allowed the Town to shape and influence the way that large houses affect their neighbors. The salient elements of the Weston by-law are the following:

- **Definition of “Residential Gross Floor Area” (RGFA):** “The sum of the horizontal area(s) of the above-grade floors in the residential building(s) on a lot, excluding unfinished attics but including attached or detached garages. The RGFA shall be measured from the exterior face of the exterior walls.”

Including garages in the RGFA is important because large houses often have multiple garages whose location is very important in the relationship of the building to its neighbors

- **Threshold for single family home site plan review:** “The Residential Gross Floor Area ‘RFGA’ of any new or replacement single family dwelling use constructed pursuant to a building permit issued on or after October 29, 1998, may not exceed the greater of 3,500 s.f. or 10% of the lot area up to a maximum of 6,000 s.f.”
- **Definition of “Replacement Single Family Dwelling”:** In order to include very large houses that result from substantial renovation and addition under the site plan review, the by-law includes a definition: “The supplanting of all or a portion of a demolished or substantially demolished single-family dwelling with a substitute single-family dwelling in the same or in a different location on the lot.”

ACTIONS FOR WELLESLEY:

Define "demolition" or "replacement house" to cover substantial additions.

Many large homes that cause concern result from construction that is technically an addition or alteration but is so extensive that the original house is no longer recognizable. The Weston by-law is intended to include these cases under the definition of “demolition” but does not define what “substantially demolished” means. Wellesley should resolve this problem by creating a definition for demolition that includes criteria such as removal of 50% of the building or removal of the roof.

Define Residential Gross Floor Area or a similar concept to include garages.

The assessor currently measures Total Living Area, which does not include garage space. Because large houses have multiple garages

with significant functional and visual impact, they should be included in measurements that make up the threshold number for the applicability of Large House Site Plan Review.

Establish Large House Site Plan Review for replacement houses three or more times the size of the houses they replace.

Wellesley can establish a new category under Section XVIA in the Zoning By-Law: Large Replacement House Projects. Site plan review can then be made applicable to large replacement houses that meet certain threshold criteria. The analysis of demolitions and replacement houses during the 1999-2003 period demonstrated that, on average, Wellesley replacement houses are 2.5 to 3 times the size in total living area of the houses they replaced. All new construction resulting in a house 3 times larger than the original structure should be made subject to Large House Site Plan Review. This concept should be tested for the inclusion of garages to see if the proposed multiplier of 3 is sufficient if garages are also included. This new site plan review category cannot easily be subsumed under one of the existing categories: Major Construction Project, which requires design review and comment from numerous Town boards and agencies; Minor Construction Project, which requires only Design Review; and Project of Significant Impact, which requires a Special Use Permit in addition to Site Plan Review and Design Review. The review process for large replacement houses should be as streamlined as possible and include requirements similar to the plans required for subdivision approval that show existing conditions and proposed changes for items such as grading, drainage, preservation of vegetation, driveways and other impervious surfaces, and so on. Formal design review by the Design Review Committee would not be appropriate, but attention to design impacts of the new construction should be part of the process.

In this case, the emphasis should not be on style but on how the new structure relates to public spaces and surrounding buildings.

One approach would be to create a performance standard checklist that the project proponent would have to respond to in the written application and at a public hearing. This would provide the project proponent with early notice of the issues that are of concern to the Planning Board. The proponent would then be encouraged to seek design solutions that will meet the performance standards.

Design performance standards for Large Home Site Plan Review would be easier to develop if the neighborhood character studies suggested in the next recommendation were to be carried out.

Recommended Option 2: Define, promote, and/or protect neighborhood identity and character

Many people in Wellesley talk about neighborhood character and they have a general sense of what they mean by that term, but, except for the Cottage Street Historic District, the standards that define Wellesley neighborhoods have not been analyzed.

ACTIONS FOR WELLESLEY:

Explore the potential for additional Local Historic Districts, a Historic Landmarks Bylaw, and Historic Easements

Other than the Cottage Street area, Wellesley does not have a Local Historic District or any other means of protecting the exterior integrity of historic buildings that have exceptional historic value to the community. A Historic Landmarks Bylaw offers the opportunity to identify individual buildings and sites for this protection. The Bylaw requires permission of the property owner before designation as a historic landmark and the Historic Commission must approve specified types of exterior changes that

would permanently alter its historic character. (Typically, this kind of regulation does not include temporary changes such as paint colors.) Although some property owners are reluctant to be subject to this kind of regulation, historic landmark status usually makes the property more valuable and, for business properties, it can be a distinguishing characteristic for a business.

Historic preservation easements are voluntary agreements between property owners and a historic preservation organization recognized by the IRS. The easement restricts specified kinds of changes to the property and the donor conveys certain rights over the property to the easement holding organization, which then has the legal authority to enforce the terms of the easement. The easement can cover changes to the exterior or interior of a building, the façade, additional building, etc., and is tailored to each situation. In return for donating the easement, the donor gets a tax deduction.

Commission a series of neighborhood studies to analyze and define neighborhood character and create voluntary guidelines for additions and new construction.

A series of studies done in collaboration with neighborhood residents would identify the physical characteristics of each neighborhood. The results of these studies might vary according to the purpose and the neighborhood. They would inform the design performance standards used by the Planning Board in Large Home Site Plan Review. Where a distinctive historic or architectural identity was documented for a particular neighborhood or sub-area, the Historical Commission might pursue creation of a local historic district or residents might begin organizing a Neighborhood Conservation District. In other cases, the results could be provided simply to guide and inform new construction in the neighborhood.

An example of effective voluntary efforts is the workbook created by Community First, a citizens' group in Naperville, IL, a Chicago suburb. Like Wellesley, Naperville is seeing \$150,000 tear-downs being turned into \$1.5 million houses. Community First was founded as an educational nonprofit by builders, architects, and citizens and is supported by both the City of Naperville and the Chamber of Commerce. The group prepared an award-winning booklet with simple illustrations that takes builders, property owners, designers, and citizens through the process of understanding the character of a particular neighborhood and street, with special attention to what constitutes more or less harmonious relationships among houses, relationships to the street, and so on. The workbook also provides advice on ways to design additions and renovations to provide the desired space without impinging on the character of the street and neighborhood.

Despite the fact that compliance is entirely voluntary, the booklet has had a significant impact. The City hands out the workbook at all pre-demolition meetings with builders and owners and Community First has influenced some 250 projects in the four years it has been in existence and has begun holding workshops for builders and city staff. The City also collaborates with Community First on an annual design award, with city residents voting on the finalists. The booklet is now also being used by other Chicago-area towns.

Explore authorizing the establishment of Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Neighborhood Conservation Districts provide a mechanism for differing levels of review—from purely advisory to regulatory—for demolition and exterior changes to buildings within a defined area that has recognized design character. The area does not have to meet the criteria

This idea could be transferred to the Wellesley neighborhood context by the creation of standards for placement of new buildings in relation to the prevailing siting along a street or similar kinds of standards that still allow for renovation of the housing stock but—by constraining extreme changes—make the transformation of street character more gradual.

2. Diverse Housing Stock and Affordable Housing

Wellesley will continue to be a community where most housing units are single family houses. The neighborhoods are near buildout and redevelopment is typically for larger single family houses. At the same time, Wellesley offers few alternatives to empty nesters who might want to sell their large homes yet still stay in Town, or to Town employees or young people who want to stay in the Town where they grew up.

Townhouses, condominiums, and apartments have become entry-level housing in many communities, but real estate prices are so high in Wellesley that market rate units of these types are priced for luxury—not for the first time



homebuyer. In order to meet the needs of a segment of the Town's population and various groups connected to the Town and its residents, as well as to meet the state goal of

10% affordable housing, Wellesley will have to take an aggressive role in promoting affordable housing production.

Focus efforts to create more diverse housing types and affordable housing by attracting rental developments to identified sites in Wellesley.

In order to create sufficient numbers of affordable units to meet the state 10% affordable housing goal and to create more diversity of housing in Wellesley, the Town must work to bring rental developments with a substantial number of units to the few identified sites where most residents agree this kind of housing would complement local character. These sites are the Tailby Lot, the Linden Street commercial district, the St. James parish site, the Grossman's, site and, potentially, other commercial districts.

Seek technical assistance from nonprofit groups and explore relationships with nonprofit developers and funding sources.

Wellesley does not have to reinvent the wheel in order to create and implement a robust affordable housing strategy. There are many organizations, such as the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) that offer resources and technical assistance. MHP has assisted many communities in creating effective Housing Partnerships and creating affordable housing that is compatible with community character. It also can provide pre-development funding, technical assistance, bridge financing, and assistance to communities in working on Chapter 40B proposals. In addition, the Housing Partnership should reach out to regional nonprofit housing groups, religious congregations, and others that may be interested in supporting affordable housing creation, including through possibilities such as land donations.

Consider joining a regional HOME consortium for access to home rehabilitation funding.

Federal funds for rehab of homes owned by low-income persons (known as HOME funds) are available through regional consortia of communities. Many communities use HOME funds for home repair and rehabilitation programs for seniors and others with low incomes (there is



no asset test, so the equity in their homes will not prevent them from qualifying). The rehabilitation program puts an affordability restriction on the home for 15 years, but if the occupant stays in the home for that period, the rehab funds do not have to be repaid. If the occupant leaves the home before the end of 15 years, the funds must be repaid on a sliding scale over time. During the 15 years that the affordability restrictions are in force on the housing unit, it counts towards the 40B inventory for the Town.

Inventory and study the feasibility of using additional town-owned parcels and buildings for affordable housing.

The high cost of land is one of the greatest barriers to affordable housing production. If the Town can contribute or donate land to a project, it makes affordable housing creation, as well as moderately priced market housing creation, much easier. The Town is already following this route in the Walnut Street Fire Station project. An inventory of all Town properties, including tax title properties, may uncover other opportunities. All Town-owned sites, both large and small, should be evaluated for their potential. The Town could combine affordable housing creation with other Town needs.

Explore the possibility of a "friendly 40B" or Local Initiative Program project on town-owned property or private property.

The Department of Housing and Community Development's Local Initiative Program (LIP) provides technical assistance to local communities that produce affordable units and counts them towards the Chapter 40B inventory, while allowing a greater degree of flexibility than is available for projects with direct financial subsidies.

Modify zoning by-laws to encourage housing diversity in type and in cost.

In order to be successful in diversifying the type and cost of housing in Wellesley, the Town must provide zoning that facilitates development of this kind of housing by avoiding special permit processes and providing incentives where necessary. With by-right zoning, the Town will continue to have oversight in design and function through the site plan review process.

- **Amend zoning to promote affordable accessory units.** Affordable accessory units can be an excellent way to create affordable housing without significant change to neighborhood or community character. Although the Town is unlikely to gain large numbers of affordable units through accessory units, these units can be valuable on the margin. Wellesley should allow permanently affordable accessory units to be created by right and allow all accessory units to be open to non-relatives. Templates for affordability agreements and simple monitoring protocols have already been established in several Massachusetts communities. The Wellesley Housing Authority can assist with these issues.
- **Allow by-right small-scale affordable single family homes and duplexes with one affordable unit on substandard, non-conforming lots, subject to site plan review.** Parcels that lack required size or frontage could be made legal lots for building affordable units or duplexes in which one unit is affordable.

Housing of modest size can provide scattered-site affordable units that fit easily into neighborhoods.

- **Extend inclusionary zoning to residential subdivisions.** Wellesley's inclusionary zoning bylaw only applies to housing in the business districts. Although there are few subdivisions in Wellesley and they are generally very small, it is still worthwhile to make them subject to inclusionary zoning. If some larger parcels of open land were to come on the market and be developed, this tool to guarantee some affordable units would be extremely useful.

Offer an amnesty for illegal apartments in exchange for making them affordable units. Converting existing illegal accessory units or

apartments will not change the de facto number of housing units or residents, but will add to the number of affordable units. In some cases, conversion of these units might require the owners to bring the units up to code. Owners may be able to qualify through regional housing programs for assistance in code improvements if the apartments will become subject to affordability agreements.

Adopt the state law on tax title properties that provides for forgiveness of taxes owed to developers of affordable housing.

Municipalities can adopt a state law that allows them to forgive taxes owed on tax title properties if a new owner will develop affordable housing. Although there may not be many opportunities of this type in Wellesley, it is worthwhile to have this tool should an opportunity arise.

5 Economic Development

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICIES
Maintain a diverse array of independent businesses.	Maintain businesses that serve the daily needs of residents.	Promote and support small business development to serve local residents.
Create mixed-use environments in commercial areas.	Leverage development and redevelopment opportunities to support both retailers and town housing goals.	Promote mixed-use development and redevelopment at key sites in commercial areas.
Fund an economic development specialist to work more closely with business and institutional property owners.	Ensure dedicated attention to commercial areas and other nonresidential development.	Provide funding for an economic development half time position.
Create a system of regular communication among Town government, the business community, and local institutions.	Leverage opportunities for new public-private-institutional partnerships to provide mutual benefits to all stakeholders.	Support use of staff and committee time to create and sustain Town-Business-Institution communication links and partnership strategies.
Support and enhance the build-out potential of non-residential property.	Enlarge the Town's nonresidential tax base.	Consider upzoning in existing nonresidential areas based on a study of potential benefits and adverse impacts.

Findings

- Wellesley is a job center, with 1.3 jobs for every resident in the labor force.
- Wellesley's labor force is highly educated and employed in high-paying jobs.
- Wellesley's commercial districts include a diversity of retail and services catering to town and regional residents.
- Over one-third of Wellesley's labor force works in Wellesley.
- The Town's economic strengths reflect the growth opportunities for the region as a whole.
- The Town's business community does not currently have an organization that speaks for it.
- Town-business relationships are generally good, but communication could be enhanced.

Key Challenges

- Retaining a mix of independent retail and services to meet residents' everyday needs may become difficult if demand for retail space continues to increase and rents are high.
- The potential for future housing development in commercial districts must be effectively balanced with needed retail and services.
- Creating more effective public-private-institutional partnerships may require more support for staff time devoted to economic development issues.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Wellesley has somewhat more jobs (17,676) than it has workers (13,532) in the labor force.
- Wellesley residents typically have a much lower unemployment rate than the state average.
- Many Wellesley jobs are in relatively high-wage sectors.
- Wellesley's tax base and financial management are among the strongest in the state as evidenced by its Aaa bond rating and the Town's experience, compared to other communities, in adjusting the budget to a slow economy and reduced local aid.
- As an affluent, "revenue rich" community, Wellesley can afford high quality services, but the demand for services tends to rise faster than available revenues. Revenue increases are limited by Prop 2 1/2, fixed costs are increasing, and preliminary estimates for FY2005 indicate a decrease of 7.5% in local aid.

Employment of Wellesley Residents

- 968 residents (7.9% of workers) worked at home in 2000
- 1,362 (10.9% of workers) were self-employed in an unincorporated business in 2000
- 63% of the population over 15 was in the labor force, and two-thirds of them had professional and management jobs in 2000
- 2003 labor force: 13,532
- 2003 unemployment rate: 2.8%
- Highest unemployment rate 1990-2003: 3.5% (1991-2)

Businesses and Employees (2003)

- 1,472 employers in Wellesley
- 17,676 jobs in Wellesley
- 19% of jobs in finance and insurance
- 16% of jobs in educational services
- 11% of jobs in retail trade
- 10% of jobs in professional and technical services
- 8% of jobs in health care and social assistance
- 36% of jobs in other sectors
- 2003 average annual wage for Wellesley jobs: \$58,812

Financial Position

- Wellesley is one of only 12 Massachusetts communities with a bond rating of Aaa from Moody's, the highest rating possible.
- The Town Office of General Government Services projects that deficits will grow from \$2.6 M (1.6%) in FY2005 to \$7.6M (4.1%) in FY2008 due to a slow economy, lower state aid, fixed cost increases, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Only self-funded retirement plan in Massachusetts

General Fund Sources (FY2004 Guide):

- 76.1% from property taxes
- 11.5% from local fees/receipts
- 6.9% from State local aid
- 2.5% Free cash
- 3.0% Other

Expenditures:

- In FY2000, education absorbed 54.9% of all town expenditures.

Property Taxes

- 87% of property taxes are paid by residential property owners.
- 12th highest total property value (EQV) in the state in total dollars; 9th highest per capita.
- Average single family tax bill: \$7,320—11th highest in the state.
- Commercial/Industrial/Personal Property (C/I/P) declined from 12.6% of Assessed Value in FY94 to 10.9% due to faster growth in the value of residential property.
- Within levy limits, property taxes will increase for FY2005 by 2.5%; value of new growth will be \$775,000, or \$100,000 less than the \$880,000 average of new growth for the last four years.

Sources: Town of Wellesley, Census 2000, Mass DOR, Mass DET, MAPC

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

When most Wellesley residents think about economic activities in the town, they focus on Wellesley's village commercial districts. Residents rightly value these neighborhood-based, small-scale shopping areas that contribute so much to Wellesley's livability and identity. Enhancing the Town's commercial areas and making sure that the mix of stores and services continues to include independent businesses that serve local needs are central concerns of Town residents, as they have been in every Comprehensive Plan.

For a primarily residential community, Wellesley is also lucky to have an unusually strong office sector and job base. In addition to the colleges and schools that contribute to a strong local economy, the Town's financial services, medical, and technology businesses represent some of the strongest industry clusters in the Boston region. Except for a few isolated office buildings on Route 9, most of the

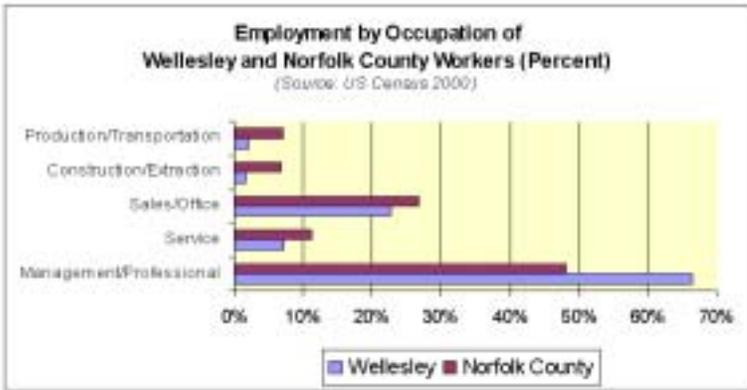
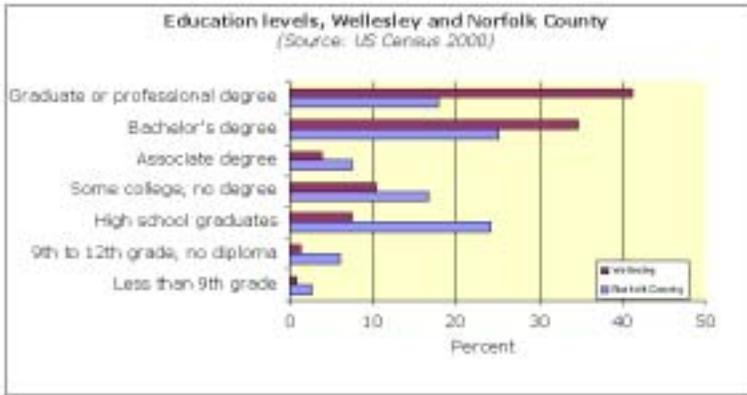
large office buildings in Wellesley are concentrated in two locations near I-95/Route 128 and have minor impacts on the rest of the town. Although Wellesley residents are not primarily concerned about job creation or increasing the non-residential tax base, these businesses and educational institutions are an important asset to the town.

In order to maintain consistency with the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, more recent economic development data are often presented here in comparison with data from Norfolk County, as well as, in some cases, adjacent communities or the state as a whole.

Wellesley's Labor Force:

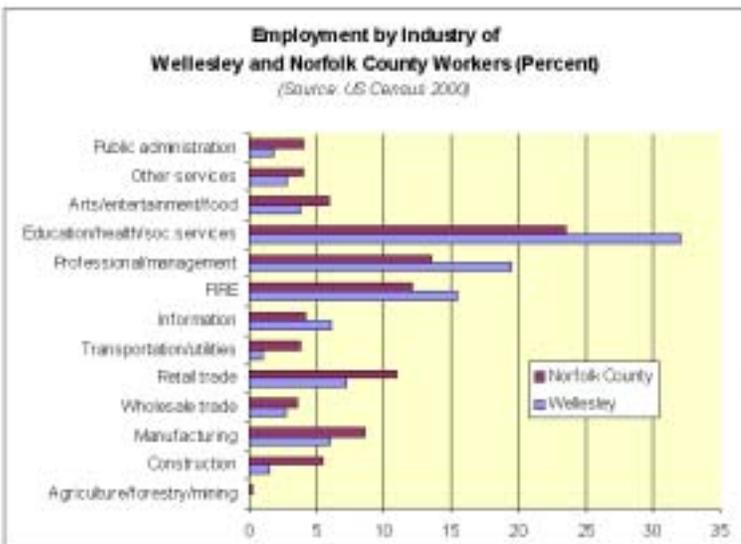
Education and Employment

Wellesley's labor force is highly educated. Nearly 76% of residents over age 25 are college graduates, and of those, over 40% have graduate degrees. As might be expected, the Town's labor force is overwhelmingly employed in management and professional



jobs.

The industry sectors in which most Wellesley workers are employed mirror the kinds of jobs they hold. Sixty-seven percent of the labor force is employed in three sectors: education, health, and social services; professional, scientific, and management services; or finance, insurance, and real estate. Those same categories employ



UNEMPLOYMENT: WELLESLEY AND MASSACHUSETTS, 1995-2003

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Town Rate (%)	State Rate (%)
2003	13,532	13,158	374	2.8	5.8
2002	13,948	13,515	433	3.1	5.3
2001	13,820	13,545	275	2.0	3.7
2000	13,627	13,470	157	1.2	2.6
1999	14,255	14,038	187	1.3	3.2
1998	14,250	14,054	196	1.4	3.3
1997	14,149	13,948	201	1.4	4.0
1996	13,721	13,515	206	1.5	4.3
1995	13,618	13,299	319	2.3	5.4

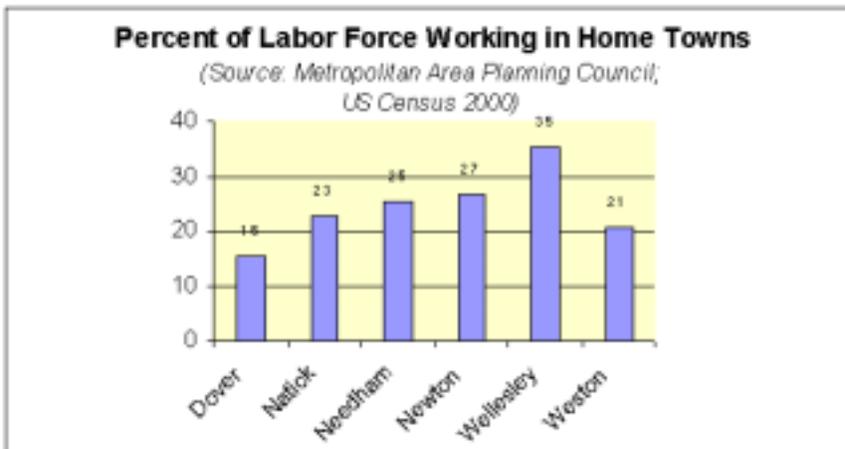
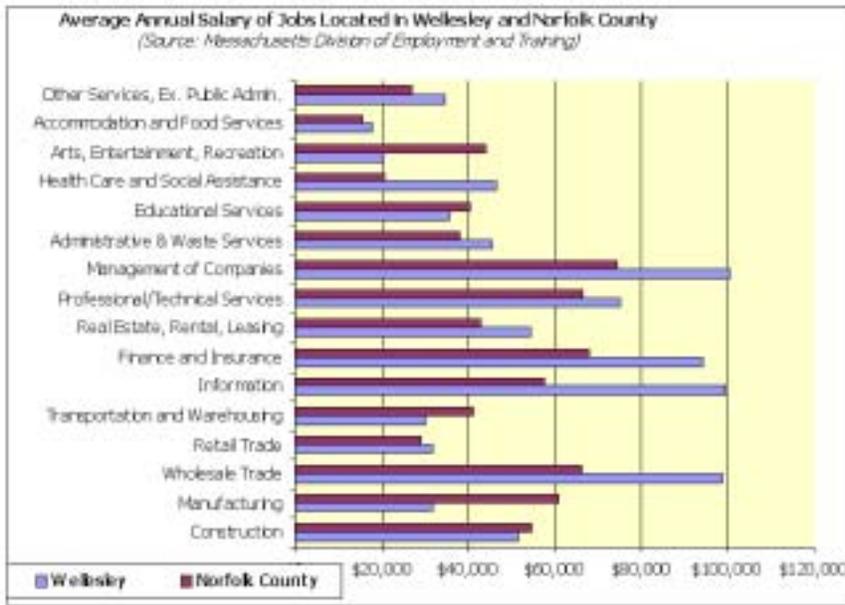
Source: MA DET

49% of Norfolk County's workforce.

High education levels and high incomes typically correlate with high employment, and Wellesley residents, along with those in its neighboring communities, generally have significantly lower unemployment rates than the state as a whole. However, the drop in the number of people in the labor force from a recent peak in 1999, as well as a doubling of the low unemployment rate, shows that Wellesley workers are not immune to business cycles.

Jobs in Wellesley

Despite Wellesley's residential identity and character, it is an employment center, with more jobs than there are people in the local labor force. Moreover, unlike many affluent suburbs, where jobs are concentrated in low-wage retail sectors, Wellesley has many well-paying jobs. According to state data, the annual average salary for Wellesley jobs in 2003 was \$58,812, compared to \$46,436 in Norfolk County as a whole. In the same year, over 66% of those working in Wellesley were employed in management or professional positions at an average salary of \$100,000.



The relatively large number of professional jobs in Wellesley has made it possible for significant numbers of Wellesley residents to work in town. A surprisingly high 35% percent of Wellesley’s labor force also works in Wellesley. This rate exceeds that found in every one of the adjacent communities, even though some neighbors like Natick and Needham have higher amounts of commercial and industrial space. Of Wellesley’s labor force 16 years and over, 7.9% reported to the 2000 Census that they worked at home, while 11.8% reported walking to work. These numbers are

Town performed well against the County in all other categories. The Town’s retail per capita sales closely approximated the county-wide number, a significant fact when considering the substantial shopping areas in other county communities like Quincy, Wrentham, Walpole, and Canton. This speaks to the contribution that retail has made and continues to make to the Town’s economic well-being. Noteworthy as well—and hardly surprising, given the array of educational institutions and programs located in Wellesley—is that the Town’s per-capita sales of educational services are more than six times greater than the County’s.

undoubtedly influenced by patterns of residence and employment at the colleges, but cannot be ascribed only to these institutions.

Economic Activity in Wellesley

The US Census Bureau does an Economic Census every five years. Data from the 2002 are not yet available at the municipal level, but the 1997 Economic Census for Wellesley shows the town’s economic strength. Per capita sales of professional, scientific, and technical services exceeded those in Norfolk County by a better than 4-1 margin. In fact, with the exception of arts, entertainment, and recreation, and other services, the

1997 PER CAPITAL SALES: WELLESLEY AND NORFOLK COUNTY

	<i>Wellesley</i>		<i>Norfolk County</i>	
	<i>sales in 1997 (x1000)</i>	<i>per capita sales</i>	<i>sales in 1997 (x1000)</i>	<i>per capita sales</i>
Wholesale trade	\$893,617	\$33,388	\$21,949,384	\$34,312
Retail trade	\$330,259	\$12,33	\$7,332,919	\$11,463
Real estate & rental & leasing	\$52,144	\$1,948	\$981,599	\$1,534
Professional, scientific, & technical services	\$365,990	\$13,674	\$1,983,823	\$3,101
Administrative & support & waste management	\$109,167	\$4,079	\$1,047,216	\$1,637
Educational services	\$13,200	\$493	\$47,741	\$75
Health care & social assistance	\$97,728	\$3,651	\$1,542,860	\$2,412
Arts, entertainment, & recreation	\$7,575	\$283	\$217,787	\$340
Accommodation & food services	\$36,799	\$1,375	\$804,120	\$1,257
Other services (except public administration)	\$13,902	\$519	\$501,000	\$783

Source: US Economic Census 1997

Wellesley’s educational institutions play an important role in the town—including its economy. There is currently no single source of data available on the economic role in the Town of private schools, colleges, and executive education programs. Payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs), institutional expenditures, and “trickle-down” spending contribute to the town’s economy in many ways. Demand from Wellesley College students and their parents helps support Wellesley Square’s lively mix of shops and restaurants and students from other institutions play similar roles.

Dana Hall School and Babson College have provided data that suggest some of the ways that these institutions benefit Wellesley’s economy:

- Dana Hall has an annual operating budget of \$14 million, and spends \$800,000 on contracted services within Wellesley.
- In 2002-2003 Babson College spent nearly \$5 million in Wellesley, including a \$75,000 PILOT. The school employs 64 Wellesley residents and its 665 full-and part-time employees also patronize local businesses.
- Babson’s Center for Executive Education purchased approximately \$113,000 worth of goods and services from Needham and Wellesley businesses.
- Babson’s 3,300+ students (undergraduate and graduate) spend approximately \$1,420 each on personal expenses, of which half—or \$2.3 million—is estimated to have been spent on campus or in town

Non-Residential Land Uses

Approximately 175 acres of Wellesley’s land area are zoned for non-residential land uses but assessor’s data indicates that 245 acres are in commercial use, 2.3 acres in industrial uses, and 8.5 acres are in mixed uses. Office buildings account for slightly more than 50 percent of the acreage in non-residential land uses, while retail and eating and drinking establishments account for 17%.





With the exception of an increase in the number of office parcels resulting from redevelopment of the MassHighway Depot site, the number of parcels used for different business types has remained stable since 1994. The data also show a reduction in the intervening 10 years of the amount of non-residential land considered developable—down from 3.41 acres to .46 acres.

Although small retail and service land uses do not account for a majority of the non-residential area, their contribution to Wellesley's sense of place is critical. For both residents and visitors, retailing is the most visible sector of the local economy; for residents in particular, maintaining a diverse array of independent retail and service businesses lies at the heart of their understanding of "economic development" in Wellesley.

Business Property and Taxes

Between 2000 and 2004, nonresidential property has dropped almost 3% as a proportion of the total value of all property in Wellesley. This is not because commercial/industrial/personal (CIP) property has declined in value. In fact, the total value has increased 19%. However, in the same period the assessed value of all residential property rose 59%. With the exception of Dover, all of Wellesley's neighboring towns show evi-

BUSINESS LAND USES - 2004

<i>Business Land Uses</i>	<i>No. of Parcels</i>	<i>No. of Acres</i>
Transient Group	4	3.27
Quarters (hotels, motels)		
Nursing Homes	2	2.82
Storage Warehouses, Distribution	1	0.41
Retail: Building Materials	2	0.74
Retail: Shopping Centers	3	4.53
Retail: Small Department Stores	1	0.50
Retail: Supermarkets (over 10,000 sf)	1	1.45
Retail: Small Retail/Services (under 10,000 sf)	64	35.20
Eating and Drinking Establishments (stand-alone)	3	1.16
Auto Sales and Service	7	11.64
Auto Supplies and Service	1	0.22
Auto Repair	2	1.33
Gasoline Stations	9	3.32
Fuel Service	1	1.32
Parking Lots	5	2.49
General Office	92	131.68
Bank Office	6	3.98
Medical Office	4	1.59
Public Service Properties	8	6.16
Indoor Recreational Facilities	1	28.45
Developable Land	3	0.46
Potentially Developable Land	1	0.29
Undevelopable Land	1	0.21
Industrial Warehouse	1	0.42
Electric Substation	1	1.52
Telephone Exchange	1	0.41
TOTAL		245.57
Mixed-Use	12	8.46

Source: Wellesley Assessor's Data 2004

WELLESLEY TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE, 2000-2004

<i>FY</i>	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Commercial</i>	<i>Industrial</i>	<i>Personal Property</i>	<i>CIP%</i>	<i>Total</i>
2000	\$4,198,292,000	\$588,887,000	\$5,011,000	\$39,364,300	13.1	\$4,831,554,300
2001	4,757,723,000	691,400,000	5,421,000	43,969,500	13.5	5,498,513,500
2002	5,776,391,000	832,118,000	6,096,000	54,259,100	13.4	6,668,864,100
2003	6,406,545,000	721,380,000	5,297,000	56,051,200	10.9	7,189,273,200
2004	6,687,379,000	688,831,000	5,428,000	62,123,900	10.2	7,443,761,900

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

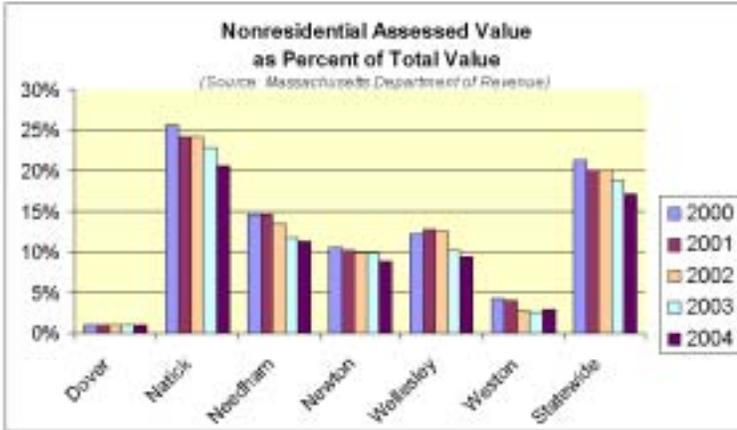
dence of the same dynamic, with a proportional drop in the value of CIP as a percent of the total.

On average, over the last five years business property has paid about 12.2% of the Wellesley tax levy, compared to 1.9% for Dover; 25.3% for Natick; 14.7% for Needham; 11.1% for Newton; and 4% for Dover. All of these communities have seen the same declining proportion of non-residential values because of skyrocketing residential values.

State law permits municipalities to shift some of the residential tax burden onto business, creating a split tax rate. Few communities with less than a 20% nonresidential tax base choose to avail themselves of this option. Among the five towns bordering Wellesley, only Needham and Newton have opted for a split rate.

C. BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

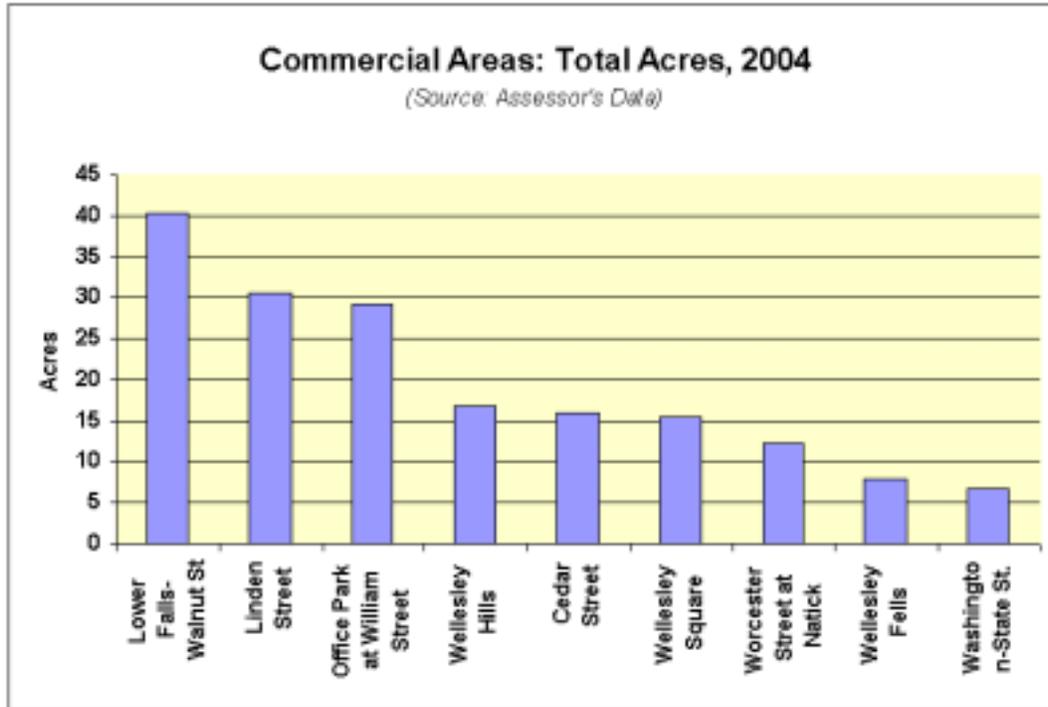
Wellesley’s non-residential areas are primarily located along or near the town’s two major east-west arterial roads, Washington Street (Route 116 and Worcester Street (Route 9). There are three village-style shopping areas: Lower Falls, Wellesley Hills, and Wellesley Square. These are characterized by pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, a preponderance of shops and service businesses with relatively small footprints (square footage), and a mix of independent and chain stores as well as small offices. Now slated for redevelopment, the Linden Street shopping area is expected to become more pedestrian-friendly in design but will still be somewhat auto-oriented because it will continue to be the site of the town’s largest supermarket. Three other commercial areas—Cedar Street, the Fells, and Washington Street at State Street—are small clusters of disparate retail, service and auto-oriented uses, mostly in older buildings with minimal landscaping or other enhancements. The shopping area on Route 9 at the western



2004 PROPERTY TAX RATES - WELLESLEY AND ITS NEIGHBORS

	<i>Residential</i>	<i>CIP</i>
Dover	9.0	9.0
Natick	10.2	10.2
Needham	9.5	18.5
Newton	10.2	19.4
Wellesley	8.6	8.6
Weston	9.6	9.6

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue



town boundary is an extension of the strip commercial development over the line in Natick. Finally, there are office parks on Walnut Street and on Williams Street.

Because the 1994 Plan was written when the region was still in a serious economic recession, there was a strong focus on fostering economic vitality in the Town's business districts, ensuring the continued prosperity of the commercial villages that serve Town residents, enhancing the Town's commercial gateways, and planning proactively for the development of commercial sites. One of the 1994 plan's chief action items called for "a joint Town/Business community study of economic and market trends as they relate to the distinguishing characteristics and market niches of Wellesley's business areas." Then as now, residents focused on the ways to ensure continued contribution by the Town's business base to Wellesley's overall quality of life.

Since completion of the 1994 Plan, the Planning Board has been implementing the Plan's recom-

mendation to do detailed plans of the Town's commercial districts. Five plans have been prepared: Lower Falls/Walnut Street, Wellesley Square, Wellesley Hills, Linden Street, and Cedar Street. Each of the plans developed a vision, analyzed a broad range of issues including the physical and economic character of each area, management, parking, physical improvements, zoning, and permitting and set forth recommended actions. Implementation of the recommendations for three of the plans, Wellesley Square, Lower Falls, and Linden Street are underway. The recommendations of the Wellesley Hills plan have yet to be taken up and the Cedar Street study remains unfinished because of scheduling conflicts.

Below is a set of summaries on issues and opportunities in each of the major commercial areas in Wellesley including a brief review of major recommendations from the 1994 plan and any steps taken implementation. The map includes building footprints in orange and zoning districts as follows: red for Business; pink for Business A; and blue for Industrial.

Wellesley Square—15.4 acres, 28 parcels

Wellesley Square offers a successful mix of independent and chain stores in a pedestrian-friendly environment, attracting shoppers from other towns as well as local residents. Although there are some stores that serve the everyday needs of residents, such as the CVS Pharmacy and some of the clothing stores, many of the stores and restaurants are more upscale. The redevelopment potential of Wellesley Square is constrained by the fact that parcels tend to be rather small and there are many different property owners, with the exception of three contiguous parcels on the north side of Central Street. More mixed-use development and higher densities would depend on allowing higher heights and creating structured parking. The Wellesley Inn, which recently changed ownership, will be redeveloped into luxury condos, which will bring new residents right into the town center.

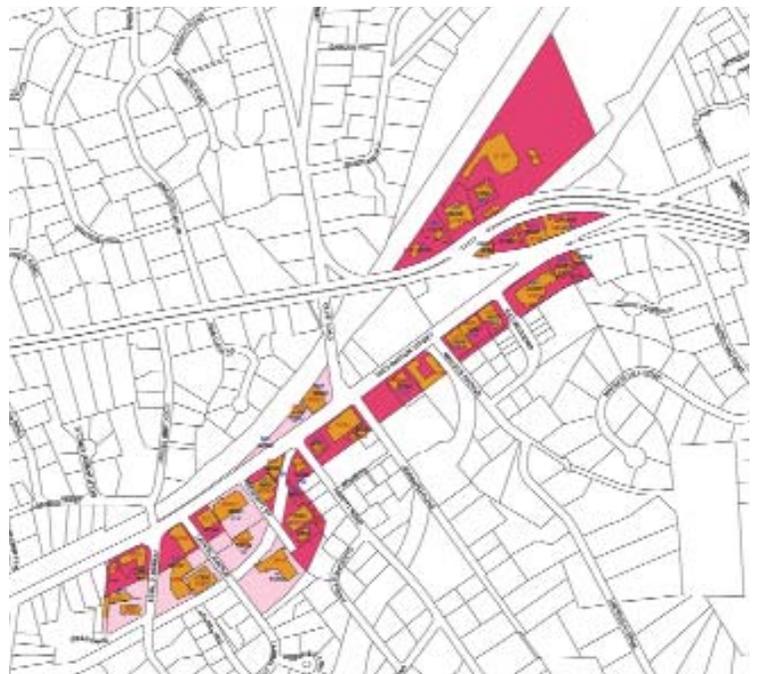


CHARACTERISTICS	ISSUES	1994 RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION
Center of Town's commercial, cultural, and civic activity Mature, built-up business district	Manage change to ensure quality of shopping, mix of uses, pedestrian scale of activity. Maintain presence of independently-owned businesses.	Design review and historic preservation to improve appearance Re-knit commercial uses in the three sub-districts of Lower and Upper Wellesley Square and Church Street Enhance profitability, mix, market, and vitality emphasizing up-scale independent specialty stores and personalized service Review public/private real estate development projects to maximize functioning of Square Formalize role of the Wellesley Square Partnership Make zoning/permitting more user friendly	Vision Plan and Action Plan FARs greater than .3 as of 3/22/04 allowed if site is redeveloped (including demolition) Inclusionary zoning applicable if Project of Significant Impact is under consideration Planning initiated for Post Office Square

CHARACTERISTICS	ISSUES	1994 RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION
Convenience shopping	Traffic congestion and effect on circulation, walkability, and safety	Decked parking at eastern section of Route 9	Vision Plan and Action Plan
High value placed on number and variety of independent businesses	Parking constrains in eastern part	Urban design improvements	Park improvements.
Pedestrian-friendly village character	Lack of coherent visual identity	Rezone as mixed-use Village Commercial District	No zoning changes.
Compact and human-scaled storefronts	Lack of streetscape greenery	Organize business association	
Important landmarks (Elm Park; Clock Tower)			

Wellesley Hills—16.9 acres, 32 parcels

Wellesley Hills is comprised predominantly of relatively small parcels and has many small shops that continue to be occupied by independent businesses providing services and a variety of goods to town residents. Compared to Wellesley Square, it is more of a neighborhood shopping area with fewer boutique-style businesses. Like Wellesley Square, the opportunities for redevelopment would be at a relatively small scale, even with allowances for additional height, shared parking, and structured or underground parking. Zoning amendments recommended in the Vision and Action Plans have not been implemented because there has been no significant development activity in Wellesley Hills in recent years. Nonetheless, the changes should be pursued because current zoning permits parking lots at the street edge and other kinds of development that are antithetical to the pedestrian-friendly village character of Wellesley Hills.



CHARACTERISTICS	ISSUES	1994 RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION
Mix of neighborhood-friendly and regional businesses (especially supermarket) and residences	<p>Maintain balance among businesses and residences.</p> <p>Enhance appearance of the street; improve pedestrian experience and safety.</p> <p>Provide more long-term parking</p> <p>Enhance the street's residential areas.</p> <p>Tie Linden Street to Wellesley Square.</p>	<p>Revitalization of commercial area</p> <p>Improved pedestrian environment</p> <p>Greater variety of commercial uses</p>	<p>Vision Plan and Action Plan</p> <p>Eastern Development aiming to follow 2002 Master Plan via retail and office mixed use</p>

Linden Street—30.5 acres, 19 parcels

Eastern Development has purchased the Diehl's hardware properties and is pursuing redevelopment based on the Linden Street Action Plan. The current proposal is for 290,000 square feet of development, of which 30,000 square feet would be office and the remainder retail, including the relocation of Roche Brothers' supermarket to the northern side of Linden Street. A more pedestrian-friendly character will be created by bringing buildings to the street edge, traffic calming elements at the entrance, and an improved pedestrian environment within the development. The closing of Diehl's hardware made many residents worry whether Wellesley was losing too many of the locally-owned retail and service businesses oriented to the local market. On the other hand, the aesthetic and functional improvements that will come with redevelopment are welcome.

From the point of view of this Comprehensive Plan, however, this project has an unfortunate



flaw—the lack of any provision for housing in the mix of uses. Residents in Comprehensive Plan public meetings repeatedly identified Linden Street as one of the best places in town to create more diverse types of housing and more affordable housing. This was evidently less of an issue when the Linden Street Action Plan was created. The Town may have lost an opportunity to create more housing on this site until the next round of redevelopment sometime in the more distant future.

Lower Falls and Walnut Street—40.3 acres total, 41 parcels

In response to the 1996 “Wellesley Lower Falls Zoning, Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines,” the Town created a set of zoning incentives for the District that were seen as triggers for redevelopment that would in turn enhance Lower Falls’ role as a major gateway to Wellesley. With permitting underway for the first such project, new development has nevertheless been occurring at a slow pace. The Grossman’s site has been in litigation for years. The Town would like housing to be included in any redevelopment of the site, even if a super-market is also part of the project.

Although it is generally discussed with Lower Falls as if the two areas were closely linked, Walnut Street is a district of office buildings, which, with adjacent River Street buildings, occupies 18.9 acres. This office park character is quite different from the pedestrian-friendly village mixed-use district that is the goal for Lower Falls.

A significant number of the parcels in Lower Falls/Walnut Street are owned by a single property owner. This is one condition that provides the potential for easier redevelopment in the future.



CHARACTERISTICS	ISSUES	1994 RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION
Regional location struggling to maintain functions and small-scale character of a village center	Difficult to redevelop because of zoning and off-street parking constraints	Maintain village character	Plan with Design Guidelines
Mix of religious and civic gathering places	High traffic volumes	Improve appearance with attractive storefronts and landscaping	Creation of Lower Falls Village Commercial District (and Residential Incentive Overlay District)
Architectural variety worth preserving in redevelopment	Pedestrian-unfriendly	Improve traffic and parking conditions	FAR above .3, but not to exceed 1.0, subject to special permit
	Underserved with parking	Enhance access to Charles River	Design and development guidelines
		Strengthen Lower Falls as eastern gateway	



Cedar Street—15.9 acres, 16 parcels

The Cedar Street commercial area on Route 9 consists of a variety of land uses including office buildings, car dealerships, gas stations, day care facilities, restaurants, and so on. The buildings are older, the building designs bear little relationship to one another, there is relatively little landscaping, and the area is not pedestrian-oriented. Although this constitutes a node of business uses, the changes of elevation in the district combined with the traffic-intensive barriers of Route 9 and Cedar Street create three small commercial clusters rather than a cohesive district.

Natick Line—Western Gateway—12.3 acres, 17 parcels

Wellesley’s western gateway on Route 9 is a continuation of the strip commercial development over the town boundary in Natick. If it were not for the sign at the town boundary, there would be no distinction between the two areas. Car dealerships and other businesses typical of commercial strips are located here. Despite these conditions, there are some underutilized properties that could be redeveloped to include housing as well as retail. An overlay district to promote better urban design could help transform the aesthetic character of this area over time as properties redevelop. Ten years ago, the towns of Framingham and Natick jointly established a highway overlay district for Route 9 that has been very successful in promoting improvements in landscaping, building design, reduction of curb cuts and improvements in circulation, and other benefits.



Williams Street—Office Park—29.2 acres, 8 parcels

The redevelopment of the MassHighway Depot at this location is a success story that emerged from the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Public workshops and planning resulted in the creation of this successful office park.

The Fells—8.0 acres, 7 parcels

The Fells commercial area is very small and at two different elevations. On the south side of Route 9, a gas station and a commercial building with several retail businesses and parking in front are located at a much higher elevation than the remainder of the district, which is composed of several one-story concrete buildings with a variety of small businesses.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Wellesley’s village commercial districts are a critical element of its livability and identity, but all the retail areas serve important functions. Residents are concerned that upscale boutiques and/or chain stores will replace the Town’s independent retailers.



Continue the commercial district planning and implementation process begun in the 1990s to encompass all the commercial areas

Wellesley implemented the recommendation of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan to prepare district plans for the Town's commercial villages. These plans have proven their value to the town, for example, the new development proposal for the Linden Street commercial area was strongly influenced by the plan, which helped the new owners understand what the Wellesley community wanted to see at that site. Some of the older plans should be reviewed to see if zoning incentives or other aspects need adjustment, and plans for the districts as yet unstudied should be undertaken.

ACTIONS

Review the Lower Falls Village Commercial District guidelines and zoning for a possible increase in incentives for mixed-use redevelopment—housing as well as retail—and enhancement of the area, including the Grossman's site and access to the River.

Amend zoning in Wellesley Hills Square to ensure that any redevelopment proposals will conform to the principles of the Wellesley Hill Square plan.

Create a plan for the Natick Line commercial area. The strip commercial character of the area is unlike most other Wellesley commercial districts: of the 17 parcels in the commercial area, three remain un-built; of the remainder, approximately 100,000 square feet of commercial space has been built on 535,00 square feet of land. There are opportunities to shape development over time by creating an overlay district that would provide incentives for redevelopment that meet town goals. As the Town's western "anchor," the Natick Line offers the opportunity for new development in support of Wellesley's economic mix.

Complete or create plans for the small commercial areas of Wellesley, such as Cedar Street of the Fells, so that their function and appearance improves over time.

Encourage housing development as part of a mixed-use strategy for commercial districts in order to support demand for a diverse mix of retail and services.

A robust mix of retail and services provided by independent businesses, regional chains, and national chains presupposes a strong consumer market. Some of Wellesley's commercial districts attract shoppers from neighboring towns. One of the best ways to support a market for pedestrian-friendly commercial areas is to provide a mix of denser housing—townhouses, condominiums or apartments—within walking distance of retail areas. Residential development supports retail areas far better than office development. The sales volume potential of residents is three times that of office workers.

ACTIONS

Plan and take the initiative to attract housing development in commercial districts where there is development potential. Chapter VI includes conceptual drawings and a more detailed discussion of this potential at several sites.

Provide town funding to support staff time for economic development activities.

Active support for Wellesley's business community and to attract desired businesses takes considerable time and effort. Wellesley's excellent planning staff has many responsibilities.

An economic development specialist can work closely with merchants and other businesses so that the Town can take action, if desired, to retain or attract businesses that meet the Town's goals.

ACTION

Consider creating a half-time economic development specialist position in the Planning Department.

Create a system of regular communication among Town government, the business community, and local institutions in support of Town's economic goals.

Although relationships between the business community and the Town and the institutions and the Town are in general quite good, a more systematic communication process can provide a framework to make sure that each group is kept informed of the future plans of others. These discussions might benefit the town in other ways, such as potential collaboration with the colleges on transportation issues, and so on.

ACTIONS

Enhance Town-business contacts for public-private partnerships. Institutionalize communication links to ensure high degree of responsiveness to changes in the local and regional economic environments, both retail and corporate, and to local issues affecting Town's economic health (e.g., parking). There are a number of ways the Town could convene joint meetings, depending on what would be most useful for the parties involved: quarterly or semi-annually on a staff basis; an annual meeting between the Planning Board and business and institutional interests; an annual meeting between the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and those interests. Among the



groups that should be approached about their views on how best to promote better communications are the Wellesley Square Partnership,



the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce, and other key stakeholders. The agenda and activities of town-business partnerships and town-institutional partnerships would derive from the action items included in the commercial district plans and the Comprehensive Plan.

Consider developing a Wellesley Retail Action Plan (WRAP) to create/coordinate implementation of retail strategy. This would require additional town staff time. Elements of the strategy would include:

- Sustain appropriate development of viable retail markets in each of the Town's commercial districts.
- Articulate major themes for each commercial district.
- Develop marketing positioning statements for each.
- Monitor lease expirations.
- Create urban design guidelines and retail attraction/development strategies for each
- Work with property owners on mixed-use strategies for redevelopment, where appropriate.
- Identify regulatory changes that might be needed to meet Town goals for the commercial districts.

Support and enhance the buildout potential of non-residential property for the purpose of increasing the Town's tax revenue.

Wellesley has a substantial number of office buildings that contribute to the Town's tax base without significant impacts on residential neighborhoods. It may be possible to increase town tax revenue somewhat through allowing more development capacity in office areas or through a split tax rate. Wellesley would not gain large amounts of new tax revenue, but the difference could potentially be significant enough to avoid override votes from time to time.

ACTIONS

Study the potential impact of allowing additional development capacity in Wellesley's office parks.

The Town should study the potential for enhancing the development capacity of office properties (for example, additional height) where more development would not have a detrimental

effect on neighborhoods. In those cases, allowing more development could encourage redevelopment over the long term.

Study the benefits and costs of establishing a split tax rate. State law permits shifting the tax burden from residential to nonresidential land uses, subject to certain requirements. A split tax rate is more common among cities and towns that receive a greater percent of their revenue from nonresidential land than Wellesley. The way the system works is as follows:

- A split rate does not change the total amount of taxes levied; it just determines the share to be paid by the different property classes.
- The non-residential share can be increased only up to 50 percent more than what it would be under a single tax rate.
- The residential share must be at least 65 percent of the single tax level share.

6 Managing Land Use for the Future

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICIES
Strengthen Town zoning regulations and design guidelines, and their enforcement, to ensure continuity of Town character and quality of life	Establish common ground among property owners, builders, and Town government to ensure consensus agreement	Eliminate zoning provisions that are barriers to creation of mixed use and diversified housing in commercial districts. Create on-going design and regulatory marketing and information strategy to educate stakeholders on land use issues related to Town character.
Improve the appearance of Town gateways that need enhancement such as the Lower Falls and Natick Line areas	Distinguish Wellesley's identity at the major entrance corridors to Town	Focus on enhancements to the Lower Falls gateway and creating a plan for the Natick Line area.
Promote a mixture of land uses, including diverse types of residences, in commercial areas.	Meet the Town's need for more housing diversity and to increase the market for a mix of shops and services in commercial districts.	Create guidelines for mixed-use land uses and pursue projects appropriate for Wellesley.

A. LAND USE ISSUES

This chapter focuses on the land use management and regulation challenges that face Wellesley as identified in the planning elements that were the focus of this Phase One of the Comprehensive Plan. Although housing and economic development are perhaps the most important of the land use policies in any community and are likely to have the most impact on land use, the final decisions on land use for the Comprehensive Plan should wait until the completion of Phase Two. The more detailed discussions of transportation,

open space, natural resources, cultural resources and community facilities that will occur in Phase Two will also influence the land use plan.

Reflecting the settled character of Wellesley, changes in land use are likely to take the form of adjustments to prevailing zoning or to prevailing uses rather than full-scale change. Like many older communities in which most of the land has been developed, over time Wellesley has established a number of small and specialized zoning districts, as well as overlay dis-

tricts. The Comprehensive Plan process in Phase One identified several goals related to land use:

- Mitigating the effect of tear-downs and man- sionization on community character
- More diversity in housing types, especially housing that would be attractive to empty- nesters who want to downsize but stay in Wellesley.
- More permanently affordable housing for moderate-income households.
- Improving commercial districts, especially those at Wellesley’s entrance corridors— Lower Falls and Natick Line.
- Preserving independent retail and services in the commercial districts that meet everyday needs.

Most of the land use recommendations on man- sionization focus on how the Town can gain more influence over the design of replacement houses, rather than on more regulation. The exception is the recommendation to create a res- idential site plan review process for replacement homes or additions that result in the new struc- ture being three or more times larger than the old structure. This recommendation does not affect the fundamentally residential use of the land in question.

All the other issues focus attention on a rather small part of Wellesley’s land—the commercial and industrial zoning districts or a few potential sites with specific characteristics. In the com- munity meetings, these were always the loca- tions that people talked about when asked where to locate housing of different types and higher densities. By the same token, the closing of Diehl’s and impending changes to the Linden Street have heightened concern about the char- acter of Wellesley’s commercial districts and how they serve residents.

Adjustments to Wellesley’s Zoning Bylaw

ZONES ALLOWING MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

Zone	Minimum Lot Area/ Dwelling Unit (s.f.)	Total Land Area (acres)
Townhouse	4000	4
General Residence	7000	73
Multi-family	3000	6
Limited Apartment	1800	7
Lower Falls	2500	9
Village Commercial		
Wellesley Square	2500	16
Commercial District		
Business	2500	42
Business A	2500	41
Industrial	2500	19
Industrial A	2500	16
Total Units		

Source: Wellesley Planning Department

Wellesley has “cumulative” zoning, with single residence zones as the most restrictive in terms of land uses. As the allowed residential density increases in other residential zones and then as commercial and industrial uses are allowed in their respective zoning districts, the uses per- mitted in more restrictive districts continue to be allowed. In general, the zoning by-law func- tions quite well and allows the Town consider- able oversight of projects other than single fami- ly home construction.

All the commercial districts allow multi-family residential uses and there are four residential zones that allow more than single family hous- es. Three of those zones cover relatively small areas and were tailored for specific projects that are not expected to change. The General Residence zone, however, covers 73 acres but

allows only two-family buildings and townhouses in addition to single family houses. Opportunities to meet the Town's goals for more diverse and affordable housing types may emerge in the General Residence zone. In order to accommodate this possibility the Town might consider allowing higher densities if the project proponents could demonstrate through a special permit process that the project would meet a set of design and development standards.

Achieving Multiple Goals in Commercial Districts

Participants in the Comprehensive Plan public meetings saw the commercial districts as the only acceptable locations to construct new housing that is not single family housing. A mixed-use approach, combining housing with retail stores, was often mentioned. There are a small number of large, developable sites that could accommodate mixed-use projects or housing, and there are a number of sites with older buildings that could be ripe for redevelopment, particularly in the smaller commercial areas. Linden Street is already the subject of a very significant proposal. The Planning Board is discussing the inclusion of more housing into the project, in addition to the retail and commercial mix originally proposed.

In order to illustrate the wide potential of some of these sites and the importance of design principles and decisions, the Comprehensive Plan consultant prepared a set of mixed-use development scenarios for several sites, the Grossman's site in Lower Falls and two sites in the Natick Line area, the Wellesley Motor Inn, and the St. James's church site. These scenarios show just some of the variety of ways that these sites could be redeveloped to provide more or less housing, commercial, and office space. All of these sites are also linked to water and offer the potential for accessible open space. Some of the scenarios show relatively low numbers of housing units

and surface parking, which is the suburban model that has been the norm on these sites. However, the housing market is so strong in Wellesley that new development of sufficient scale (such as 100 units) could easily support structured parking to share with commercial uses. With underground or structured parking (surrounded by retail), it becomes possible to simultaneously have more housing units and more green open space. At the same time, the additional population living in these commercial areas would help support retail stores and services there. It is important to keep in mind that these drawings do not represent actual development proposals, they are simply concepts that could be used to discuss preferred outcomes with property owners.

Unfortunately, neither of the sites used for the illustrative examples is adjacent to one of Wellesley's commuter rail stations. However, residential uses generate less traffic than commercial uses, so these development concepts would be expected to have moderate traffic impacts. Opportunities also exist near the stations. The Tailby Lot is already the subject of a feasibility study and adjacent parcels could also accommodate additional development and benefit from improved design.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

Meeting multiple goals through redevelopment in commercial districts:

- diverse housing types
- improved town gateways
- more affordable housing
- additional open space



Grossman's Site—Lower Falls





GOSSMAN'S SITE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Conserve the river's edge: create a continuous, publicly accessible green ribbon along the river
2. Establish connections and linkages to the river and site amenities
3. Extend "Main Street" character along the Washington Street face of the site
4. Respect front-front and back-back relationships of buildings
5. Locate residential uses adjacent to existing neighboring residential area



SCENARIO A:
Housing/Supermarket/Retail—
5 Housing Units

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	67,000sf
Office	0sf
Loft (live work)	5 unit
Apartment	0 unit
Duplex	0 unit
T. House	0 unit
S.F.	0 unit
Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	273 spaces
Parking Provided	275 spaces
Structured	0
Deck	0
Surface	275
Garage	0
Net Commercial	67,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	3 units
Max Height	3LVL
Project Density (gross)	1.50U/acres



SCENARIO B: Supermarket/Retail—3
1 Housing Units

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

■ Retail	64,000sf
■ Office	0sf
■ Loft (live work)	6 unit
■ Apartment	25 unit
■ Duplex	0 unit
■ T. House	0 unit
■ S.F.	0 unit
■ Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	251 spaces
Parking Provided	258 spaces
Structured	0
Deck	44
Surface	214
Garage	0
Net Commercial	64,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	31 units
Max Height	3LVL
Project Density (gross)	6DU/acres



**SCENARIO C: Supermarket/
Office/Retail—100 Housing Units**

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	66,000sf
Office	8,000sf
Loft (live work)	20 unit
Apartment	80 unit
Duplex	0 unit
T. House	0 unit
S.F.	0 unit
Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	363 spaces
Parking Provided	370 spaces
Structured	250
Deck	85
Surface	35
Garage	0
Net Commercial	74,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	100 units
Max Height	3VL
Project Density (gross)	190U/acres



**SCENARIO D: Small
Supermarket/Roof Gardens—
54 Housing Units**

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	36,000sf
Office	0sf
Loft (live work)	2 unit
Apartment	52 unit
Duplex	0 unit
T. House	0 unit
S.F.	0 unit
Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	196 spaces
Parking Provided	185 spaces
Structured	0
Deck	80
Surface	105
Garage	0
Net Commercial	36,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	54 units
Max Height	3VL
Project Density (gross)	10.5DU/acres



**SCENARIO E: Small Supermarket—
104 Housing Units
POTENTIAL PROGRAM**

■ Retail Office	36,000sf 0sf
■ Loft (live work) Apartment Duplex	4 unit 100 unit 0 unit
■ T. House S.F.	0 unit 0 unit
■ Open Space	yes
■ *Parking Generated	271 spaces
■ Parking Provided	256 spaces
Structured	170
Deck	70
Surface	16
Garage	0
Net Commercial	36,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	104 units
Max Height	31ft
Project Density (gross)	200U/aces

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

Meeting multiple goals through redevelopment in commercial districts:

- diverse housing types
- improved town gateways
- more affordable housing
- additional open space



Motor-Inn/St. James' Sites—Natick Line





ST. JAMES'S DIVERSE HOUSING SCENARIO
POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	0sf
Office	0sf
Loft (live work)	0 unit
Apartment	100 unit
Duplex	6 unit
T. House	20 unit
S.F.	7 unit
Open Space	yes
Adaptive Use of Church Building	
Net Commercial	0sf
Net Dwelling Units	133 units
Max Height	30ft
Project Density (gross)	18.8/acre





NATICK LINE/ST. JAMES'S SITE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Extend network of streets and paths
2. Re-establish linkages to the water and open spaces
3. Create appropriate development parcels
4. Define placement and physical guidelines for building
5. Create a gateway element at the Natick line gateway
6. Strategically locate parking

SCENARIO A: Retail/Office—
50 Apartments

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	9,500sf
Office	9,500sf
Loft (live work)	0 unit
Apartment	50 unit
Duplex	0 unit
T. House	0 unit
S.F.	0 unit
Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	135 spaces
Parking Provided	128 spaces
Structured	0
Deck	70
Surface	32
Garage	0
Net Commercial	19,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	50 units
Max Height	2.5sv.
Project Density (gross)	21DU/acres



SCENARIO B: Retail/Office—
20 Townhouses/Duplexes/Lofts

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Retail	10,500sf
Office	10,500sf
Loft (live work)	8 unit
Apartment	0 unit
Duplex	6 unit
T. House	6 unit
S.F.	0 unit
Open Space	yes
*Parking Generated	100 spaces
Parking Provided	106 spaces
Structured	0
Deck	0
Surface	84
Garage	22
Net Commercial	21,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	20 units
Max Height	2.5sv.
Project Density (gross)	8.7DU/acres





SCENARIO C: Retail/Office—
55 Diverse Housing Units

POTENTIAL PROGRAM

■ Retail	11,000sf
■ Office	0sf
■ Loft (live work)	9 unit
■ Apartment	36 unit
■ Duplex	0 unit
■ T. House	10 unit
■ S.F.	0 unit
■ Open Space	yes
■ *Parking Generated	118 spaces
■ Parking Provided	102 spaces
■ Structured	0
■ Deck	70
■ Surface	32
■ Garage	0
Net Commercial	11,000sf
Net Dwelling Units	55 units
Max Height	3xL
Project Density (gross)	24DU/acres

Wellesley, like other communities that are close to full buildout, needs to be highly strategic in its planning, seeking to achieve a number of different objectives by identifying development opportunities that solve more than one challenge at a time. In moving forward with a set of interrelated development strategies—residential, commercial, open space, and transportation—and using them as a collective guide to decision-making, Wellesley will be in a position to reduce, if not eliminate, the unintended consequences of managing change as a series of independent activities rather than as an interrelated system.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Make adjustments to zoning to clarify language and provide flexibility.

ACTIONS:

Review the General Residence district to allow a special permit option for projects with higher densities that meet town design standards and other requirements. Of the four residential districts that allow more than single family housing, the General Residence district is the one that covers the largest area (73 acres). The current minimum lot area per dwelling unit is 7,000 square feet. Residents are sensitive to the possibility that an across-the-board increase in the permitted density in this zoning district might create adverse impacts on neighbors. However, well-designed housing at somewhat higher densities could be desirable in some locations. A special permit option tied to findings on design and impacts would provide flexibility while ensuring that the town would be able to control any increases over the base density.

Review the language allowing mixed-use buildings in commercial districts to clarify the

requirements for setbacks and similar standards. Current language is ambiguous because there are different standards for commercial uses and for residential uses, making it unclear which standard prevails in a mixed-use project. The zoning could be amended to provide for specific requirements, or an amendment could provide that certain design and performance standards have to be met in the site plan review process.

Amend zoning in commercial districts, where needed, to ensure redevelopment would retain desired village commercial character. In some commercial districts, for example, Wellesley Hills Square, the potential outcome of existing zoning is inconsistent with the current village character of the commercial district and with the goals for the district as expressed in the Vision Plan. Current zoning in Wellesley Hills allows parking in the front and similar suburban-strip style development. Zoning in commercial districts should be modified to promote pedestrian-friendly design while accommodating cars and parking.

Create an overlay district with design standards for multifamily, nonresidential and mixed uses from Natick Line to Russell Road. The Natick Line commercial district and the southern part of Route 9 that includes the St. James's site and the adjacent office building should be included in an overlay district that encourages improved site design and function as properties are redeveloped in this area. Ten years ago, the towns of Natick and Framingham developed and adopted a common overlay district for their sections of Route 9, which had become increasingly dysfunctional and unattractive after decades of sprawling corridor growth. Over the last ten years, as properties have been redeveloped, these sections of Route 9 have improved and the towns found that the property owners often did not even require the density or other incentives

offered to encourage them to make improvements. An overlay for a commercial district like this one can be surprisingly effective in a relatively short time because, unlike residential areas, retailers need to refresh and redevelop more often in order to stay competitive and attract customers.

Make a plan to recodify the Zoning By-law in the next ten years. The current Zoning By-law is the result of an accretion of amendments and has become increasingly complex over the years. As a result, redundancies, inconsistencies and conflicts have inevitably been introduced. During the next ten years, the Planning Board should make a plan to request funding for assistance to recodify the Zoning Bylaw.

Raise public awareness about and understanding of land use issues in Wellesley.

Residents and other property owners often lack good information about how the land use system works, the technical vocabulary of land use regulation, and the authority of regulatory boards—including the limits on their authority. Many communities have found it useful to create pamphlets or other informational materials.

ACTIONS:

Adapt or develop brochures, guidebooks, and presentations to educate Wellesley residents and other property owners about the land use system. A succinct guide to the land use system and to land use regulation helps property owners when they want to make changes to their property and informs potential developers. Materials developed by others could be adapted to fit Wellesley's circumstances. High school students could be involved in creating these materials through classes or clubs.

Make these materials available through multiple means in Town. Any materials should be made available on the web site, in Town Hall, the

Library, the recreation center, the community center, and the Council on Aging, but they could also be offered to organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, parent organizations, congregations, service organizations, and so on. Flyers publicizing the existence of these materials on the town web site could be included in electric bills or posted in supermarkets and other places frequented by many residents. Members of the Planning Board could also offer to give presentations to community groups. It is usually more effective to go where the people are rather than ask them to come to you. Finally, in some communities Planning Department staff or Planning Board members visit school classes to talk about the physical character of the town and how development occurs.

Promote redevelopment in the commercial districts that meets the Town's goals for mixed-use development and diversification of the housing stock.

In many cases, the changes in land use that the Town would prefer cannot be achieved through a regulatory strategy. Although the zoning frameworks must be in place to allow the Town's preferred development types, in many cases the Town will have to take an active role to work with property owners and even recruit suitable developers.

ACTIONS:

Discuss the potential for mixed-use projects that meet town goals with owners of suitable sites and with possible developers. The development scenarios provided earlier in this chapter illustrate the fact that even in a Town that is largely built out and where there are a limited number of suitable sites for mixed-use development and higher density housing, it is still possible to envision a variety of well-designed options. Similar scenarios could be created for other sites. By sharing these ideas with property owners, the Town can communicate the kind of

development it is seeking. However, the market at any one time may not be completely aligned with Town objectives. For example, at the time of writing, condominiums and not rental housing are the most desirable housing product for the commercial districts from the market point of view. The Town would benefit from creation of rental housing with an affordable component

through a “friendly 40B.” In such a case, it would be worthwhile for the Town to identify potential developers who produce the kind of rental housing with affordable units that would be suitable to Wellesley’s character and begin working with them to bring a development to the Town.