

## II. Public Participation

MetroWest Growth Management Committee (MWGMC) met several times with a committee made up of representatives from Wellesley Planning Board, Wellesley boards and committees, Natick Planning Board and municipal staff.

In addition, the planning process included two public forums for abutters, business owners, property owners and interested residents. The Wellesley Planning Department and the consultant made a concerted effort to include as many stakeholders as possible. The two public forums were held on December 14, 2006 and June 7, 2007. The agendas for these public forums are included in Appendix G. The public forums were advertised in the local newspapers, posted in Wellesley and Natick town halls and on town websites.



Rose Mary Donahue, Wellesley Planning Board - Photo P3

Throughout the planning process, there were several meetings with planning board members and relevant town staff to ensure that the Board's plans for the area were included, and the interests and concerns of town staff were also included.

### Purpose of the first public forum

The purpose of the first public forum was twofold; to familiarize the residents of the two communities with the work being done under the contract and additional MWGMC technical assistance and to poll residents concerning areas to be protected, desirable land uses and impacts to be studied.

### Analysis in preparation for the first public forum

In preparation for the public forum, the Wellesley GIS Department and MWGMC prepared a series of maps. These maps included the following:

- Natural resources
- Water resources
- Transportation
- Economic development and housing
- Topography
- Ortho-photograph of the site

These maps are included in Appendix I.

### The Public Forum Agenda

The first public forum was held on June 7, 2007 at the Wellesley Town Hall. The full agenda for this forum is included in Appendix G. After presenting an overview of the project and previous studies that were done for the site, MWGMC and MAPC posed the following questions to the attendees:



Ken Soderholm, Natick Planning Board - Photo P4

### Open Space/Natural Resources

1. *There are natural resources within the study area. Which natural resources should be*

*protected?*

- 2. The study area is adjacent to town-owned land where either playing fields or trails could be placed. Is this an important factor to consider when planning future development and/or redevelopment?*
- 3. The aqueduct is a regional historic asset. Should it also serve as a trail system?*

### **Housing**

- 1. Is this study area a location where Wellesley can make some progress in ensuring that Wellesley is affordable for your children?*
- 2. What creative opportunities can we take to provide a range of housing types and densities?*
- 3. Would the study area be a good location for “empty-nester” housing?*

### **Economic Development**

- 1. Are their improvements that can be made within the study area to keep the commercial life of Wellesley viable?*
- 2. Is additional commercial and/or industrial development needed or wanted in this study area to support the tax base? If so, how could that be accommodated?*
- 3. Should mixed use development be a major component?*
- 4. Should the study area become a business district that would serve nearby neighborhoods?*

### **Transportation**

- 1. Are additional sidewalks necessary? Where and why?*
- 2. Other than sidewalks, what improvements should be made to make pedestrians safe?*
- 3. Where are the most dangerous sections of roadways or intersections?*
- 4. What steps can Wellesley take to encourage alternative modes of transportation and energy efficient transportation in the study area?*
- 5. Is parking in the study area insufficient at present? How can it be improved?*
- 6. Is it important to create off-road connections between lots/businesses in the study area?*

**Rick Brown, Wellesley Planning Director - Photo P5**



**Public Forum - Photo P6**



**Aesthetics**

1. *The study area is the gateway to Wellesley. What should be done to visually improve the study area?*
2. *Overhead utility wires are often viewed as a blight on an area. Is burying the overhead utilities important to the future success of the study area?*
3. *Is signage an issue within the study area?*
4. *Landscaping can be an important factor in creating an attractive setting. How important is landscaping in redevelopment within the study area?*

Meghan Jop, Wellesley Assistant Planning Director, presented a history of zoning and land uses within the study area. Mark Racicot of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Donna Jacobs, MWGMC Director asked for input on each subject area. Then MWGMC conducted a “show of hands” voting exercise to determine the number of

**Public Forum - Photo P7**



participants in support of each idea.

The following tables present the data that was gathered throughout the public process. The first table, P1, identifies the items that the attendees felt were assets that could be built upon as well as what they like about the area at the present time.

<b>Table P1. Assets and Likes</b>	
Open space – topography/aqueduct	Morse’s Pond watershed
Oldest family operations (history)	Major trail abuts area
Signature Place - Defines the town	Route 9 is regional access/egress
Offices provide jobs	Residential corridor

Retail area – need more	Automotive center – provides services / jobs
Diversity of uses	

Table P2 identifies the items that the participants believed to be real challenges to future development or redevelopment, and also identified their dislikes.

<b>Table P2. Challenges and Dislikes</b>	
Traffic	Flooding
Landscaping requirements	Major trail abuts area
Culvert on Route 9 at south end of Morse’s Pond is inadequate	Health of Morse’s Pond -surface runoff
Commercial encroachment of residential areas	Creating neighborhood retail – walkable
Morse’s pond water levels	Need traffic & pedestrian lights
Town is not developer-friendly	Drinking Water
Parking requirements	Road Noise

Table P3 reports the participant’s perceptions of Opportunities for Change, and they are reported in order of the highest number of votes.

<b>Table P3. Opportunities for Change</b>	
Less hostile, easier permitting process	12
Purchase remaining piece of aqueduct	12
Encourage investment in commercial properties as potential solutions to challenges	12
Address issue of flooding off of Route 9 and raise in level of Pond due to improper/inadequate maintenance of culvert that is outlet to pond.	11
Protect/maintain conservation land from infringement	9
Engagement & Commitment from state regarding Oak Street / Route 9	8
Need infrastructure improvements – water, power, drainage	5
Add Community/Neighborhood scale businesses and amenities – focus on community services	5
Quality of Development = rising tide	5
Diverse Housing – starter/smaller homes, empty nesters/seniors	5
Integrated development with surrounding park land	4
Opportunities to envision changes for larger tracts (St. James, Motor Inn)	4
Provide for pedestrian scale –crosswalks/lights	4
Community needs – encourage/explore open space and recreation	3
Beautification - Bury utilities, more landscaping	3
Possible green space at St. James	2
Use LID to make surface water improvements	2
Increase tax base – encourage expansion	1

As you can discern from the results reported in the tables above, the residents and business people who participated in the two public forums emphasized the dichotomy through their votes establishing their perception of the assets and likes as well as the

Table P4. Relationship to Sustainable Development Principles	
Principle	
Redevelop first	Yes
Concentrate development	Moderate
Be fair	Moderate
Restore and enhance the environment	High
Conserve natural resources	High
Expand housing opportunities	Moderate
Provide transportation choice	Moderate
Increase job opportunities	Moderate
Foster sustainable development	High
Plan regionally	High

challenges and dislikes. However, with respect to the opportunities for change, the results were surprisingly similar.



surprisingly similar.

Photos P8 and P9 provide visual proof of the dichotomy. The westbound gateway viewscape is dramatically different from the eastbound entry to the gateway. As you approach the Weston Road exit on Route 9 heading westbound, there isn't a noticeable difference from the viewscape further to the east, which consists primarily of homes nestled among the natural

Westbound Gateway - Photo P9

resource areas bordering the Route 9 corridor.

During the public forums, residents stated that the current Wellesley West Gateway is not consistent with the character of the Town of Wellesley, and that is an unattractive gateway to the community. Photo P10 below provides an aerial viewpoint that further proves the existence of a dichotomy.



Virtually all participants recognized the potential for change within the study area, and the opportunity to create a more attractive and cohesive gateway area. The closing of the St. James the Great Catholic Church and the likely redevelopment of the Wellesley Motor Inn both offer obvious opportunities for change. There are opportunities for redevelopment that are not as obvious, such as some potential for parcel assembly were also discussed at the two public forums.

**Study Area, Aerial View of Area at Wellesley/Natick Town Boundary - Photo P10**



Based on the input received at the two public forums and from the Planning Board, Planning Director, Town Planner and other department heads, the plan for Wellesley's West Gateway is carefully designed to ensure that the West Gateway will provide a high quality of life to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Study Area, Aerial View of Central Portion of Study Area - Photo P11



Study Area, Aerial View of Area near Weston Road - Photo P12

