



Neighborhood Conservation Districts ~ NCD's "Giving Neighborhoods a Voice"

A VOICE FOR WELLESLEY'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Article 58 is an enabling bylaw which, if passed by a majority vote of the 2007 Town Meeting, will permit the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) in Wellesley. The bylaw sets forth the process for creating these NCDs, and it describes how they will be governed. No actual NCD is created by Article 58, but passage of the bylaw is required before such a District can be created.

WHY a Neighborhood Conservation District Bylaw for Wellesley?

Since 2000, 305 homes have been demolished in various neighborhoods throughout the Town. The existing zoning laws provide no protection against incompatible new construction that can significantly alter the environment of surrounding houses and the neighborhood itself. Other communities throughout the country have found that one of the most effective means to provide individual property owners with a say in the development of their neighborhood is the NCD. An NCD is a mechanism by which neighborhoods may elect to develop their own guidelines for construction and alteration in order to allow development in a neighborhood without destroying its special character. Under Massachusetts law, Wellesley must first pass an enabling bylaw before any neighborhood can petition to form an NCD.

WHAT is a Neighborhood Conservation District?

An NCD is a legally designated area that can protect property owners in distinctive neighborhoods which may not be eligible for protection as Historic Districts. Unlike Historic Districts, an NCD is concerned with neighborhood characteristics, rather than the architectural details of individual buildings. Unlike zoning districts, an NCD doesn't create dimensional or numerical standards. Rather, an NCD, through design guidelines tailored to meet its particular needs, and through administration by its own NCD Commission, encourages construction and alterations consistent with its character.

HOW is a Neighborhood Conservation District created?

Once Article 58 is approved, and the bylaw is in place, a series of steps is required to create an NCD: (1) at least 80% of the property owners in a neighborhood petition the Historical Commission, asking to be designated an NCD, describing the eligibility of the neighborhood, and submitting a map of the proposed area and preliminary guidelines for the NCD; (2) the Historical Commission approves the proposal and establishes a study committee; (3) the Historical Commission and Planning Board jointly hold a public hearing to discuss the study committee's report; (4) the Historical Commission and Planning Board recommend the NCD to Town Meeting; (5) following acceptance by a majority vote at Town Meeting, an NCD Commission is appointed to oversee the NCD.

WHO benefits?

Current owners, builders and new buyers all benefit from a sense of long-term stability in Wellesley. Growth and updating occurs, while at the same time neighborhood character is preserved. The whole Town benefits by offering a range of housing options and remaining one of the most desirable, attractive places to live in greater Boston

**CONTACT the Wellesley Historical Commission for Information at
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