



CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Town of Wellesley is a mature suburban community located in the hills southwest of Boston. First settled in the 1630s, Wellesley became an independent town in 1881. Since then, Wellesley has developed as a predominantly residential community with neighborhoods of distinctive character from all periods of late nineteenth and early, mid, and late twentieth century growth.

These Historic Preservation Design Guidelines are intended as a community-wide resource to inform decision making about changes to older residences from all eras throughout Wellesley. They may also serve as a resource for the Town's Historic District Commission in the review and approval of proposed changes in accordance with the Town's Historic Districts Bylaw.

The design principles outlined in the guidelines and their suggested application to specific types of features, materials, and conditions common to historic residences may be useful to property owners as they consider changes to their historic properties.

WELLESLEY'S DISTINCTIVE HISTORIC CHARACTER

Wellesley's location within the Greater Boston Metropolitan Area and close proximity to the area's urban core has resulted in intensive growth and development since the Town's establishment in 1881. Direct commuter access to the urban core by road, rail, and trolley has dramatically influenced the type, timing, and location of this development.

The early importance of Washington Street, Worcester Street, and others as regional transportation routes established early rural agricultural, village, and estate development patterns. By the time of the Town's establishment, real estate investments in planned residential development tracts typical of a commuter suburb were beginning to occur.

The 1897 Atlas of the Town of Wellesley shows the extent of building and development present at that date. Along Washington Street and the railroad line, large tracts are shown platted for development with streets and lots, only a few of which had yet been built upon. In northern, southern and western portions of the Town, the estate landscapes shown were more open and rural. The presence of prominent places such as Wellesley College and the Hunnewell Estates have enhanced the reputation and prestige of the entire community as a desirable place to live.

Between 1897 and the present, Wellesley has been intensely developed as an affluent suburban landscape. Washington Street has filled in as a commercial and institutional corridor. Most characteristic of the Town, however, are the residential neighborhoods that have spread across Wellesley, with new neighborhoods added throughout the twentieth century.

Wellesley's residential neighborhoods are of distinctive character. They feature many

homes of architectural merit set within mature community landscapes of great appeal. The Town's relative affluence has facilitated investment in high quality design as continued growth has increased the density of residential development.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In 1978, the Town's Historical Commission sought to protect one of Wellesley's earliest neighborhoods in the vicinity of Washington and Cottage Streets as a Local Historic District. Designated by the Town in 1980, the Cottage Street Historic District is comprised of a variety of types of residences constructed between the 1860s and 1910, the earlier of which were modest "cottages" constructed in conjunction with a nearby industrial enterprise before the beginning of suburbanization.

As of this writing, the Cottage Street Historic District is the only neighborhood historic district in Wellesley. However, over the years several individual residences have been established as Single Building Historic Districts by owners wishing to encourage their preservation.

A number of other residential neighborhoods dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could be appropriate for designation as Local Historic Districts should residents be interested in the public recognition and preservation protections provided through designation. Local Historic Districts are discussed further in Chapter 4 of these Design Guidelines.



PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These Historic Preservation Design Guidelines were commissioned by Wellesley's Historic District Commission as a resource for property owners within the Cottage Street Historic District and four Single Building Historic Districts to provide guidance in making changes to their historic residences. They are a resource and guide to the preservation and enhancement of historic character within Wellesley's historic residential neighborhoods.

The Design Guidelines outline the character defining qualities and features of residences within the historic districts and provide guidelines for accommodating change while preserving and building upon those qualities and features. They emphasize best practices of historic preservation and specifically address issues associated with preservation and stewardship within historic neighborhoods.

Maintenance and the appropriate treatment of authentic historic fabric is a key aspect of stewardship. Recognizing that change will continue to occur, the Design Guidelines provide guidance for adaptations to historic residences when necessary and for additions and new construction.

The Design Guidelines are a resource to inform decision making about change over time. Rather than providing an answer for every situation, the guidelines outline concepts and principles important to the character of historic residences and suggest how they may be applied. Every situation presents a combination of issues and opportunities that may differ depending upon their context. The information and guidelines included here will help property owners and designers appreciate and respond appropriately to varying situations and issues.

The chapters and sections of the Design Guidelines can serve as a checklist outlining items that should be considered when contemplating change within a neighborhood's historic context. The guidelines provide a strong philosophical foundation that is nonetheless flexible and adaptable to varying circumstances.

Additionally, guidelines can sometimes inspire creative and sensitive solutions that were not envisioned when a project was first proposed. The best outcomes are those that meet the needs of residents while preserving the elements that define historic building character.



USE IN THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

As discussed in Chapter 4, *The Application Review Process*, the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines will guide the Historic District Commission in the review of proposed construction projects in Local Historic Districts as required by the Town's Historic District Bylaw.

Availability of the Design Guidelines to property owners and designers as they are planning projects not only provides them with guidance in best practices, it is also informative regarding the criteria by which applications to the Historic District Commission will be assessed.

Property owners and designers should use the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines when planning construction projects within the Cottage Street Historic District and other Local Historic Districts designated by the Town. Early consultation with Town staff and the Historic District Commission regarding proposed changes is strongly recommended.



USE WITHIN WELLESLEY'S OTHER HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

The Design Guidelines are also useful in neighborhoods that have not been designated as historic districts. Though the examples shown in the Design Guidelines are taken from the Cottage Street and other Single Building Historic Districts, the topics discussed and advice given are common to historic residences in neighborhoods throughout the Town.

Current Town-wide issues regarding historic residential buildings include:

- Proposed demolition in order to replace existing historic buildings with new, larger residences;
- Inappropriate additions and changes to historic residences that adversely impact their historic character and integrity; and
- The construction of new residences that are inappropriate (often out of scale) with the character of existing residences within a neighborhood.

Wellesley has adopted regulatory mechanisms such as Demolition Review and Large House Review to help mitigate these issues. These Design Guidelines will be useful in the assessment of conditions, impacts, and appropriate responses with respect to these bylaws and their review processes.



ORGANIZATION OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These Historic Preservation Design Guidelines are organized into seven chapters. The first four chapters provide background and context. The final three chapters outline the design guidelines and are illustrated using examples from the Town's Cottage Street and Single Building Historic Districts.

Chapter 1, Introduction, provides a brief background, summary, and overview of the Design Guidelines.

Chapter 2, Wellesley's Historic Districts, describes the Town's existing Local Historic Districts outlining their character, context, and change over time.

Chapter 3, Design Principles for Historic Preservation, presents the philosophical basis and ideas for best practices for historic preservation that are then applied to conditions and features in Chapters 5 through 7 of the Design Guidelines.

Chapter 4, The Application Review Process, outlines the review process conducted by the Historic District Commission for proposed projects within the Town's Local Historic Districts as required by the Historic District Bylaw.

Chapter 5, Historic Building Materials & Treatments, reviews common issues and appropriate treatments for types of materials used in historic buildings, including wood, masonry, stucco, and metals.

Chapter 6, Treatment of Historic Building Features addresses issues and treatments associated with key features in historic buildings, such as roof features, siding and detailing, doorways, windows, porches, and site elements.

Chapter 7, Additions and New Construction, provides guidelines for the design of additions to historic buildings and the design of new buildings in an existing historic context.

It is the hope of the Historic District Commission that these design guidelines will prove useful not only to home owners within the Town's historic districts but to owners of historic residences throughout Wellesley. We appreciate the care and respect that residents have for the Town's historic character, and we look forward to assisting in preserving that character through the common stewardship of our historic resources.





View of a portion of South Cottage Street, Cottage Street Historic District



View of a portion of Weston Road, looking north, Cottage Street Historic District