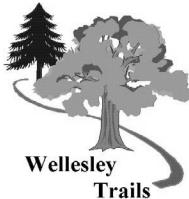




WELLESLEY TRAILS COMMITTEE

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To: Advisory Board
 Natural Resources Commission
 Select Board
 Planning Board
 Zoning Board of Appeals
 From: Trails Committee
 Date: October 17, 2023
 Subject: Special Town Meeting Article 15, Sisters of Charity property at 125 Oakland St

Centennial Reservation is a place of beauty. It has forests, meadows, a pond, streams, and hillsides with extensive views. It is the most used and popular reservation in Wellesley. In 1980, the town's Centennial Committee purchased the reservation land from the Sisters of Charity. In 2004, when changes in use were proposed, Town Meeting overwhelmingly voted to preserve Centennial Reservation in its natural state and to continue the town's legacy of retaining conservation land for the benefit of Wellesley residents. Open space and outdoor trails enhance our residents' mental and physical health.

A proposed Special Town Meeting Article put forward by the Sisters of Charity would amend the zoning bylaw in such a way that they should be able to more easily sell their property at 125 Oakland St., which is adjacent to Centennial Reservation. The Trails Committee is concerned the proposed changes could negatively impact the woods, wildlife, trails, and use by future generations. Once open space is lost, it's gone forever.

To protect the use and enjoyment of the reservation, the Trails Committee supports a conservation restriction around the perimeter of the Sisters of Charity property.

In addition, the Trails Committee supports the following constraints:

1. Retain the existing unbuilt, wooded perimeter of 125 Oakland to preserve the views, quiet, and character of the woods for people walking in the reservation and animals living there.
2. Retain the existing setbacks of 125 Oakland to preserve the views, quiet, and character of the woods for people walking in the reservation and animals living there.
3. Restrict new building heights at 125 Oakland to protect existing views and wooded areas and to protect against changes in sunlight or shade that could negatively impact the reservation's woods, wetlands, meadows, wildlife, and trails.

4. Restrict nonporous pavement area to protect against increased water runoff and drainage that could negatively impact the reservation's woods, wetlands, meadows, wildlife, and trails.
5. Establish formal trail easements, or other legal protection, for two Centennial Reservation trail sections that cross Sisters of Charity property:
 - a. 70 foot trail section crossing the southwest corner of the property, and
 - b. 120 foot trail section that exits NRC land at the southeast corner of the property and connects to Oakland Street.

Let us follow in the footsteps of how this reservation was conceived and protected, and prevent any development that would be detrimental to the landscape and character of this valuable town treasure. This land is important and should be protected for use by Wellesley residents now and in the future.