



STAFF REPORT

Town of Wellesley – Planning Department

Application:	Public Hearing – Wellesley Square Commercial District Special Permit for Increased Density
Subject Property:	592 Washington Street
Applicant:	592 Washington LLC
Property Owner:	592 Washington LLC
Date:	Report prepared 4/9/26 1/23/2026 for 4/12/26 1/26/2026 Planning Board Meeting
Staff Contact:	Brad Downey, Senior Planner

OVERVIEW OF APPLICATION

Please find attached materials constitution an application for a Special Permit for the Wellesley Square Commercial District for construction of a multi-unit housing project at an increased density than what is otherwise allowed without a Special Permit. Namely, the request is to permit a reduction in the 2,500 square foot minimum lot area required for residential dwelling units in the Wellesley Square Commercial District, in order to permit the addition of nineteen dwelling units with the revised project on the site located at 592 Washington Street. The proposed project would provide 1,887 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit for a total of nineteen total dwelling units within the 35,861 square foot Development Area.

The project will be subject to Zoning Bylaw Section 5.7 Inclusionary Zoning.

STATUTORY/REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Per Zoning Bylaw Section 5.2.C.3 Area Regulations:

“In the Wellesley Square Commercial District, the 2,500 square foot minimum lot area requirement per Housekeeping Unit for whose habitation such building is designed, set forth in Section 5.2.C.2 above, may be reduced to no less than 1,800 square feet for each Housekeeping Unit for whose habitation such building is designed or adapted subject to the terms of a special permit granted by the Planning Board, acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority, in accordance with the following performance standards:

- a. A report shall have been received from the Design Review Board finding the proposed project is consistent with the design criteria listed in Section 5.5 and that the project is an improvement of building facades to enhance the pedestrian experience and contribute toward the history and vitality of Wellesley Square; and*
- b. All whole Assisted Units required to comply with Section 5.7 (excepting any fractional Assisted Unit) are to be constructed on the Development Area; and*
- c. There shall be provided for each project a minimum open space, as defined under Section 1.3, equal to at least twenty percent (20%) of the Development Area; and*

d. There shall be provided for each unit parking for two vehicles.”

Section 5.2.C.2 states *“In Educational, Business and Industrial Districts and in Educational Districts A, Educational Districts B, Lower Falls Village Commercial District, Wellesley Square Commercial District, Business Districts A and Industrial Districts A there shall be provided for each apartment house, apartment hotel, hotel, inn or town house, hereafter constructed or placed therein a lot containing not less than 2,500 square feet for each Housekeeping Unit for whose habitation such building is designed or adapted or the minimum area required for lots in the area regulation district in which the building is located, whichever is greater.”*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the performance standards of Zoning Bylaw Section 5.2.C.3 Area Regulations, Planning Staff has made the following findings:

- a) On January 7, 2026, the Applicant went before the Design Review Board to receive a report finding that the proposed project is consistent with the design criteria listed in Section 5.5 and that the project is an improvement of building facades to enhance the pedestrian experience and contribute towards the history and vitality of Wellesley Square. At that meeting, the Design Review Board motioned to make such a finding, voting favorably 4-0. Therefore, Standard A has been met.
- b) Per the application, there will be 4 Assisted Units associated with the proposed project (21% of all units), will be located on the Development Site. Therefore, Standard B has been met.
- c) Per the application, the Development Area is 35,861 sq. ft., with 14,703 sq. ft. of open space proposed on site. To meet this standard, at least 20%, or 7,172 sq. ft. must remain as open space. The Applicant is providing roughly double the minimum required open space. Therefore, Standard C has been met.
- d) Per the application, the proposed project will have 38 parking spaces servicing a total of 19 residential units. Therefore, Standard D has been met.

Staff recommends the Planning Board approve the requested special permit for increased density at 592 Washington Street, a property located in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

Following discussion at the January 12, 2026, meeting, Planning Staff reached out to Town Counsel for further clarification. Town Counsel confirmed that any conditions must be both reasonable and appropriate.

Conditions regarding size and massing of the structure can be made only to the extent that it relates to the findings of the Design Review Board. Additional comments can be made during the Planning Board review of the Site Plan Review application submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

As landscaping is not within the scope of PSI, conditions on landscaping can be made during the Planning Board review of the Site Plan Review application submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The most appropriate interpretation of the parking requirement would ensure at minimum a total of 38 parking spaces. If the Board wishes to impose conditions to the distribution of those parking spaces or the reservation of spaces for visitors or deliveries, it has the right to do so.

Conditions related to traffic, circulation, pedestrian access and safety, and public safety response can be made during the review under the Project of Significant Impact.

The Planning Board should be cautious of imposing any conditions that may be inconsistent with a condition or decision made by the Zoning Board of Appeals under Site Plan Review.

BOARD ACTION

The Planning Board may continue the public hearing, adopt a motion consenting to the requests, or adopt motions rejecting the requests. Motions consenting to or rejecting the requests should reference the consistency, or lack thereof, with the criteria provided in Zoning Bylaw Section 5.2.C.3.

Attached Documents:

- 1. Planning Board Application Form for Wellesley Square Commercial District Special Permit, prepared by 592 Washington, LLC***