



# *Historic and Cultural Resources*

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**W**ellesley residents value the historic buildings and neighborhood character that can be found in many parts of town. The town's most iconic historic building, the Romanesque Revival Town Hall, is scheduled for external restoration work and internal renovation over the next ten years at a total estimated cost of \$24 million, with most of the work to be done by 2022.

At the same time, Wellesley has been traditionally reticent about regulating changes in historic private properties. Following recommendations in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, the Town created several single-building historic districts and authorized the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts, one of which was adopted. In 2017 Town Meeting adopted demolition delay for single-family residences dating before 1950. As a result, Wellesley now has access to all the historic preservation tools available to Massachusetts towns. Over the next ten years covered by the Wellesley Unified Plan, an important set of tasks will focus on refining and implementing tools for historic preservation.

The Town has access to a variety of cultural resources, from concerts, exhibitions, and lectures at the colleges to Recreation Center activities, community music, art, and theater groups, and programs for children and youth. However, unlike some comparable towns, Wellesley does not have a community visual and performing arts center. There is a constituency for an arts and culture center, and the lack of space has made it difficult for some groups, such as the Wellesley Players, to continue to operate. Arts and culture centers elsewhere are typically managed and funded by nonprofit organizations with the

collaboration and support of town governments in some way. The ten-year period of this Unified Plan offers an opportunity to identify options, cultivate a constituency, and create a business plan.

### ***Supporting Town Government Concepts***

***The Unified Plan's emphasis on making town government more customer-centered, data-driven, and strategic is reflected in this chapter, including strategies to complete the historic inventory and raise public awareness.***

## **A. Historic And Cultural Resources In The Vision And Values**



### ***Vision***

In 2040, Wellesley is a town recognized for....respect for the environment and support for sustainability, conservation, and protection of physical and historical assets



### ***Values***

**Town Character:** Establish policies, practices and criteria for the preservation of the character of the town's residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, and open spaces.

## **B. Goals And Policies**

GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
<b><i>Wellesley preserves cultural resources, including cultural landscapes, to maintain and enrich community character.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support initiatives to inventory historic properties and establish clear and understandable criteria and guidelines for historic district and demolition delay requirements.</li> </ul>
<b><i>The Town government continues to maintain the character of its historic buildings, such as Town Hall.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain historic character through renovations and retrofits.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Wellesley is developing a permanent arts and culture center.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek options to support performing and visual arts activities for Wellesley cultural organizations and artists.</li> </ul>



## C. Findings And Challenges

### FINDINGS

#### ***Historic Resources***

- Wellesley has three National Register Historic Districts (Hunnewell Estates, Sudbury Aqueduct Linear District, and Cochituate Aqueduct), seven individual National Register properties, four Single-Building Historic Districts and one Local Historic District.
- Except for buildings in the Single-Building Historic Districts and the Cottage Street Local Historic District, most of Wellesley's historic properties are not protected in any way from external alterations.
- At the 2017 Annual Town Meeting, Wellesley adopted a demolition review bylaw for review of proposed demolition of single-family houses buildings dating from 1949 or earlier. If the buildings are determined by the Historical Commission to be preferably preserved, they are subject to a twelve-month delay before a demolition permit can be issued. During the delay period, the owners are encouraged to work with the Historical Commission to find a way to preserve the historical significance of the building while providing desired changes.
- Wellesley has one Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD), Denton Road, and a study committee has been established for a potential Standish Road NCD. NCDs are created when residents of a specific area vote that they would like to preserve certain aspects of the character of the area.
- The historic structures and places on the National Register include:
  - › The Eaton-Moulton Mill, ca. 1853
  - › Wellesley Farms Railroad Station, ca. 1893
  - › Wellesley Hills Branch Library, ca. 1927
  - › Elm Park and Isaac Sprague Memorial Clock Tower, ca. 1928
  - › The Intermediate Building ca. 1894
  - › Wellesley Town Hall ca. 1881-85
  - › Wellesley Congregational Church and Cemetery, ca. 1918-22
  - › Fuller Brook Park ca. 1899
- The single-building historic districts include:
  - › 379 Weston Road
  - › 38 Lowell Road
  - › 26 Elmwood Road

- The Wellesley Historical Society, a private educational and advocacy organization, is cataloging its materials.
- The Historical Commission is researching properties from 1881 to 1914 for plaques to add to the plaques already in place for properties from before 1881.

#### ***Scenic roads***

- The Town has designated seven scenic roads under MGL Chapter 40, Sec. 15C. Requests for activity within the right of way that could damage trees must go through a public hearing before the Planning Board. The designated scenic roads are:
  - › Benvenue Street
  - › The Brookway
  - › Cartwright Road
  - › Cheney Drive
  - › Pond Road
  - › Squirrel Road
  - › Brookside Road

#### ***Cultural Resources***

- Wellesley has a number of art and performance groups including:
  - › Wellesley Symphony Orchestra
  - › Wellesley Chamber Players
  - › Wellesley Choral Society
  - › Wellesley Players
  - › Wellesley Society of Artists
  - › Wellesley Repertory Theater
  - › Wellesley Theatre Project (pre-K to 12th grade)
  - › Wellesley Community Art Project (community artists showcased in retail properties)
  - › World of Wellesley
- Wellesley College, Babson College, MassBay Community College, and Dana Hall School all have arts and cultural events open to the public.
- The Warren Building/Recreation Department includes an art studio.
- There is limited performance or art space in Wellesley outside of the colleges. The Wellesley Symphony Orchestra has been the orchestra in residence at MassBay Community College since 1984 and the Wellesley Repertory Theater is in residence at Wellesley College. Most performing arts groups must find performance space outside Wellesley. There is no community arts center in Wellesley similar to



the Umbrella Community Arts Center in Concord, the Munroe Center for the Arts in Lexington, or the Arlington Center for the Arts.

## CHALLENGES

- Expanding public awareness of the range of historic resources and properties in Wellesley
- Promoting the economic benefits of historic preservation
- Providing examples of modern renovations compatible with the historic origins of buildings
- Lack of private nonprofit or public-private arts coordinating arts organization

## D. What The Community Said

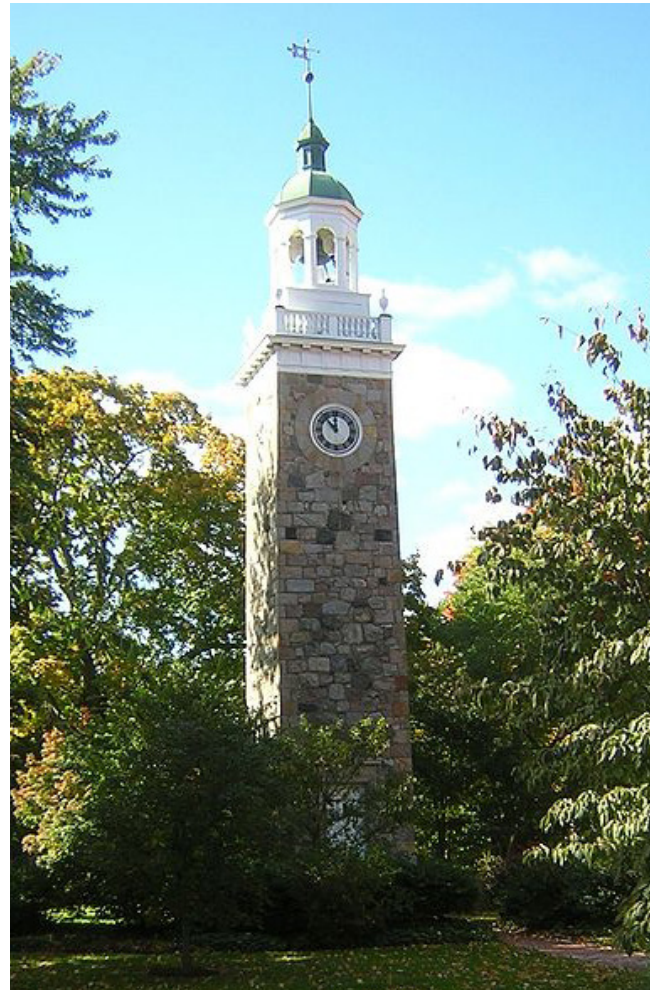
### *Themes in public meetings and surveys:*

- Widespread concern about teardowns of older buildings
- Need for performing and visual arts spaces, in Wellesley or in conjunction with neighboring towns

### *Workshop*

Participants were asked to identify the next steps for historic preservation:

- Look into roles of Historic Districts and historical comm. to see if there is a benefit in combining—are there overlaps?
- Town establish design guidelines for historic renovations
- Count trees in preservation efforts
- Preserve and renovate town hall—do a better job utilizing beautiful design elements of building
- Historic landscapes—Lake Waban, Mass Bay, land around town hall
- Building awareness—strategies that don't take away from natural surroundings. Build curiosity and the desire to research and learn. Watch the signage and don't pollute. Possibly more historic districts.
- Increased use of NCDs
- More single building historic districts
- Support Form B submissions
- Address the commercial area for 1) preservation 2) creative affordable and reasonable mix uses



- Preserve as much as possible of Hardy and Hunnewell facades

Participants were also asked whether Wellesley should have an arts and culture organization with performing and visual arts space, and if so, should the town support this goal and how would it do so?

- If an empty school building becomes available, consider it for performing arts center
- Can we co-develop an arts center with/at MassBay CC?
- Integrate into other building projects
- Yes, perhaps look at the community center
- Yes to having an arts center/can the community center be redeveloped to support visual, performing arts- including studio space.
- Collaboration between rec/library/community council on aging, etc. and health department



## E. Strategies And Actions To Achieve The Goals

### Goal 1: Wellesley preserves cultural resources, including cultural landscapes, to maintain and enrich community character.

#### Policy

- Support initiatives to inventory historic properties and establish clear and

understandable criteria and guidelines for historic district and demolition delay requirements.

### STRATEGIES

- A. Create a historic property inventory by documenting historic properties eligible for State and National Register listing and submit the forms.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <i>Work with the Historical Society to identify historic properties for documentation.</i> The National Register of Historic Places Program has guidance publications for documentation and the Massachusetts Historical Commission has standard inventory forms for buildings, structures, objects, bridges, areas, parks and landscape features, burial grounds, streetscapes, and archaeological sites.	2018-2022	Historical Commission; Historical Society
ii. <i>Provide funding to the Society or to a historic resources consultant to prepare the forms.</i>	2018-2022	Town Meeting
iii. <i>Create priority categories or criteria for historic properties outside of local historic districts to be used in preservation efforts and demolition delay cases.</i> As the inventory of historical sites proceeds, the Historical Society and the Historical Commission can work together to develop Wellesley-specific categories and priorities for preservation.	2023-2028	Historical Commission
iv. <i>Create a historic property inventory database on the Town website.</i> This information should be available on the website, ideally as part of a Town data warehouse.	2023-2028	Historical Commission; IT

- B. Provide guidance to property owners and regulators on how to preserve historic character.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <i>Identify categories of historic styles common in Wellesley.</i>	2018-2022	Historical Commission; Design Review Board
ii. <i>Develop design standards and criteria for use in determining Certificates of Appropriateness in local historic district properties.</i> These standards and criteria should be appropriate to Wellesley and more specific than the Secretary of the Interior's standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Town Meeting has allocated some funds for this purpose.	2018-2022	Planning Department with Historical Commission
iii. <i>Use historic categories and criteria for the purposes of the demolition-review bylaw for determining whether a property is preferably preserved.</i> Adopt and make public a guidance document for decision making.	2018-2022	Historical Commission; Planning Department



### Historic Preservation Design Guidelines

Newton has developed publications that explain historic preservation priorities, options, and requirements.

[www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/histpres/design.asp](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/histpres/design.asp)



- C. Develop a historic landscape plan for Wellesley.** The Town could obtain assistance at limited cost by working with graduate programs of groups and institutions such as the New England Landscape Design History Association, the Conway School of Landscape Design, the Landscape Institute at the Boston Architectural College, and others.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <b>Develop a scope for a historic landscape plan.</b> The Historical Commission and the Natural Resources Commission can develop a basic scope for the plan and explore opportunities with graduate programs.	2023-2028	Historical Commission; NRC; Planning Department
ii. <b>Integrate the plan's recommendations into maintenance programs for the town's historic landscapes when complete and adopted by both Commissions.</b> The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (located in Charlestown) has a relevant publication, <i>Guide to Developing a Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape</i> , available online at <a href="https://www.nps.gov/oclp/Guide%20to%20Developing%20a%20Preservation%20Maintenance%20Plan%20for%20an%20Historic%20Landscape.pdf">https://www.nps.gov/oclp/Guide%20to%20Developing%20a%20Preservation%20Maintenance%20Plan%20for%20an%20Historic%20Landscape.pdf</a> .	2023-2028	Natural Resources Commission; DPW

**D. Expand public awareness of historic preservation through awards programs, illustrative materials to promote compatible renovation of historic properties, and developer and contractor education.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Send notices once a year to property-owners in the local historic districts explaining when they need a Certificate of Appropriateness and how to get one and make this information available to realtors.	2018-2022 and ongoing	Historical Commission; Planning Department
ii. Send notices once a year to owners of State and National Register listed properties, if not in local historic districts, to raise awareness about the historic value of their properties and encouraging voluntary consultation with the Historical Commission when making renovations. Make this information available to realtors.	2018-2022 and ongoing	Historical Commission; Planning Department
iii. Provide information sheets on historic styles common in Wellesley that show how to make historically-sensitive renovations. There are many sources of information available online from other municipalities that could be helpful models.	2018-2022	Historical Commission with Planning Department
iv. Create an award program for historic preservation. The Historical Society can develop an award program to highlight excellent historic preservation and adaptive reuse projects.	2023-2028	Historical Society

**E. Improve the Neighborhood Conservation District process.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Review and amend the NCD bylaw to simplify the process while still requiring significant consensus. The process now requires 80% of owners to sign a petition to begin the process. To initiate the NCD study, a somewhat smaller percentage, such as 70% or 60%, might be suitable, while retaining the higher percentage for final adoption. This would provide the opportunity to persuade reluctant property owners during the study process.	2023-2028	Historical Commission; Planning Board; Planning Department
ii. Prepare an information sheet that succinctly explains the purpose and process for setting up an NCD.	2023-2028	Planning Department



- F. Combine the Historical Commission and Historic District Commission.** One Town entity dedicated to historic preservation can provide more coherent leadership on these issues and give all commission members more experience in dealing with the regulatory aspects of historic preservation.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <i>Combine the Historical Commission and the Historic District Commission.</i>	2023-2028	Town Meeting

## GOAL 2: TOWN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN THE CHARACTER OF ITS HISTORIC BUILDINGS, SUCH AS TOWN HALL.

### Policy

- Maintain historic character through historically-sensitive renovations and retrofits.

## STRATEGIES

- A. Preserve Wellesley's iconic town-owned buildings and structures, while providing functional interior workspaces and up-to-date energy-efficiency.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <i>Identify key historic exterior and interior design features of Wellesley's iconic Town buildings and incorporate them into renovations and retrofits.</i> Design of the restoration of the building envelope and renovation of the interior are underway in FY2018.	2018-2022	Permanent Building Committee; Facilities Management Department

## GOAL 3: WELLESLEY IS DEVELOPING A PERMANENT ARTS AND CULTURE CENTER.

### Policy

- Seek options to support performing and visual arts activities for Wellesley cultural organizations and artists.

## STRATEGIES

- A. Develop leadership and a constituency for an arts and culture center in Wellesley.**

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. <i>Strengthen the Wellesley Arts Alliance.</i> The Town could give limited assistance to the Alliance to organize into a nonprofit that can develop a business plan to create and manage a community arts center in Wellesley.	2018-2022	Town Meeting; Alliance volunteers
ii. <i>Investigate options such as use of the community center, integrating into other building projects or facilities not in current use.</i>	2023-2028	Alliance volunteers
iii. <i>Collaborate with the Recreation Department, Library, Health Department, Council on Aging, and the Public Schools.</i> Collaborating with relevant departments in Wellesley will help the Arts Alliance create a constituency for an arts center.	2023-2028	Alliance volunteers; Planning

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
<p><i>iv. Develop a fund-raising and location campaign for an arts and culture center.</i></p> <p>Suggested locations for an arts and culture center include any town building not being used, like the former school buildings and firehouse that house arts centers in Lexington, Concord, and Natick. The Cheever House, currently owned by Wellesley but scheduled for eventual sale, was also suggested as an option, should the Town acquire it in the future.</p>	2018-2022	Alliance volunteers; Library; Council on Aging; School Department

### Arts Centers in Similar Communities

#### LEXINGTON

The Munroe Center for the Arts in Lexington is run by Lexington Friends of the Arts, a nonprofit organization, as a community arts center with six visual and performing arts schools for all ages, 11 low-cost artist studios, a gallery, and arts events. The Town owns the building, the organization pays rent to the Town and maintains the building, and the schools and studio artists pay rent.



#### CONCORD

The Umbrella Community Arts Center is managed by a nonprofit organization that leases the building [a former school] from the Town. It includes 50 artists' studios, four teaching studios for classes and workshops, a gallery, and a 435-seat theater. The nonprofit is responsible for programming, operating, building maintenance, and capital improvement costs.

#### NATICK

The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN), a nonprofit organization, owns the historic firehouse in downtown Natick that includes a 290-seat theatre, art gallery and community center with space to accommodate art exhibits and administrative offices. TCAN serves the entire MetroWest region and has a strong fundraising program.