

Town of Wellesley North 40 – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the Town interested in buying the property?

Given a number of ongoing needs, the Town is potentially interested in acquiring this property. Examples of these needs include the desired renovation/replacement of several elementary schools, ongoing demand for more playing fields and a desire for additional Town-controlled open space.

2. How will the Town determine if it is interested in buying the property?

The Board of Selectmen has asked the Planning Board and School Committee for their initial thoughts regarding potential municipal uses for the property. The Selectmen are forming a Committee to undertake a more comprehensive study and visioning effort for the potential municipal use of the property. This Committee will include representatives from a number of Town boards and the neighborhood. The work of the Committee will involve multiple opportunities for public and the meetings will be held in compliance with Open Meeting Law requirements. Further details regarding the makeup of the Committee and the Committee's work plan will be provided shortly

3. What would the property cost?

No asking price or firm value has been established for the property. Wellesley College is currently performing an appraisal and the Town will obtain its own independent appraisal.

4. With the pending override and school facilities projects that are planned, how could the Town afford to buy the property?

It is likely a significant portion of the acquisition cost could be funded by Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, either by use of funds on-hand, or by borrowing against future years' CPA surcharges. Any use of CPA funds must be supported by a qualifying use, i.e., open space, recreation, affordable housing or historic preservation. The use of CPA funds would help to reduce the amount of additional funds the Town would need to borrow. Given the potential magnitude of the tax-impact borrowing it is likely a debt exclusion would be required, which would necessitate a town-wide vote.

In assessing the affordability of this potential acquisition, the Selectmen remain mindful of the:

- Long-term impact the development of this property would have on the Town
- Uniqueness of this opportunity, i.e., there are no other undeveloped parcels of land in Wellesley of this size and quality
- Long-term plans for our School system, and the potential implications to the cost and timing of the planned school renovation projects
- Other capital project priorities

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- Short and long-term financial needs and resources of the Town

5. What are the implications to the planned purchase of the Crevo property?

The Selectmen remain firmly committed to the purchase of the Crevo property. The location of the former American Legion site near the center of town and in walking distance to the Library, Town Hall, Senior Housing, police department, grocery stores, etc., make this an excellent location for the Senior Center, as evidenced by the 83% favorable vote of Town Meeting. However, the Selectmen welcome any feedback from the Study Committee on the acquisition of this property as it pertains to the Town's acquisition and development of the North 40.

6. What are the implications to the planned purchase of 900 Worcester?

The Town recently extended the Purchase and Sale Agreement for the purchase of 900 Worcester Street for another year. This acquisition remains subject to the satisfactory completion of the Town's due diligence, which will not be undertaken until we receive authorization to proceed from the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. As a result, there are currently no assurances this acquisition will be completed. Similar to the Crevo property, the Selectmen welcome any feedback from the Study Committee on the acquisition of this property as it pertains to the Town's acquisition and development of the North 40.

7. What is the current zoning of the property and how many house lots could be created?

The property is zoned Single Family Residential with a 15,000 square foot minimum lot size (SRD15), which allows the construction of a large number of one-family dwellings, by right. The exact number of lots that could be created would depend on how the property is laid out and how a developer would utilize the 5 acre +/- land-locked parcel between the railroad tracks and Route 135. The zoning also allows educational, religious and municipal uses.

The Town's new Natural Resource Protection (NRP) Development bylaw, approved at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting will apply to any subdivision generating 5 or more lots. This bylaw requires a minimum of 50% of the property be preserved as open space in exchange for reduced lot sizes (to a minimum of 7,500 square feet in the SRD15 district) without increasing density.

Subdivisions that have a development potential of 5 or more lots are also required to comply with the Town's Inclusionary Zoning bylaw, which requires the creation of .20 affordable units for each dwelling unit created, i.e., 20% of the units must be deemed affordable, as defined under State law.

Lastly, the property is within the Water Supply Protection Zoning District defined in the Town's Zoning Bylaws, which requires a special permit for projects that result in impervious surfaces over 10,000 square feet in area. The zoning prohibits specific uses that could generate hazardous wastes including petroleum products, chemicals, car repair/servicing. The intent of the zoning provision is to mandate new projects have clean fill, recharge all on-site storm water runoff, and prohibit the re-grading of soil less than 5 feet above groundwater unless it can be proven that groundwater quality will not be affected.

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8. How will the Town's permitting requirements govern the potential development of the property?

Generally speaking, new lots with sufficient frontage (100' in SRD15) on a public way (e.g., Weston and Turner Roads) could be developed via the Approval Not Required (ANR) process, as defined under Subdivision Control. Developments that follow this process are "by-right", and involve minimal Town oversight.

The development of additional lots on the interior of the North 40 parcel requiring the creation and construction of new roads must follow Subdivision Control and the Town's Rules and Regulations governing the subdivision of land. This process would require the Planning Board's approval of the subdivision plan and compliance with Zoning Bylaw provisions related to Natural Resource Protection (NRP) Development and the Water Supply Protection District.

Projects involving the construction of single and two-family dwellings are specifically exempted from the Zoning Bylaw's Project Approval provisions, which encompass the Project of Significant Impact (PSI) permitting requirements.

9. How will the neighbors be protected against the traffic impacts of a large development?

There are various levels of traffic reviews that could be triggered, depending on the type of development sought. For Approval Not Required Plans there is no traffic study requirement arising from the creation of new house lots. For any new subdivision that is deemed to generate 30 or more vehicle trips in any single hour of the day, traffic impact data and analysis is required and evaluated in the Planning Board's decision; the analysis must include existing traffic conditions at the existing connections including peak hour volumes, speed, level of service as compared to post-development traffic volumes, level of service of intersections and streets at the proposed point of intersection of the new street system. If the Planning Board finds the data shows that the street does not have adequate construction or will not have adequate capacity, alternative designs to address the problems must be created and approved by the Planning Board.

Construction of a new school or other large, non-residential project would be subject to the Town's PSI special permit approval process, which requires an in-depth Municipal Systems Impact Analysis, including a traffic study. Such a study would analyze the traffic impacts of the proposed development and require the development and evaluation of various approaches for mitigating adverse impacts.

10. Given the historic use of a portion of the property as a landfill, and the potential for contaminated fill originating from Paint Shop Pond, how would the Town deal with the potential environmental risks?

Any acquisition by the Town would be preceded by and conditioned upon a comprehensive program of due diligence, including a M.G.L. Chapter 21E Environmental Site Assessment. Ultimately, any construction on the former landfill area will require further engineering analysis.

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11. What are the implications of the vernal pool near the intersection of Weston and Turner Roads?

It is unlikely the vernal pool will be impacted by development of the property. Furthermore, the land area of the pool and surrounding 200' buffer area would be excluded from the total land area used for purposes of determining the total number of developable lots in a Natural Resource Protection Development, and, as a Primary Conservation Area, would likely be required to be permanently preserved within the retaining open space of such a development.

12. What will happen with the Community Gardens?

The College has encouraged plot holders to go ahead and plant for this season. Longer-term, the continued use of the land for this purpose will depend on whom acquires the land and how they choose to develop it. If developed under the Natural Resources Protection Development provisions, retaining the Community Gardens would qualify as part of the minimum required open space.

13. What are the implications of the property lying near the Town's wells?

It appears from initial investigation that no portion of the property lies within a Zone I or II Wellhead Protection Area, as defined in the MassDEP's (Department of Environmental Protection) rules and regulations, for the Town's wells. However, it appears that at least some portion of the property lies within Zone II for certain Wellesley College wells. Similar to the Water Supply Protection District Zoning Bylaws, this may restrict the types of uses that might be permitted.

(Also see answer to Question #7 regarding the property lying within the Water Supply Protection Zoning District.)

14. How would a developer access the portions of the property that lies between the Town-owned Cochituate Aqueduct and Route 135?

A developer would likely request permission from the Town to access the portion of the property that lies between the Aqueduct and the railroad tracks by construction of a new road over the Aqueduct, or via an extension of Turner Road. Either scenario would require permission from the Town.

Accessing the portion of the property that lies between the train tracks land and Route 135 would most likely require an additional curb cut on Route 135, which would require MassDOT permission.