

# Wellesley Comprehensive Plan Update 2007–2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is Wellesley's fourth Comprehensive Plan. Wellesley is a successful community because it has always been willing to invest in planning for the future. As a mature residential suburb that is barely growing, the Town faces challenges that are not the result of population growth but reflect the Town's enviable position as one of the most attractive, successful and sought-after communities in Massachusetts.

Phase One, completed in 2004–2005, focused on the following elements:

- Town goals and priorities for the future
- Housing
- Economic development
- Land use

Phase Two, completed in 2005–2006, focused on:

- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Open Space and Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Implementation

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Town-wide survey
- Seven public meetings, town-wide and by precinct
- One meeting with business and institutional stakeholders
- Steering Committee meetings open to the public
- Committee member visits to Town boards and commissions to review progress and gain additional input
- Comprehensive Plan web site
- Draft Plan review

### Housing

#### PRESERVE

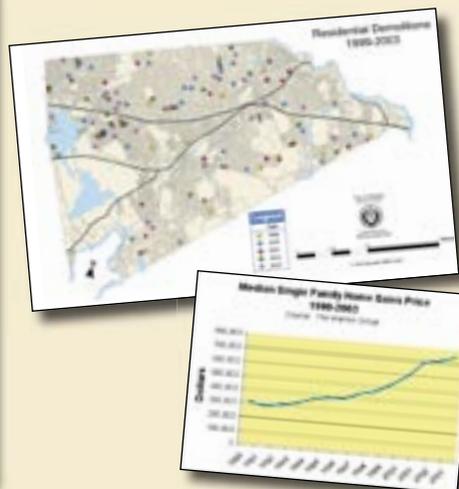
- The Town will continue to have a majority of single-family homes.

#### CHALLENGES

- How to manage the effect of teardowns and large replacement houses on neighborhood character.
- How and where to provide more variety in housing types and more affordable housing cost for empty-nesters, Town employees, and young adults who grew up in the Town and would like to continue to live here.

#### HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish site plan review for large replacement houses to provide an opportunity to discuss design impacts on the street and the neighborhood.
- Explore allowing the establishment of Neighborhood Conservation Districts to preserve neighborhood character through review ranging from completely advisory to regulation of selected changes.
- Create advisory design guidelines for neighborhoods.
- Identify opportunities to create townhouses, condo and multi-family housing types in commercial areas.



### Economic Development

#### PRESERVE

- Maintain the character of village commercial districts.
- Maintain a diverse array of independent businesses and businesses that serve the daily needs of residents.

#### CHALLENGES

- How to effectively incorporate more housing in commercial districts to create a mixed-use environment with residents who will support local businesses.
- Whether to seek more nonresidential tax revenue.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a plan for the Natick Line commercial area and town gateway that incorporates housing opportunities.
- Encourage housing development where feasible in commercial districts.
- Study the pros and cons of allowing more development capacity in office parks or establishing a split tax rate in order to get more nonresidential tax revenue.

## Land Use

Reflecting the settled character of Wellesley, changes in land use are likely to take the form of adjustments to prevailing zoning or to prevailing uses rather than full-scale change. However, a recodification of the zoning bylaw is recommended in order to eliminate inconsistencies, improve clarity, and resolve any contradictions that may have crept into the zoning bylaw as it has been amended over the years.

### LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recodify the zoning bylaw.
- Consider mandatory cluster development zoning for the few remaining large open space parcels lacking conservation restrictions. Development is not currently considered likely, but mandatory cluster zoning will help ensure preservation of open space character through limited development if these parcels are proposed for development.
- Create mixed use development frameworks for commercial district sites with potential for housing and mixed use development in order to understand the options for appealing design alternatives.



## Natural and Cultural Resources

### PRESERVE

- Restore and preserve natural areas, water resources, biodiversity, and wildlife habitats.
- Enhance community understanding of the value of cultural resources and promote the preservation of historic buildings, sites, and landscapes.

### CHALLENGES

- How to reduce non-point source pollution from private landscaping practices and regional activities in upstream communities.
- How to expand conservation lands in an expensive land market.
- How to increase awareness of the economic and aesthetic value of historic properties.
- How to expand public knowledge about historic preservation.

### NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to minimize non-point source pollution caused by stormwater runoff through public awareness and regulation.
- Continue to restore and manage ponds to avoid eutrophication.
- Continue to enhance the Shade Tree Program.
- Promote public awareness of Wellesley's history and the benefits of historic preservation.
- Maintain the historic integrity of Wellesley's neighborhoods by initiatives, such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts, that will help protect historic properties and landscapes.
- Expand the scope of potential preservation projects by seeking non-local funding and partnerships and private donations.

## Open Space and Recreation

### PRESERVE

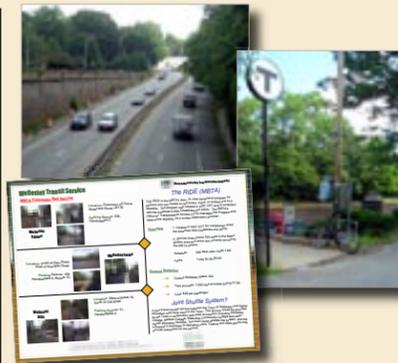
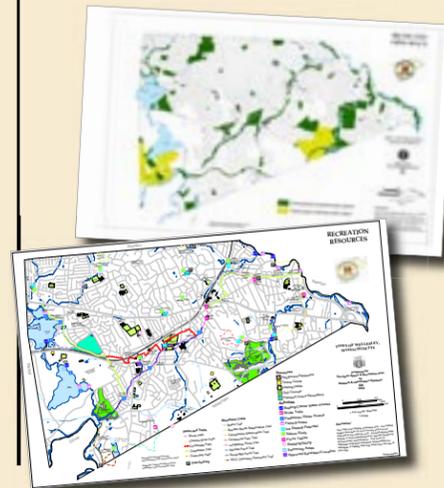
- Provide permanent protection for Town-owned open space and preserve additional passive and active recreation space as needed.

### CHALLENGES

- How to provide additional open space for a growing number of users in a built-out market with high land prices.
- How to improve maintenance of current open space and recreational facilities as use increases.
- How to balance competing demands for active and passive recreation space.

### OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to protect and enhance open space in Wellesley, including through agreements with institutional partners.
- Pursue greater connectivity of open spaces on a local and regional level.
- Conduct a recreational needs assessment and seek management options that will allow more productive use of Town-owned and private active recreational space rather than converting passive into active open space.
- Continue to develop recreational programs that will fit the needs of Wellesley's changing population.



## Transportation and Circulation

### PRESERVE

- Maintain mobility and safety in neighborhoods and on major roads.

### CHALLENGES

- How to improve arterial traffic flow and reduce local street traffic cut-throughs and speeding.
- How to provide more alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel.
- How to enhance transit and pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- How to provide adequate parking in commercial areas.

### TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Actively participate in regional transportation planning.
- Continue implementation of new technologies to address traffic growth.
- Improve traffic safety and correct high-hazard locations.
- Explore the possibility of a shared-use shuttle bus system.
- Implement stronger Transportation Demand Management strategies that will reduce overall traffic demand on the Wellesley road system.
- Implement new parking management programs in parking lots.
- Consider developing a Sidewalk Plan.
- Create a Town-wide Bicycle Plan.

## Public Facilities and Services

### PRESERVE

- Maintain school excellence by providing updated educational facilities and continue to provide high-quality Town services and facilities.

### CHALLENGES

- How to fund needed facility improvements on a short- and long-term basis.
- How to finance additional staff when needed.
- How to add additional community meeting space.
- How to track the condition of and systematically manage infrastructure and capital assets.

### PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue improving school facilities.
- Investigate the possibility of using schools as "community centers" to supplement other meeting places and recreation facilities.
- Develop a systematic approach to asset management.
- Consider increasing fire and police staff to address shortfalls.
- Develop a uniform policy for street acceptance and a system for the maintenance of private streets.
- Construct an expanded DPW operations building and a new Municipal Light Plant facility.



## Stewardship and Implementation

Effective implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require a group of leaders to monitor progress and facilitate actions needed to carry out the goals of the plan. The Planning Board has made a special effort to include input from numerous Town boards and commissions, and all of these entities should act as stewards of the plan. Broad community participation as the plan moves forward will ensure that its recommended actions are undertaken and that its goals are achieved.

### STEWARDSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATION

- Create a system to review the goals, strategies, and actions of the comprehensive plan update at the five-year mark.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

### Planning Board Members

Thomas Frisardi  
Rose Mary Donahue  
James C. Meade  
Sue Wright  
Edward Chazen  
Frank S. DeMasi  
Chris Chan

### Town Meeting Precinct Representatives

Gerald C. Hume, Precinct A  
Richard McGhee, Precinct B  
Jacqueline Hatch, Precinct C  
Joellen Toussaint, Precinct D  
Henry Lysaght, Precinct E  
Barbara McMahon, Precinct F  
Judith Hull, Precinct G