

Town of Wellesley Profile

The Town of Wellesley was incorporated in 1881 and is located in Norfolk County. Wellesley is a primarily residential community located approximately 15 miles west of Boston and is bordered by Natick on the west, Weston and Newton on the north, Needham on the east and southeast, and Dover on the south. It is approximately 10.51 square miles in area and, according to the 2020 U.S. Census records, has a population of 29,550 persons.

The main highways serving the Town are State Routes 9, 16, 135, 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides railroad services to Boston and Framingham.

The Town operates under the Representative Town Meeting form of government with public officers serving as ex-officio members of the Town Meeting. The legislative body consists of 240 members elected by precincts. Administrative affairs of general government are managed by a five-member Select Board and an Executive Director.

Local school affairs are administered by a five-member School Committee; public works are administered by a three-member Board of Public Works; the Municipal Light Plant is administered by a five-member Municipal Light Board that is comprised of the three-member Board of Public Works and two members appointed by the Board of Selectmen; and library affairs are administered by a six-member Board of Library Trustees.

General governmental services are provided within the town's boundaries, including public education in grades kindergarten through twelve, police and fire protection, collection and treatment of sewage, water distribution, electric services, public works, streets, parks and recreation, veteran's services, health and sanitation, and libraries. The water and sewer enterprise funds are self-supporting. The Town maintains a solid waste recycling and disposal facility.

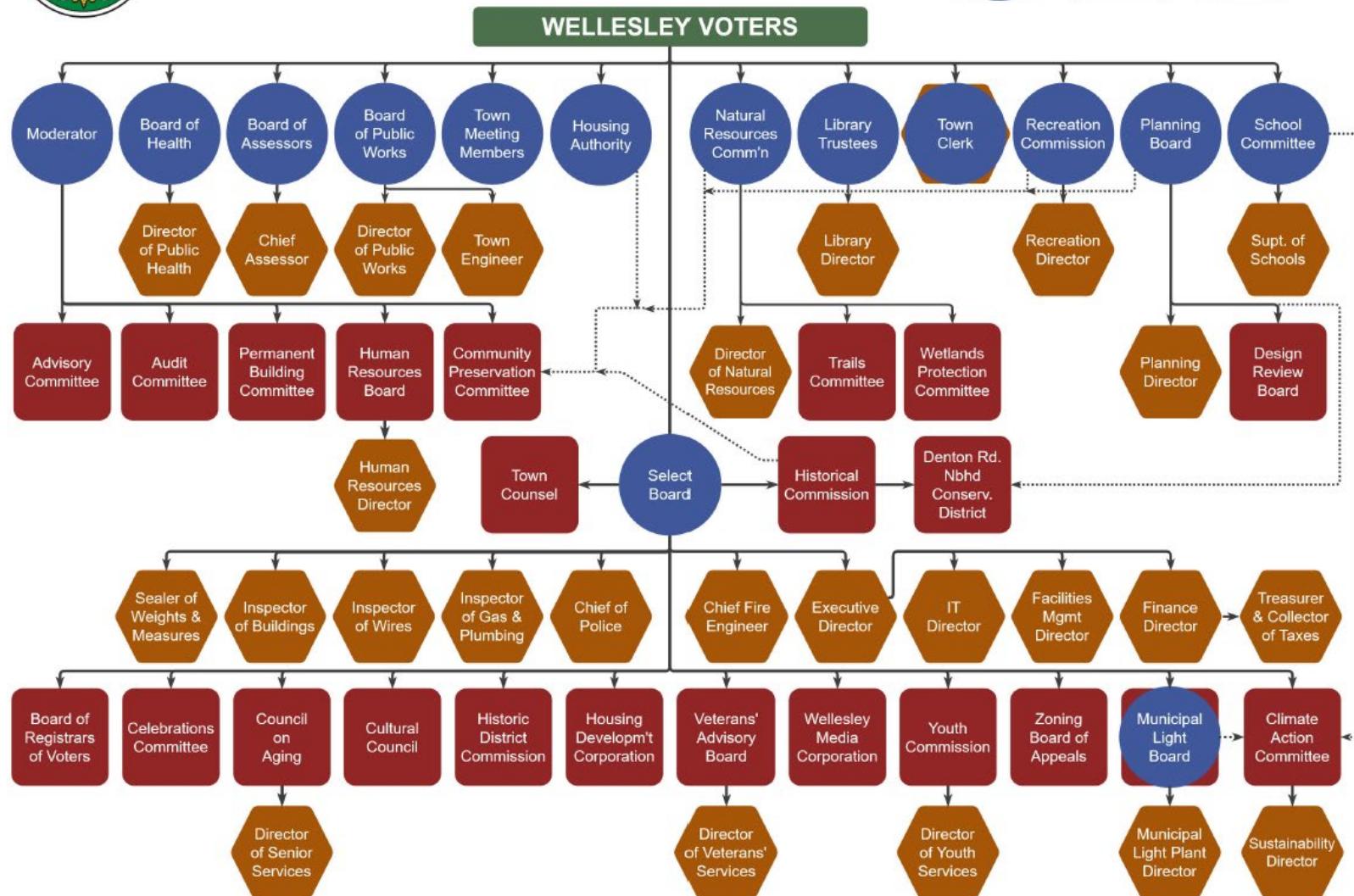
The Town owns and operates a self-supporting municipal light plant. The Municipal Light Board carries out the responsibilities of the Municipal Electric Commissioners as outlined in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 164.



TOWN OF WELLESLEY

Government Organizational Chart

Elected (Blue circle)
Appointed (Red square)
Town Employee (Orange hexagon)



Local Economy

The Town continued to be impacted by the novel coronavirus, Covid19, during fiscal 2021. A number of local businesses closed. Others had to reduce hours because of staffing shortages or find other ways of doing business. Raw materials and commodities became scarce, and some “non essential” government services were reduced. The pandemic inspired many private citizens and those in Town government to work together to assist local businesses; by relaxing dining and alcohol regulations, providing PPE, and volunteer labor. The slowing of traditional non-emergency services led to more focus on outreach to vulnerable populations, technology improvements that facilitated remote student learning, and remote working opportunities. The implementation of remote meetings allowed for more citizen engagement.

The Town’s economy and employment levels continue to improve. Wellesley remains attractive to educated urban professionals whose wealth levels are among the highest in the Commonwealth. While the per capita household income in Massachusetts is higher than national levels, Wellesley’s (\$182,353) is third highest in the Commonwealth and more than four times the State average. The relative wealth is also seen in the owner- occupied median housing value, which, at \$1,171,000 is more than twice that of the state and four times that of the nation. The Town is densely populated, and land is increasingly valuable. Tear downs and residential improvements, though slowed for several months, continue to contribute to steady permit fee revenue and taxable new growth. The Town benefitted from being 87% residential and able to rely upon collecting real estate and motor vehicle tax revenues and to generate more investment income, compared with other municipalities.

The Town continues to manage its financial affairs in a prudent manner. It has maintained its “excellent” bond rating of Aaa by incorporating long range planning tools such as a Town-wide Financial Plan; maintaining reserve levels; investing in technology; maintaining facilities to avoid costly emergency repairs; continuing an aggressive pay-as-you-go financing strategy for capital improvements and utilizing the dedicated revenue streams from debt that is exempt from the constraints of Proposition 2 ½ to finance some of its larger projects. The significant pay- as-you-go strategy proved especially helpful in providing financial flexibility in developing a strategic financial response to the pandemic, as non-emergency capital spending could be temporarily slowed.

The Town has also enhanced its revenue flexibility by establishing enterprise funds. This has allowed the Town to shift one hundred percent of the operating cost and capital improvements to the users of electric, water, and sewer services so that no tax support goes towards providing these services. All related debt is funded through user fees. By doing so the Town is able to provide the maximum tax dollars available to all other services.

Unified Plan

The Town of Wellesley strives to provide excellent and innovative services to its citizens through its numerous elected and volunteer Boards and its professional department managers. Within individual long-term strategic plans, each board/department has a mission statement and work plan which forms the basis for its annual operating and five-year capital requests. In addition, the

Town's Unified Plan (UP), the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategic Plan, provides the framework for Town and departmental goals, policies, and actions. The FY21 budget guidelines were the first-year reference to meeting UP objectives, goals, and policies were incorporated into budget submittals. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, many approved FY21 initiatives were delayed as departments pivoted towards a COVID-19 response. As Town departments began to understand the changing operations and adapt to COVID-19 protocols, more project and policy work resumed along with attention to longer-term capital planning. Through the FY22 budget process, COVID-19 continues to impact revenue assumptions and limited budget guidelines to a 2.5% operational increase. The FY23 budget guidelines have strived to try and "catch up" on deferred capital and to begin building incrementally back into budgets strategic initiatives to meet UP goals, policies, and objectives. Grants and alternative funding opportunities continue to play an integral role in the ability to implement initiatives.

The **Vision and Values** of the UP serves as the "constitution" of the Wellesley Unified Plan, intended to guide the Town as it makes decisions about activities, operations, programs, and capital investments in the future. Specific ways to achieve the Vision and implement the Values appear in the goals and strategies of the Unified Plan and those that are identified for implementation in FY23 are outlined in the departmental narratives detailing budget requests.

The Vision of the Unified Plan:

In 2040... Wellesley is a town recognized for its welcoming community culture and exemplary town services; commitment to education and life-long learning; a quality of life that enhances the health and social well-being of its residents; respect for the environment and support for sustainability, conservation, and protection of physical and historical assets; and for its dynamic and thriving business community. Wellesley is recognized for its fiscally sound, well-managed, innovative, and accessible town government that has strong citizen participation and a highly motivated, collaborative, and talented professional staff.

The Values of the Unified Plan:

	Diversity: Establish, implement and support ongoing initiatives to maintain Wellesley as a community that welcomes a diversity of people and households.		Conservation and Sustainability: Make resource-efficient choices to conserve energy, water, and materials; improve water and air quality and reduce carbon emissions; develop and implement sustainable practices to adjust to changing environmental conditions.
	Sense of Community: Foster a sense of community and community-building through support for inclusive services and facilities, town-wide events, multi-generational activities, and community gathering places.		Town Asset Management: Maintain, protect, preserve, and enhance the Town's physical assets including facilities, infrastructure, parks, open space, and natural resources.
	Town Character: Establish policies, practices and criteria for the preservation of the character of the town's residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, and open spaces.		Business-Friendly: Support existing and new businesses in commercial areas that complement and enhance our community, while protecting quality of life and environmental resources.
	Excellence in Service Delivery: Provide a broad array of services to residents and other users of town services; maintain a strong customer service orientation that strives for excellence in every aspect of service delivery.		Collaboration: Leverage resources and expertise of local private businesses and institutions, as well as neighboring towns and regional agencies, to achieve mutual goals.
	Education: Support best-in-class public education, library, recreational and senior services.		Best-Practice Implementation: Establish best practices and priority-based resource allocation systems to support town services, infrastructure and capital investments in a fiscally-prudent manner; conduct long-range fiscal/financial planning that includes appropriate metrics for evaluating progress and adjustment to changing financial conditions.
	Healthy Lifestyles: Enhance the health and wellness of residents through public health initiatives, educational, social and recreational opportunities; create the conditions for healthy lifestyles through easy access to healthful food, medical and psychological care, support systems, non-motorized transportation options, and town facilities.		Democratic Government and Citizen Participation: Promote participation and engagement in town governance and decision-making.
	Connectivity of People and Places: Provide safe, accessible, and efficient transportation choices including public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle pathways, to connect people to town destinations and the region.		Transparency: Facilitate public access to information, making it easy to understand how town government works, how decisions are made and how to get involved; encourage input from and effectively communicate with residents and other stakeholders.
<p><small>(THE SEQUENCE IN WHICH THE VALUES APPEAR DOES NOT REFLECT A RANKING OF THEIR IMPORTANCE)</small></p>			

Unified Plan Action Items accomplished or underway between FY21-FY22:

- Climate Action Plan (Recently Completed) – Climate Action Committee (CAC)
- Sustainable Mobility Study nearing completion – Mobility Committee
- Open Space and Recreation Plan underway – Natural Resources Commission (NRC)
- Establishment of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force – Executive Director
- Town Hall Interior Schematic Design nearing completion – Permanent Building Committee (PBC)/Facilities Management Department (FMD) Staff
- Morses Pond Bathhouse and Beachfront Feasibility Study – Recreation Commission/FMD Staff
- Funding for a Weed Harvester to continue maintenance of Morses Pond- NRC
- Debt Exclusion of \$138M approved in December 2021 for construction of a new Hardy Elementary School and a new Hunnewell Elementary School - School Committee (SC)/ Select Board
- Reconstruction of Grove Street – Board of Public Works

- PFAS Mitigation – Interim Solution Funded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the amount of \$1.5M – Board of Public Works (BPW)
- Eliminated seating requirements for alcohol licensing to increase restaurant activity – Select Board
- Modified zoning requirements to allow for outdoor dining as a matter of right to enhance dining experiences and the vitality of the commercial districts – Select Board
- Adopted new Greenhouse Gas reduction goals to 50% below Wellesley's 2007 baseline by 2030, 75% below Wellesley's baseline by 2040, and net zero town-wide by 2050 - CAC
- Received grant funding for new bicycle racks at the Middle School to encourage bicycling to school – Executive Director's Office
- Received shared street funds to create parklets for outdoor dining, and to install a new rapid flashing pedestrian beacon at the Fuller Brook Park crossing along State Street – Executive Director's Office
- Reactivated the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation and have an Affordable Housing Market Study underway – WHDC/Select Board
- The Town of Wellesley joined the regional Charles River Chamber of Commerce which also includes Needham, Newton, and Watertown
- Worked with the MWRTA to pilot micro-transit program for Wellesley – Mobility Committee

Proposed FY23 Unified Plan funding and plan implementation requests:

- PFAS mitigation permanent solution to be investigated and implemented – BPW
- Amend zoning to allow for accessory dwelling units – Planning Board (PB)
- Amend zoning to update the Flood Plain and Watershed Protection District Bylaw - PB
- Retrofit of Hunnewell Field Lights to LED (\$400,000 CPC) - NRC
- Field Optimization Study (\$58,000 CPC) - NRC
- Preservation of the 1897 Town Atlas (\$7,500 CPC)- PB
- Lawn Conversion Pilot Program (\$20,000 CPC) - NRC
- Weed Harvester for Morses Pond (\$80,000 CPC) - NRC
- Relocation of Land Use Departments to Leased Space (\$397,100) – Select Board
- Replacement of Police Radio Antenna (\$195,129) – Select Board
- Reconstruction of Walnut Street (\$2,450,000) - BPW
- Reconstruction of Middle School Parking Lot, including installation of EV Charging and Bike Racks (\$2,500,000) – BPW/SC
- Retrofit of light fixtures in the High School to LED (\$1,250,000) SC/FMD
- Creation of Study Committee to review Town Meeting Operations Select Board/Moderator
- Increased funding for Summer Transportation for Low-Income Families for Recreation, Youth, and Health Programs (\$26,500) Recreation/Youth/Health
- Allowance for issuing of licenses on Town sidewalks and rights of way for the service of alcohol in connection with a restaurant license – Select Board
- Expansion of One-Day Alcohol Service Licenses to for-profit businesses – Select Board
- Increase one part-time staff position in each of the following departments to a full-time position: Natural Resources Department, Climate Action Committee Department, and Planning Department.