



# TOWN OF WELLESLEY

## STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN

**June 2025**  
**DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Prepared for the Town of Wellesley  
by Barrett Planning Group



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## Introduction

[The Town Staff, the Wellesley Housing Task Force, and consultants from the Barrett Planning Group began working with the community in May of 2024 to create this Strategic Housing Plan (SHP). In 2021, the Town of Wellesley received the Housing Choice Initiative designation from the state in recognizing for the Town's best practices in zoning, the use of CPC funding towards affordable housing, and cultivating projects that furthered the subsidized housing inventory.<sup>1</sup> With this designation, the Town has access to state funds for projects that further these recognized accomplishments. The designation expires in 2026 and Wellesley must continue to exemplify its commitment to sustainable housing production to extend it. The Housing Task Force, organized as a communications channel and advisory group with members from the Select Board, Planning Board, Community Preservation Committee, the Housing Authority, Wellesley Housing Development Corporation, and Building a Better Wellesley, issued a Request for Proposal to develop the Strategic Housing Plan following 2023 Town Meeting approval for Community Preservation Act funding in support of this effort.<sup>2</sup>

## Defining Housing Needs

This project began with a determination from the Task Force that the Town of Wellesley is in need of more housing options despite meeting many of the recommendations from the 2018 Housing Production Plan (HPP) and the 10 percent threshold for Affordable Housing on the state Subsidized Housing inventory. Both Town Staff and the community identified populations in need of more diverse housing options in Wellesley and housing types that may address those needs. With the challenges of land costs and affordability, housing prices in Wellesley are out of reach for all but the highest earners. Housing that caters to households of all income levels requires options of affordable housing for low-income individuals and families, workforce housing for middle-income earners, housing for seniors, and market-rate housing for those with higher incomes. Housing types including single-family homes, rental apartments, townhouses, and condominiums, offer households in Wellesley the option of housing that meets the needs of different stages of life, living preferences, and lifestyles.

Supporting diverse housing does not only refer to housing of different types that meet regulatory meanings of "affordability". The strategies included in this Plan instead address options the Town can pursue to limit the costs of single-family options that are characteristic of Wellesley's neighborhoods while offering housing types that align with the village centers and transit-accessible areas of town.

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Wellesley Select Board. 2021. Wellesley Received Housing Choice Initiative Designation. [https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23655/SB\\_Housing-Choice-Initiative-designation\\_revised-45](https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23655/SB_Housing-Choice-Initiative-designation_revised-45)

<sup>2</sup> Town of Wellesley. 2024. What is the Wellesley Housing Task Force?. <https://wellesleyma.gov/Faq.aspx?QID=257>

### Housing Terminology

**Affordable Housing.** For purposes of inclusion on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory, this refers to housing available to households with incomes not exceeding 80 percent AMI, and at a cost that does not exceed 30 percent of their monthly gross income. For inclusion on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), affordable housing must also be subsidized, deed restricted, and marketed according to strict fair marketing and tenant selection plan.

**Housing Production Plan.** A Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a community's strategy for meeting its affordable housing needs in a manner consistent with the Chapter 40B statute and regulations. CMR 56.03 describes the required contents of an HPP, the local and state approval procedure, and the certification process. Communities can request state certification of their HPPs if they meet their annual production goal of adding either 0.5 percent or 1.0 percent of its total year-round housing count to the Subsidized Housing Inventory in a given year. Municipalities that meet the 0.5 percent target are eligible for a one-year certification, while those that meet the 1 percent target can receive a two-year certification. During this period, decisions of the local Board of Appeals regarding comprehensive permit (40B) applications will generally be upheld by the Housing Appeals Committee even if the municipality has not achieved the 10 percent statutory minimum under Chapter 40B.

## Approach to Engagement

Engagement for this plan provided context to understand conversations around housing occurring in the community. Engagement across several outreach methods connected the consulting team with residents and nonresidents concerning the state of housing in town. The Town provided multiple opportunities for participation by local officials and the community at large. The Community Engagement Plan guided the planning process and consisted of the following components:

- **Small group interviews.** During the months of June and July 2024, the consultant team conducted small group interviews with nearly 60 individuals familiar with Wellesley’s housing needs to get a sense of community perceptions surrounding the current state of housing stock in Wellesley. The housing committee and planning staff distributed an interview sign-up form to those who would be interested in participating and asked them to share the opportunity with others. Participants included government officials, local residents, local employers, nonprofit organizations, and developers.
- **Community Survey.** A community survey was available from October 14, 2024 to November 25, 2024 through an online survey and physical copies. Designed to capture attitudes about housing in Wellesley and potential strategies to address housing diversity in Town, the survey encouraged responses from both residents and nonresidents to take. A total of 1,542 individuals completed this survey, the results of which are included in the Appendix.
- **Community Forums.** The Consulting Team and Housing Task Force hosted three community meetings during the development of this plan – one in June 2024 and two in November 2024 (one in person and one virtual). Summaries of these meetings are included in the Appendix.

- **Wellesley Housing Task Force & Strategic Housing Plan Working Group Meetings.** From June 2024 to April 2025, a Strategic Housing Plan Task Force met virtually to discuss the plan's development, findings, and potential strategies.
- **Presentations to the Select Board and Planning Board.** On June 3, 2025, the consultant team and Town staff presented a draft of the plan to both boards.
- **Public Comment Period.** Members of the public, including Town boards, committees, and commissions, had the option to provide written comments on the draft plan from June 4 to **DATE**. These comments and committee responses are included in the Appendix of this plan.
- **Final Public Hearings and Plan Adoption.** **TO BE UPDATED**

While the promotion of these engagement events, including the town-wide survey and community forums, attempted to include all individuals with an interest in housing, the feedback gathered from these events are from a self-selecting group of individuals. Self-selected sampling allows participants to engage on their own accord and willingness to participate is often influenced by a participants' interest in the topic, time allowance, or even having headspace to fully engage in these events.

It is important to recognize that self-selected sampling can amplify existing disparities in engagement access and privilege within the community engagement process. Certain populations, like those with more access to free time, have the availability to engage with civic engagement opportunities more easily. This can lead to an overrepresentation of viewpoints or experiences, skewing the overall results and limiting the generalizability of findings excluding marginalized or underrepresented groups. The consulting team and Task Force acknowledge these limitations and used engagement response to guide but not limit recommended strategies and implementation suggestions.

## Key Findings

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**Shifting Population Trends.** From 1990 to 2020, Wellesley's population experienced a significant loss of its 25 to 44 population and an increase in 45 to 64, with a relatively stable share of its 65+ population.

**Limited Existing Multifamily Zoning.** While various forms of "multifamily" housing are allowed "by right" in multiple zoning districts, these areas are limited in size and scattered throughout town. In addition, multifamily projects are likely to trigger other local review processes. Having such regulatory safeguards is good practice, but it may be beneficial to streamline some of these local review processes.

**Housing goals should incorporate Open Space Goals.** Per the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), while 33% of Wellesley's land area is open space, only about 9% is fully protected under Article 97. Expanding permanently protected open spaces is a goal of the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. While this may seem at odds with housing goals, it can provide opportunity for collaboration on joint housing and open space preservation projects that could access more potential funding streams and meet two important objectives.

**Protecting existing character.** Many residents value Wellesley’s character as a predominantly single-family home community. Concerns that multi-family developments might alter this legacy reflects broader community apprehension that new housing types could affect the built fabric of Wellesley and its neighborhoods. Community support exists for using existing structures for multifamily housing, as the rehabilitation of existing buildings limits the presence of modern building form to the existing landscape.

**Reaction to Proposed Zoning Changes.** To make incremental changes and channel residential development, Town officials have proposed zoning overlays on specific parcels rather than proposing broader zoning reform. However, this selective approach has led to concerns about "spot-zoning," which some residents view as a hasty or unsystematic way to introduce higher-density housing.

**Greater access to housing data and dialogue.**

## Note on Data

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### ■ SOURCES

Information for the Wellesley Strategic Housing Plan comes from a variety of sources, including the Town, the community engagement process described above, previous plans and studies, state agencies, proprietary data, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The most frequently used sources of data are as follows:

- **The American Community Survey (ACS).** The ACS provides demographic and housing estimates for large and small geographic areas every year. Although the estimates are based on a small population sample, a new survey is collected each month, and the results are aggregated to provide a “rolling” dataset on a wide variety of topics. In most cases, data labeled “ACS” in this plan are taken from the most recent five-year tabulation: 2018-2023 inclusive.
- **State Data Center at UMass Donahue Institute.** The State Data Center (SDC) Program was established by the US Census Bureau in 1978 to partner with states to make data readily available at the state level through partnerships with state agencies, universities, libraries, and more. In Massachusetts, the State Data Center is housed at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Donahue Institute, which also produces the population projections used in this plan.
- **HUD Consolidated Planning/Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data.** Created through a combined effort of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Census Bureau, this dataset is a “special tabulation” of ACS. According to the HUD guidance, “these special tabulation data provide counts of the numbers of households that fit certain combinations of HUD-specified criteria such as housing needs, HUD-defined income limits (primarily 30, 50, and 80 percent of median income) and household types of particular interest to planners and policy-makers.” The most recent CHAS Data are based on the ACS 2016-2021 estimates.

- **Housing Market Sources.** The consultants tapped the Warren Group’s extensive real estate transaction databases to sample sales volume and sale prices, as well as Rentometer for rental market data.
- **Town Plans.** Recent documents including the Housing Production Plan (2018), Unified Plan (2019), Housing Market Analysis (2022), Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022), Climate Action Plan (2022), Sustainable Mobility Plan (2020), and Wellesley Safe Routes Plan (2025) captured goals and strategies from recent planning efforts in town.
- **Town Data.** Departments provided data upon requests to support a review of local development patterns, market trends, and development constraints.

In addition, many local and regional publications were reviewed during the development of this Strategic Housing Plan and this plan references them throughout this document.

## ■ COMPARISON GEOGRAPHIES

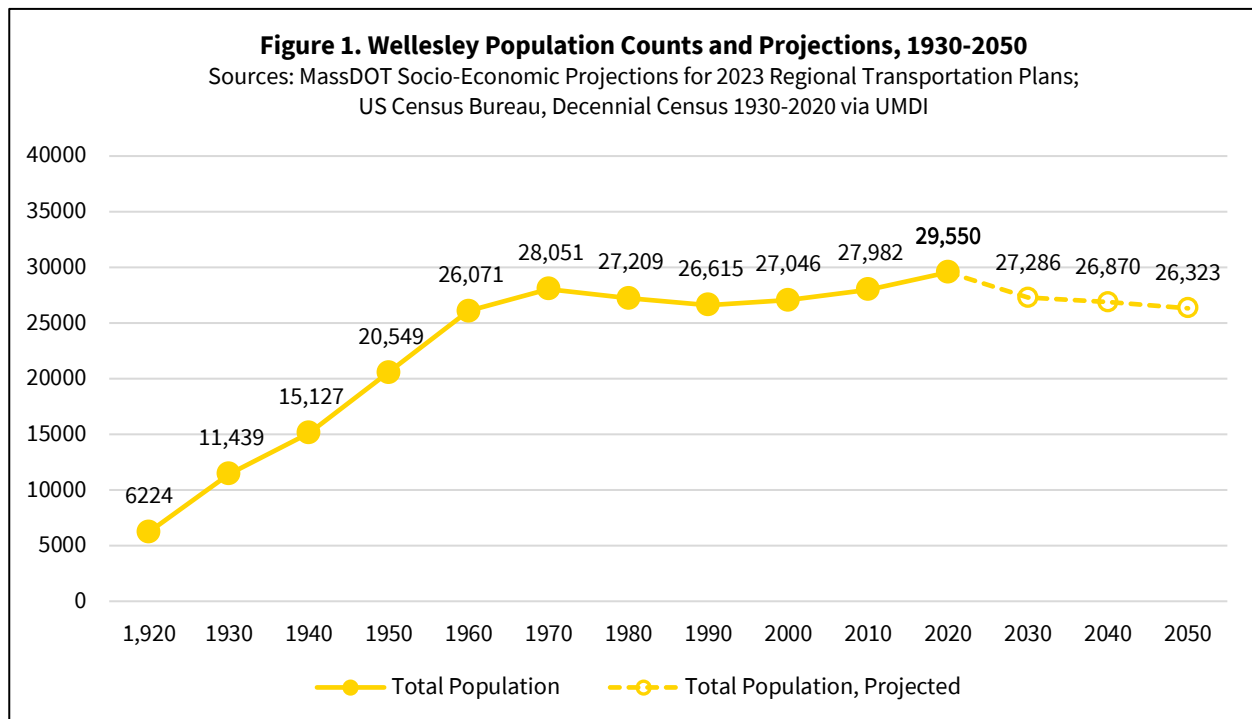
Comparison geographies included the communities immediately adjacent to Wellesley – Natick, Weston, Newton, Needham, and Dover – as well as Norfolk County and Massachusetts. When comparing with surrounding towns, Middlesex County was added because it includes three of the surrounding towns (Natick, Newton, and Weston).

# Housing Needs Assessment

## Demographic Profile

### ■ POPULATION GROWTH

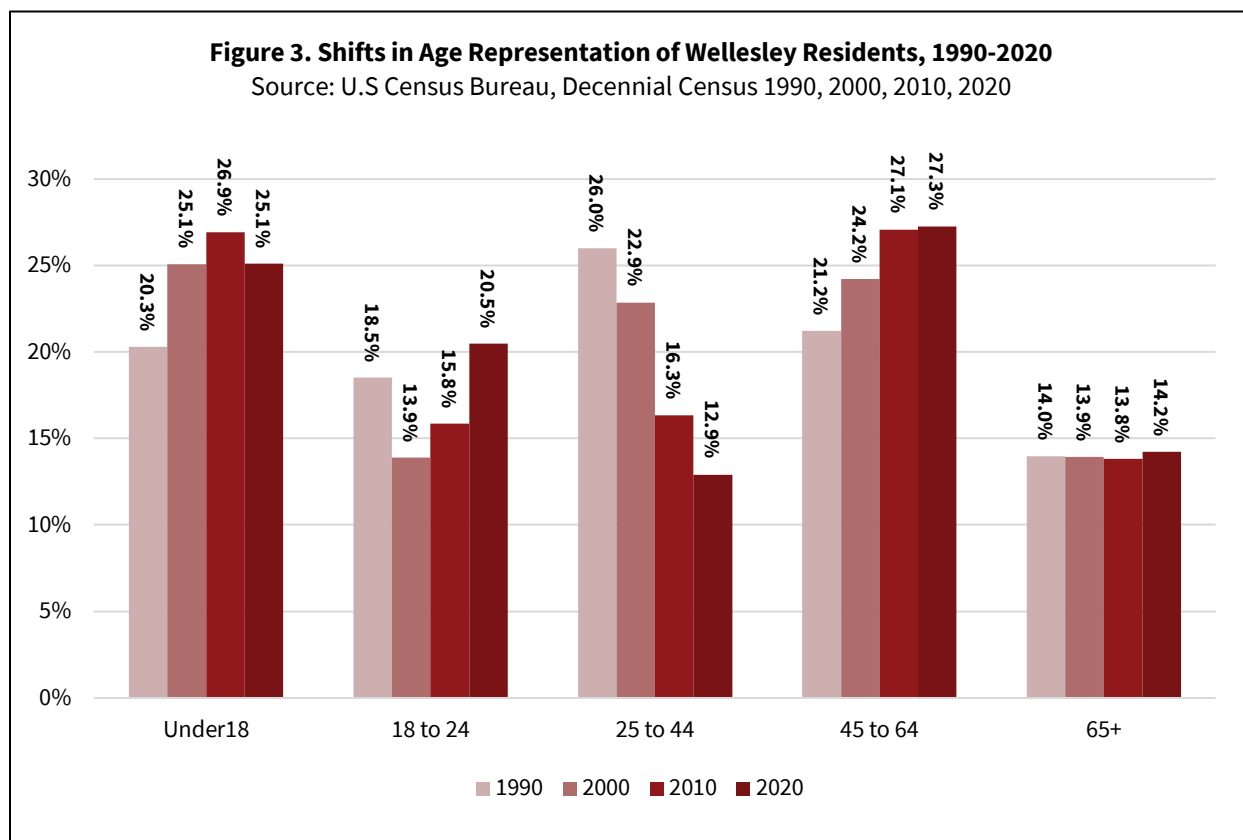
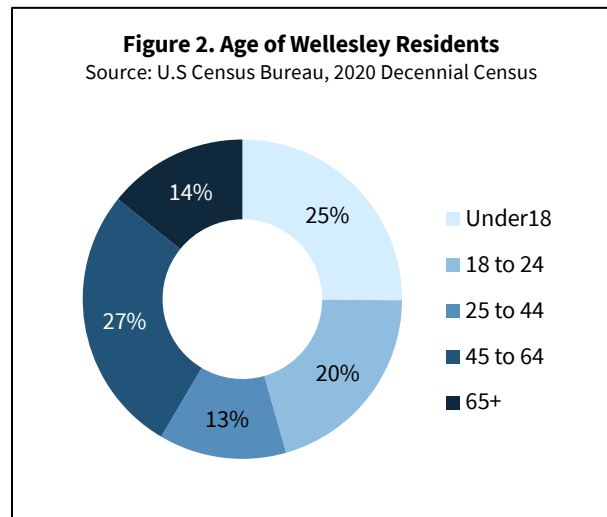
Over the last century, Wellesley’s population growth accelerated most rapidly from 1920 to 1960 before somewhat stabilizing. While the Town’s population hit a high of 29,550 in 2020, recent population projections from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) indicate a probable decrease over the next couple of decades (**Figure 1**). These projections were developed from 2021 to 2023 to assist Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) prepare Regional Transportation Plans. As part of this effort, MassDOT engaged both the Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to develop and refine models to project estimated population, household, and employment changes through 2050.<sup>3</sup> These projections extrapolate past trends and incorporate adjustments based on development potential at the municipal level.



<sup>3</sup> UMDI used a municipal cohort method based upon birth, death, and migration trends to generation population projections, which MAPC then brought into a model that incorporated buildout assumptions based on land availability and local zoning modeled to the municipal level. Methodologies of UMDI and MAPC projections available at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/socio-economic-projections-for-2023-regional-transportation-plans>

## ■ POPULATION AGE

Comparing Wellesley to nearby municipalities can highlight regional trends as well as demographic patterns unique to Wellesley. The presence of both Wellesley College and Babson College, for example, result in a much larger representation of the population age 18-to-24 (see related “Group Quarters Population” below). Wellesley has a somewhat lower share of residents age 65+ than Norfolk County and Massachusetts (both 18 percent compared to Wellesley’s consistent share of 14 percent – see **Figures 2 and 3**). Meanwhile, the population age 25 to 44 has fallen consistently, with a loss of 3,126 residents in this range during the 30-year period from 1990 to 2020.<sup>4</sup>



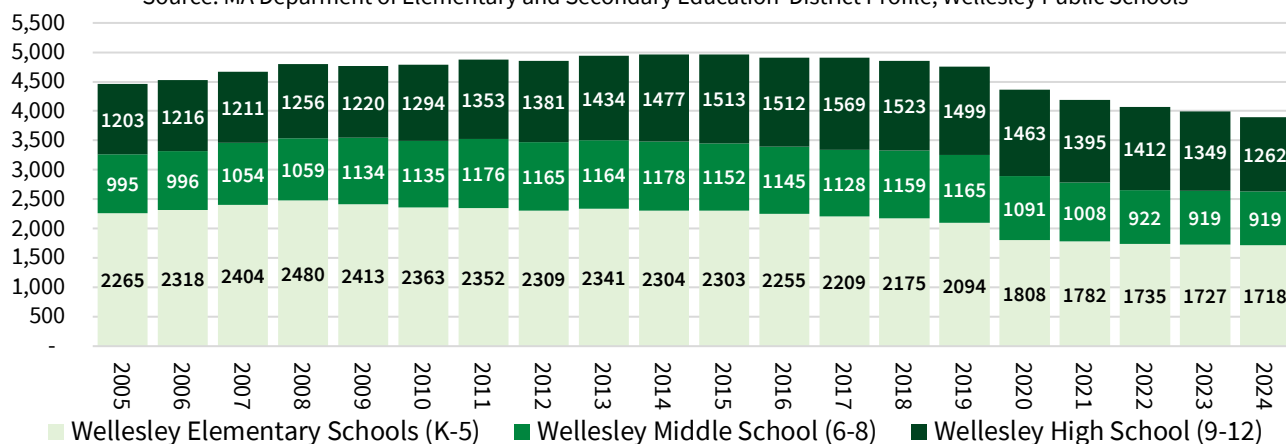
<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

## School-Aged Populations

Wellesley's school-aged population increased by 699 between 2000 and 2020, although this growth includes a loss of 158 from 2010 to 2020.<sup>5</sup> This period corresponds with a decline in enrollment in the Wellesley Public Schools (see **Figure 4**). However, school enrollment is a somewhat unreliable indicator in communities where a large number of youth attend private school, as **Table 1** shows is the case for Wellesley. An estimated 22 percent of Wellesley's school-aged children (grades K-12) are enrolled in private schools, on par with Newton and Weston and significantly higher than county and state figures.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 4. Wellesley Public Schools Enrollment, 2005-2024**

Source: MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education District Profile, Wellesley Public Schools



**Table 1. Estimated School-Age Children Enrolled in Private School (K-12)**

Geography	# K-12 Population	% K-12 Population
WELLESLEY	1,214	21.9%
Dover	211	18.3%
Natick	511	9.6%
Needham	1,156	15.4%
Newton	3,091	20.4%
Weston	550	21.1%
Norfolk County	14,017	12.4%
Middlesex County	26,528	11.1%
Massachusetts	112,118	11.0%

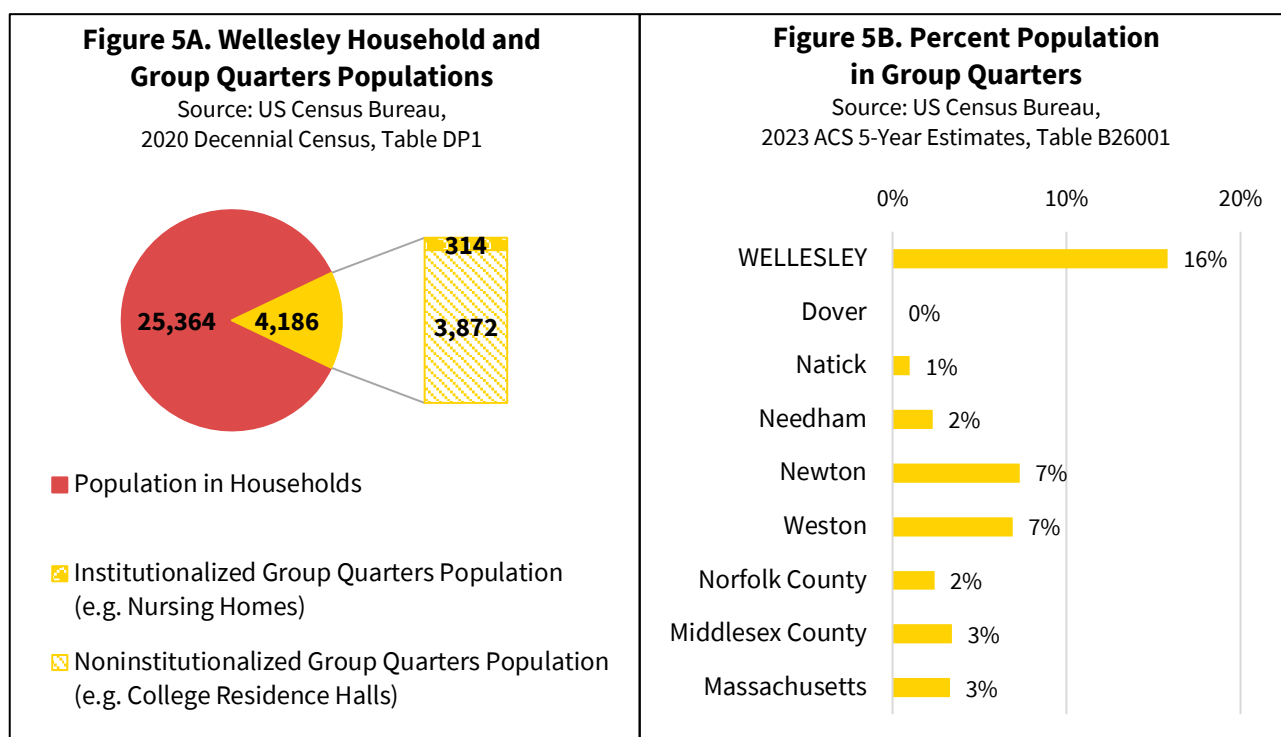
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023, Table B14002

<sup>5</sup> US Census Bureau, 2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B14002

## Group Quarters Population

A community’s “group quarters” population includes those who reside in a group setting that is owned or managed by an organization providing housing or services for residents. Wellesley has a substantial group quarters population — an estimated 16 percent of its total population — primarily due to the presence of Wellesley College and Babson College. Together, both colleges house approximately 4,370 students in on-campus residence halls.<sup>7</sup> While Wellesley’s nursing homes also count as group quarters, they do not host nearly the number of residents as its higher education institutions.



Understanding the distinctions between population types is especially important in communities with larger group quarters populations such as Wellesley because it affects how demographic data should be interpreted. Students living in college dormitories during the academic year count toward a community’s total resident population for Census purposes (as do residents of long-term care facilities if living at the facility on Census Day); however, these groups do not count toward a community’s households.

<sup>7</sup> Wellesley College reports 2,181 students in fifteen residence halls (Wellesley College, “Housing,” residence hall profiles accessed May 2025 at <https://www.wellesley.edu/life-at-wellesley/housing>). Babson College reports that 80 percent of ungraduated students (2,734 in 2024) live on campus in eighteen residence halls (Babson College, *Common Data Set 2024-2025*, B. Enrollment and Persistence; Babson College, “Life at Babson/Residential Life/Housing,” accessed May 2025 at <https://www.babson.edu/undergraduate/student-life/residential-life/housing/>).

## ■ RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRATION

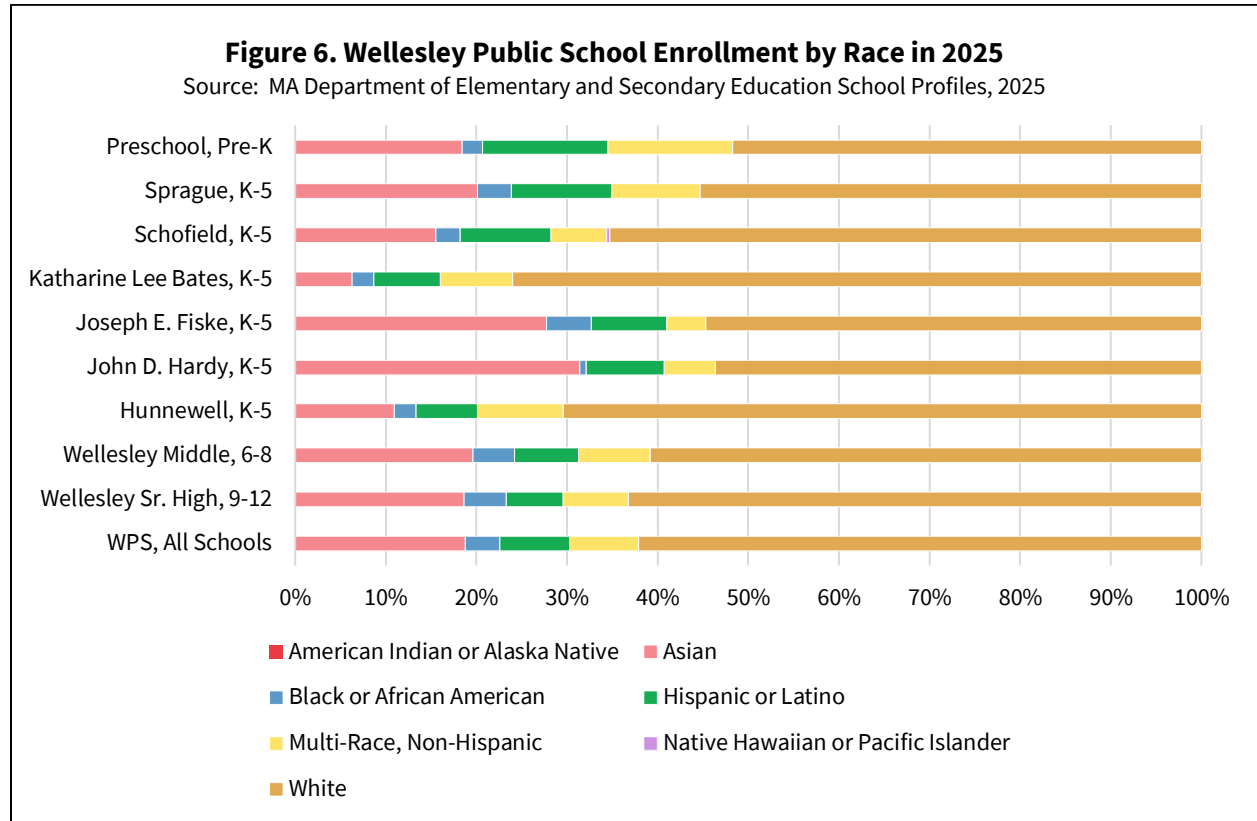
### Minority Populations

The majority of Wellesley’s population is White Alone (73.5 percent), slightly lower than all neighboring communities except Newton and pointing to Wellesley’s relative racial diversity. However, much of this diversity is attributed to Wellesley’s group quarters populations (primarily college students, in Wellesley’s case), as **Table 2** below demonstrates. That said, the demographic makeup of Wellesley Public Schools also reflects greater diversity than the Town’s overall population, with approximately 38 percent of enrolled students belonging to a racial or ethnic minority (see **Figure 6**). The district’s six neighborhood elementary schools significantly differ in their levels of minority representation, paralleling the distribution of minority populations by census block group shown in **Map 1**. Asian residents make up the largest minority population in Wellesley, mirroring the larger MetroWest region’s demographic makeup.

**Table 2. Comparative Race and Latino Population Characteristics**

	% Population		
	Total Pop	Household Pop	Group Quarters Pop
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%
Asian Alone	14.0%	11.8%	21.7%
Black or African American Alone	2.0%	0.3%	9.1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.4%	0.8%	4.0%
Two Or More Races	9.0%	6.0%	21.2%
White Alone	73.5%	81.1%	27.9%
Hispanic or Latino	6.0%	3.7%	15.7%

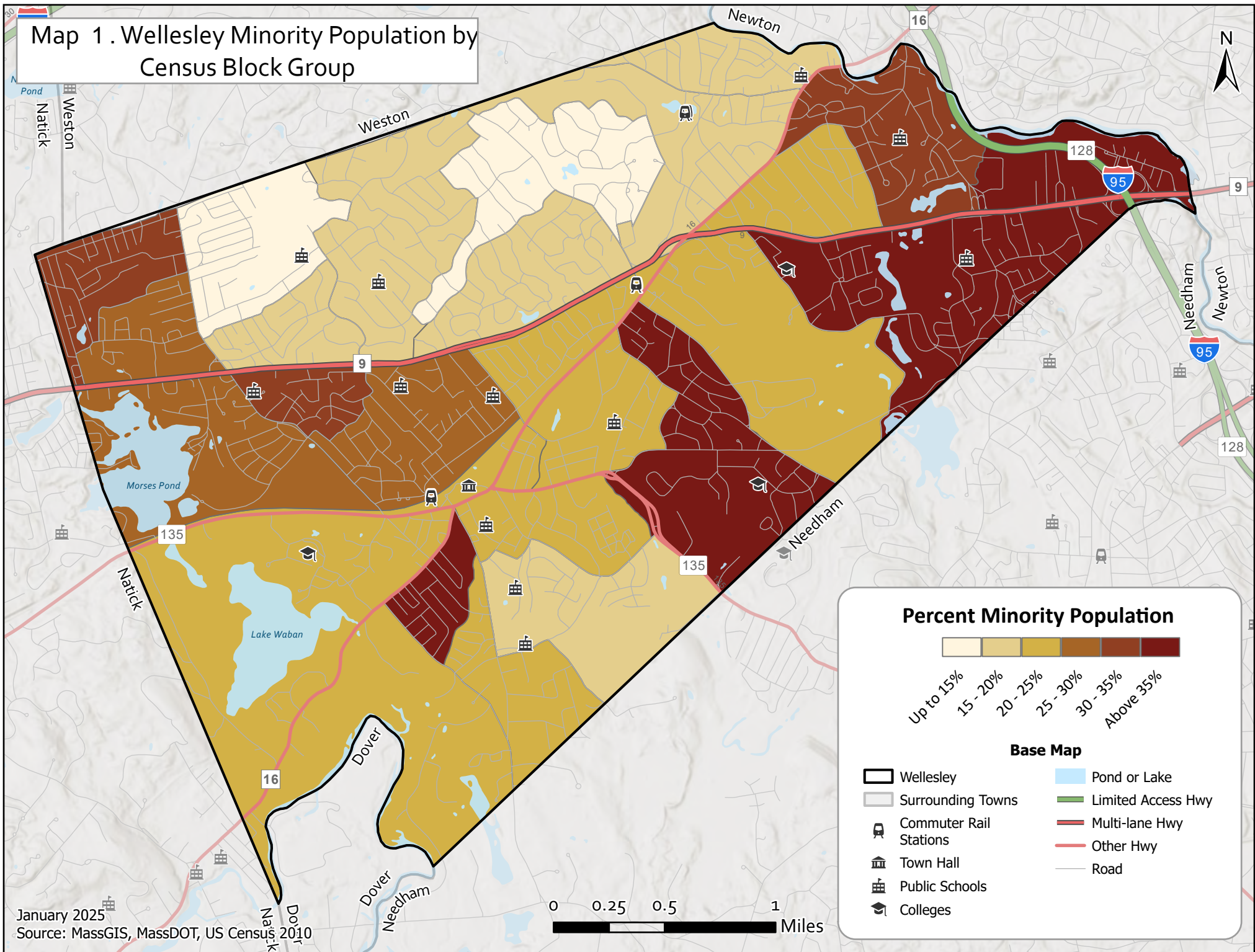
Source: U.S. 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B02001, B03003, B25008(A-G)



Wellesley participates in the METCO program, a state-funded program created to expand educational opportunities and reduce racial isolation by allowing students from Boston to attend public schools in participating communities. Currently, Wellesley enrolls eighteen new METCO students each year, with a total of 153 enrolled.<sup>8</sup>

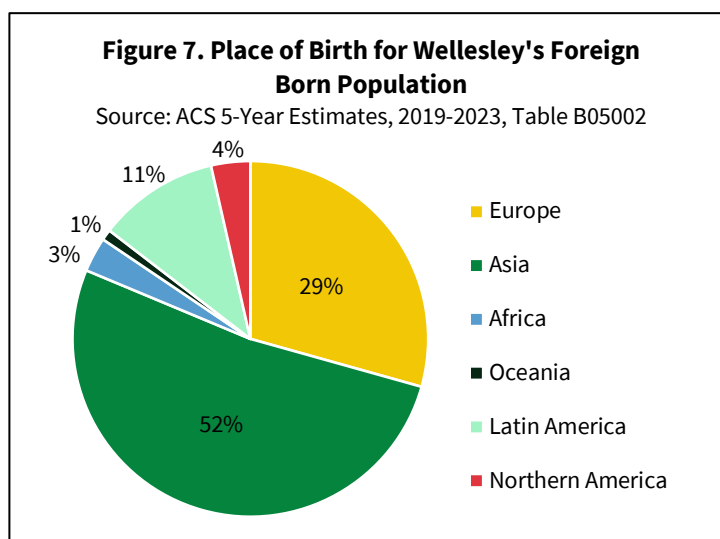
<sup>8</sup> Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity (METCO), “Explore Partner Districts,” accessed May 2025 <https://metcoinc.org/apply/#explore>

Map 1 . Wellesley Minority Population by Census Block Group



## Foreign-Born Population

Approximately 20 percent of Wellesley's total population was born outside of the United States, as shown in **Table 3**. Of the foreign-born population, the vast majority were born either in Asia (52 percent) or Europe (29 percent) – see **Figure 7**.<sup>9</sup> About 20 percent of Wellesley's population age 5+ speaks a language other than English, with the greatest concentration among those 18-64 (24 percent).<sup>10</sup> The Wellesley Public Schools report that 12.1 percent of enrolled students have a first language other than English, although just 2.6 percent are considered English Learners.<sup>11</sup>



**Table 3. Immigration Characteristics**

	Count	Percent
US Citizen, Born in United States	24,059	80.5%
US Citizen, Born in Puerto Rico or US Island Areas	81	0.3%
US Citizen, Born Abroad to American Parents	569	1.9%
Foreign Born, Naturalized US Citizen	3,049	10.2%
Foreign Born, Not US Citizen	2,148	7.2%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B05001

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B05002

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Table B16007

<sup>11</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School District Profiles, Wellesley, Selected Populations, 2025.

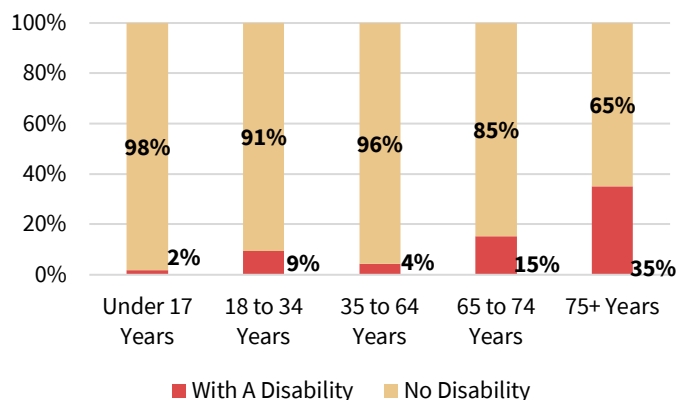
## ■ DISABILITY

An estimated 8.1 percent of Wellesley residents have a disability, defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity. This reflects a lower share than Norfolk County (9.7 percent) and Massachusetts (12.1 percent).<sup>12</sup> Some disabilities correlate with age, and understanding the overlap between the needs of older residents and residents with disabilities can help target types of in-demand housing stock such as single floor living units. As **Figure 8** and **Table 4** show, the share of residents with a disability increases for the 65+ population, with the most drastic jump for residents age 75 or over.

**Figure 8. Estimated Disability Status by Age for Wellesley Residents**

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B18101

*Note: does not include those living in institutionalized group quarters settings such as nursing homes*



**Table 4. Types of Disabilities for Wellesley Residents by Age**

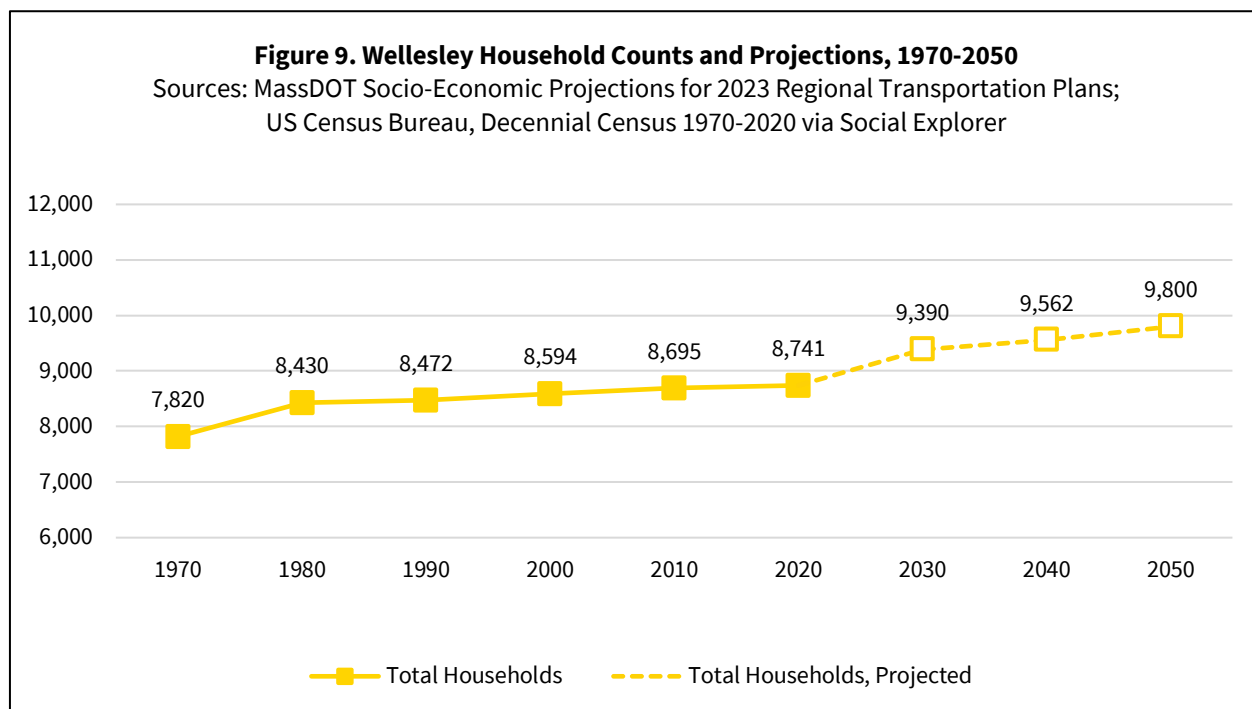
Disability Type	Under 18	18 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Hearing	0.1%	0.6%	6.1%	16.4%
Vision	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	3.8%
Cognitive	2.2%	3.7%	4.3%	6.5%
Ambulatory	0.0%	1.2%	5.3%	20.7%
Self-Care	0.4%	0.4%	3.8%	8.0%
Independent Living	N/A	2.1%	4.9%	16.9%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables B18102-B18107. Note: ACS does not provide data for independent living difficulties for the under 18 population. Disability data do not include those living in institutionalized group quarters settings such as nursing homes.

<sup>12</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023, Table B1801

## ■ HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Wellesley has an estimated total of 9,101 households, with an average household size of 2.8 — slightly smaller than Dover (3.1) and Weston (3.0), on par with Needham (2.8), and larger than Natick (2.4) and Newton (2.6).<sup>13</sup> **Figure 9** shows the increase in Wellesley households from 1970 to 2020, as well as projections through 2050 based on the same 2023 MassDOT Socio-Economic Projections reflected in **Figure 1**. While Wellesley’s population is expected to decrease, these projections predict that the number of households will increase, indicating either a likely decrease in average household size or an assumed loss of group quarters population, or a combination of these factors.



### Household Type

The US Census Bureau defines a “family” household as a group of two people or more related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people are considered as members of one family. **Table 5** shows that around 70 percent of Wellesley’s households are married couples, which is significantly higher than Norfolk County or Massachusetts but is within the range of most neighboring communities.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates via Social Explorer Table A10003

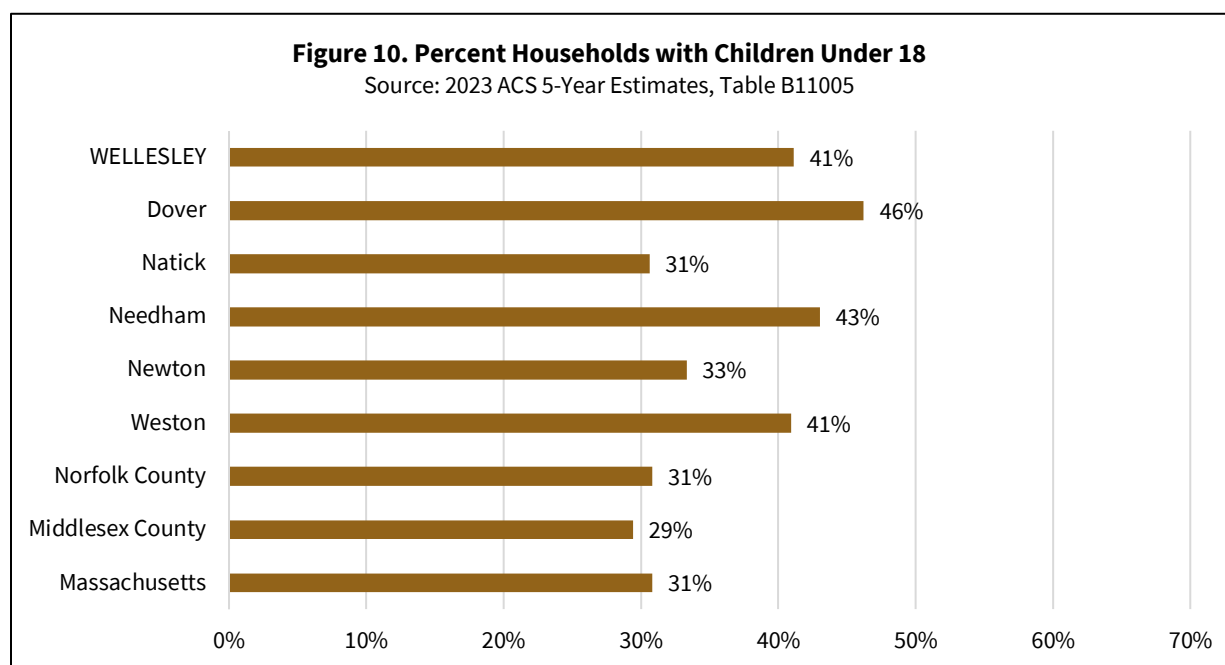
<sup>14</sup> US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B11001

**Table 5. Household Types for Wellesley and Comparison Geographies**

Household Type		Wellesley	Norfolk County	Massachusetts
Family Households	Married Couples	70.0%	52.3%	46.2%
	Other Family	7.1%	13.4%	16.4%
Non-Family Households	Householder Living Alone	20.6%	26.9%	28.6%
	Householder Not Living Alone	2.3%	7.5%	8.8%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B11001

An estimated 41 percent of Wellesley households include minor children (**Figure 10**), with concentrations by census tract ranging from a low of 29 percent in the southwest corner (which includes Wellesley College) to a high of 51 percent in the northeast corner bordering Weston and Newton.

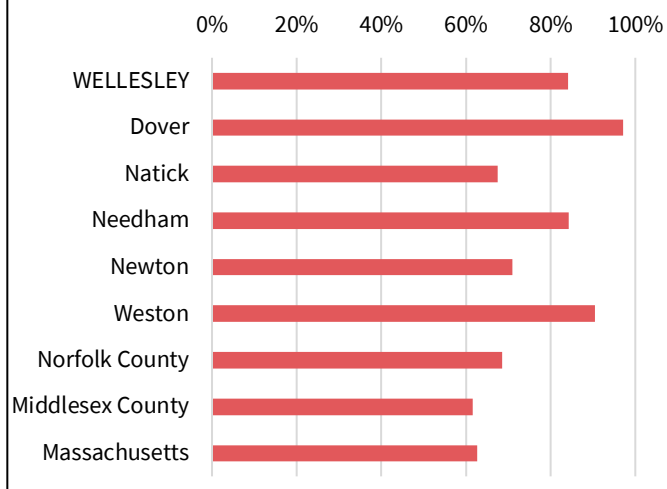


## Age and Tenure

Homeowner households far exceed renter households in Wellesley, Dover, Needham, and Weston (**Figure 11**). Wellesley renters are more likely to be younger, although renting begins to increase among householders age 75+ (**Figure 12**). This shift may be attributed to seniors looking to downsize into smaller rental units, as well as the Wellesley Housing Authority's 130+ senior/disabled rental units described later in the Housing Market section.

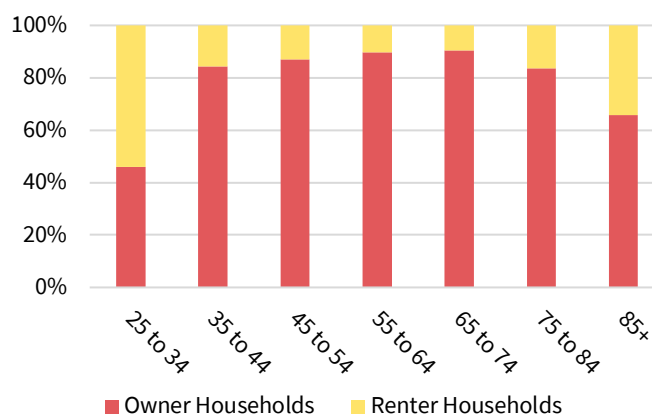
**Figure 11. Percent Homeowner Households**

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B25003



**Figure 12. Tenure by Age for Wellesley Householders**

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B25003



#### What is a householder?

For Census purposes, each household has one householder, defined as the person (or one of the people) in whose name the home is owned or rented. Household-level data from the Decennial Census and American Community Survey is based upon the designated householder and may not necessarily apply to the entire household; the “Age of Householder” or “Race of Householder” data, for example, only refer to one householder.

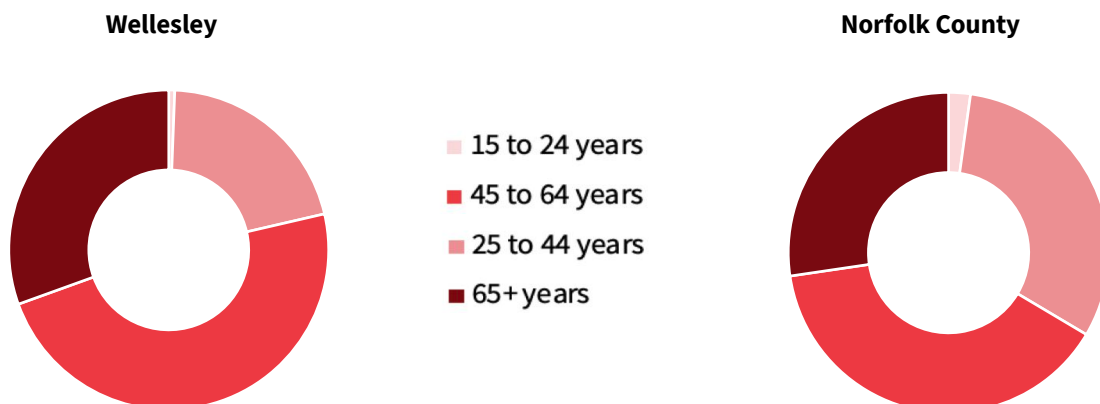
#### What is tenure?

In the context of housing, tenure refers to whether a household owns or rents their home.

Nearly half of Wellesley householders are between ages 45 and 64 (**Figure 13**), notably higher share than Norfolk County although in line with Dover and Weston. This age cohort tends to be in the prime of their earning potential compared to those under age 45 and are therefore better equipped to “buy up” into the significantly higher-cost housing markets of Weston and Wellesley.

**Figure 13. Age of Householder, Wellesley and Norfolk County**

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B25007



The prevalence of younger renter households (as well as the shift toward renting among senior households) aligns with smaller household sizes, with nearly 70 percent of Wellesley renter households made of up one or two members (**Table 6**).

**Table 6. Wellesley Owners and Renters by Household Size**

Owner Households			Renter Households		
Household Size	2013	2023	Household Size	2013	2023
1-Person	15.6%	15.9%	1-Person	44.9%	45.6%
2-Person	33.5%	32.3%	2-Person	30.0%	24.5%
3-Person	14.2%	17.3%	3-Person	11.7%	9.0%
4-Person	21.1%	20.6%	4-Person	11.4%	10.7%
5-Person	11.9%	9.6%	5-Person	1.0%	7.7%
6-Person	3.3%	4.0%	6-Person	1.1%	2.0%
7+ Person	0.3%	0.3%	7+ Person	0.0%	0.5%

Source: 2013 & 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B25009

## ■ GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

Townwide, Wellesley’s population has a similar degree of geographical mobility as the county and state, as measured by the share of residents living in the same home as the previous year (**Table 7**). In terms of Wellesley’s neighbors, Needham and Dover residents are much more likely to be living in the same house as the previous year compared to Wellesley, Newton, Weston, or Natick.<sup>15</sup> *Within* Wellesley, the census tracts containing Babson and Wellesley College have much higher resident turnover due to their student populations; while these newcomer student populations are most likely coming from a different state, the Babson-affiliated census tract shows significantly more in-migration from another country than the census tract containing Wellesley College. This matches differences in enrollment trends between both institutions; Babson College has a higher share of international undergraduate students (28 percent) compared to Wellesley College (13 percent).<sup>16</sup>

**Table 7. Geographical Mobility in the Past Year for Residents**

	Census Tract Containing Wellesley College	Census Tract Containing Babson College	Wellesley	Norfolk County	Massachusetts
Same house 1 year ago	84.2%	82.0%	87.4%	89.2%	88.0%
Moved within same MA county	2.5%	1.7%	2.4%	4.1%	5.9%
Moved from different MA county	2.2%	2.8%	4.2%	3.9%	3.0%
Moved from different state	9.2%	9.1%	4.6%	2.2%	2.2%
Moved from abroad	1.9%	4.3%	1.8%	0.8%	0.9%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B07001

<sup>15</sup> US Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B07001

<sup>16</sup> Babson College, “International Students: A Local Campus, A Global Viewpoint,” accessed May 2025 at <https://www.babson.edu/undergraduate/admission/international-students>; Wellesley College, “International Applicants,” accessed May 2025 at <https://www.wellesley.edu/admission-aid/apply/first-year-applicants/international-applicants>.

## Economic Profile

The economic profile of a community examines socioeconomic characteristics of its population and households, its labor force (residents over age 16 either working or looking for work), and its employment base (jobs within a community). These factors connect to housing primarily when considering whether area wages are compatible with housing costs or to gain insight into those currently served by housing market.

### ■ INCOME

#### Median Household Income

The American Community Survey has a ceiling of \$250,000 for its published median income figures, so the *actual* median household income figures for Wellesley, Dover, and Weston are too high to include in **Table 8**. Generally, median income levels, as opposed to average, better display the income status of the majority of households because outliers have little effect. However, for context, the 2023 average household income for Wellesley households was \$368,179 compared to \$177,133 for Norfolk County and \$140,991 for Massachusetts.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 8. 2023 Median Household, Family, and Non-Family Household Incomes**

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Median Non-Family Income
WELLESLEY	Over \$250,000	Over \$250,000	\$83,568
Dover	Over \$250,000	Over \$250,001	\$123,750
Natick	\$134,591	\$180,851	\$69,286
Needham	\$212,241	\$231,607	\$77,228
Newton	\$184,989	\$231,607	\$87,030
Weston	Over \$250,000	Over \$250,001	No data
Norfolk County	\$126,779	\$163,845	\$69,417
Middlesex County	\$126,497	\$160,640	\$76,523
Massachusetts	\$101,341	\$128,134	\$59,635

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B19013, B19113, B19202

<sup>17</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023, via Social Explorer Table A14008

## Regional Context

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) publishes Area Median Family Incomes annually for federally defined metropolitan and rural areas. Wellesley is part of the “Boston-Cambridge-Quincy MA-NH HUD Metro Area,” which includes Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, and Suffolk counties and extends into New Hampshire. Based on the median income, HUD sets annual income limits, adjusted for household size, to determine eligibility for its low- or moderate-income housing programs. **Table 9** below shows the HUD 2025 income limits for 30%, 50%, and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), with an added column calculating an unofficial 100% AMI for context. At over \$250,000, Wellesley’s median household income is far higher than the HUD-delineated metro region.

**Table 9. Income Limits for Boston-Cambridge-Quincy HUD Metro Area**

Median Family Income: \$160,900				
HH Size	30% AMI	50% AMI	80% AMI	100% AMI
1	\$34,750	\$57,900	\$92,650	\$115,800
2	\$39,700	\$66,200	\$105,850	\$132,400
3	\$44,650	\$74,450	\$119,100	\$148,900
4	\$49,600	\$82,700	\$132,300	\$165,400
5	\$53,600	\$89,350	\$142,900	\$178,700
6	\$57,550	\$95,950	\$153,500	\$191,900

Source: HUD 2205 Income Limits, Boston-Cambridge-Quincy HUD Metro Area

HUD publishes a dataset known as the Comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy (CHAS) to guide local governments plan their use of HUD funds. Because CHAS is based on American Community Survey data, it lags behind and the most recent set available is for 2021. Nonetheless, the data help contextualize and compare the distribution of income levels across geographies. **Table 10** below shows the percent of households by tenure at specific income thresholds for Wellesley and Norfolk County. An estimated 73 percent of Wellesley households have incomes above the regional median, adjusted for household size, compared to 52 percent for Norfolk County. Because these income levels are based on a regional area, communities with well over half of the households above the median are comparatively wealthier.

However, Table 10 also indicates that, despite meeting its state obligations for affordable housing, Wellesley still has more households considered low or moderate income than it does affordable units. In Massachusetts, G.L. c. 40B §§ 20-23 (“Chapter 40B”) sets a target for communities to have at least 10 percent of their year-round housing stock deed-restricted for low- or moderate-income households, defined as having incomes up to 80% AMI, yet for most communities, the percentage of households under 80% AMI exceeds the state’s 10 percent goal. **An estimated 22 percent of Wellesley households meet basic income requirements for affordable housing under Chapter 40B. For renter**

**households, this figure jumps to 52 percent.** Other factors may apply; for example, low-income owner households may include retirees with paid off mortgages and homes holding substantial value that would make them ineligible for affordable housing. However, the data point to a potential gap between the state’s target versus a community’s level of income-eligible households.

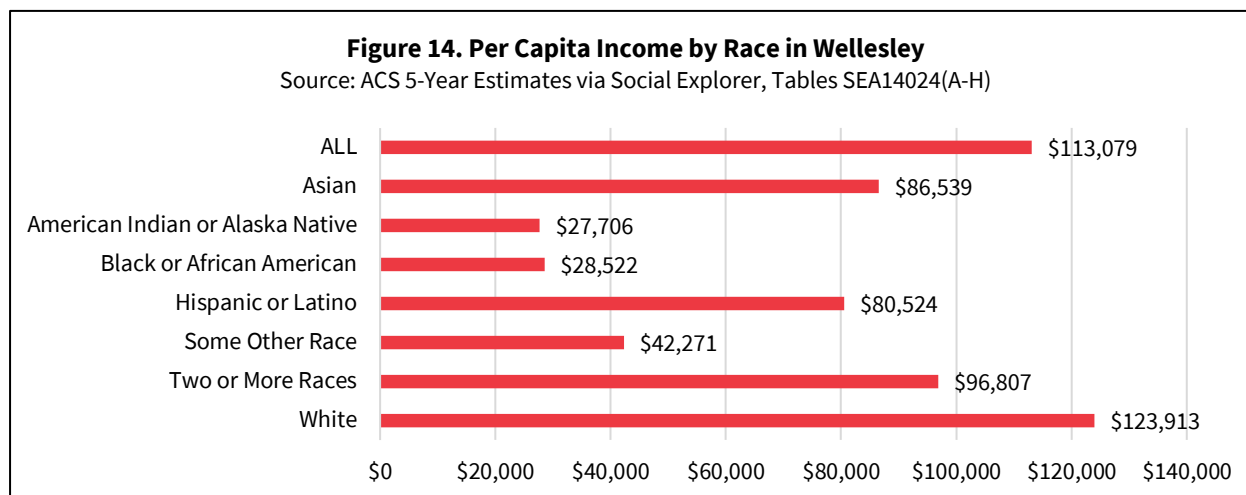
**Table 10. Household Income Levels by Tenure for Wellesley and Norfolk County**

	Wellesley			Norfolk County		
Income Cohort	Total	% Owners	% Renters	Total	% Owners	% Renters
Up to 30% AMI Extremely Low Income	8%	5%	24%	13%	7%	27%
30+ to 50% AMI Very Low Income	5%	3%	12%	10%	8%	16%
50+ to 80% AMI Low Income	9%	8%	16%	14%	13%	17%
80+ to 100% AMI Moderate Income	5%	5%	5%	10%	10%	11%
100+% AMI Above Median	73%	79%	43%	52%	63%	30%

Source: US Dept of Housing and Urban Development, CHAS, 2017-2021

### Per capita Income

Per capita income compares the relative wealth of different populations by dividing aggregate income by the population count. Though not the same as household income, per capita income sheds light on potential disparities within population groups. American Community Survey data indicate a significant difference between the per capita income of Wellesley’s White, non-Latino residents and Black or Latino residents, as illustrated in **Figure 14**, titled Per Capita Income by Race. The disparity in per capita income results in different levels of access to housing choice and neighborhood options.



## ■ POVERTY

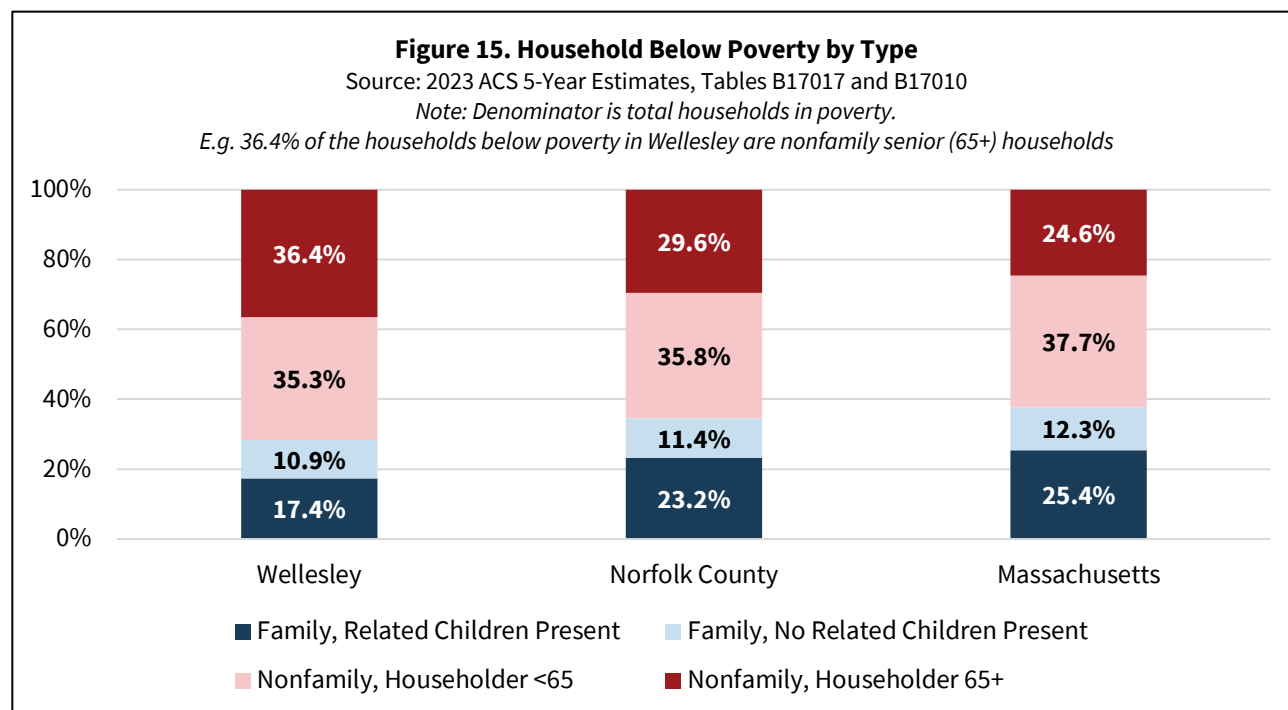
An estimated 3.9 percent of Wellesley households have incomes below the poverty level compared to 8.0% for Norfolk County and 10.9 percent for Massachusetts (**Table 11**). Nonfamily senior households represent the largest share of Wellesley households living in poverty (**Figure 15**), followed by other nonfamily households and single parent households.

**Table 11. Percent of Household Type Below Poverty Level**

*Note: Denominator is specific household type. E.g. 11.5% of Wellesley's nonfamily senior (65+) households live in poverty.*

Household Type	Wellesley	Norfolk County	Massachusetts
<b>All Households</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>
<b>All Family Households</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>
Family Households, Related Children Present	1.7%	6.1%	10.0%
Family Households, No Related Children Present	1.2%	2.6%	3.9%
<b>All Nonfamily Households</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>
Nonfamily, Householder Age >65	13.21%	13.50%	17.14%
Nonfamily, Householder Age 65+	11.50%	17.91%	20.16%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B17017 and B17010



## ■ EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The highly educated population in Wellesley reflects similar trends in neighboring populations in the region like Weston and Newton. Over 86 percent of Wellesley’s residents 25 years and over have at least a bachelor’s degree, with 54 percent of Wellesley’s residents holding a graduate, professional, or doctoral degree (**Table 12**).<sup>18</sup> These statistics are higher than the corresponding estimates for the region, and Wellesley attracts graduates from various prestigious academic institutions in the Boston area. High-achieving Well-educated people often have high earning potential, and the 86.2 percent of Wellesley residents with at least a bachelor's degree indicate a highly educated and motivated workforce in the area.

**Table 12. Cumulative Level of Educational Attainment for Population Age 25+**

Level of Educational Attainment	Wellesley	Norfolk County	Massachusetts
Less than High School	1.5%	2.4%	8.6%
High School Graduate or More (Incl. Equivalency)	98.5%	97.6%	91.4%
Some College or More	94.6%	89.9%	68.6%
Bachelor's Degree or More	87.1%	79.7%	46.6%
Master's Degree or More	55.1%	49.3%	21.4%
Professional School Degree or More	21.8%	20.9%	6.4%
Doctorate Degree	9.4%	10.3%	3.3%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5 -Year Estimates, Table B15003

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<sup>18</sup> 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B15003

## ■ RESIDENT LABOR FORCE

Wellesley's **labor force**, defined as residents age 16+ working or looking for work, totals 13,875. Nearly a third of Wellesley's employed population works in education, health care, or social assistance; **Table 13** shows the top three industries reflected in Wellesley's labor force, with a significant drop in representation for specific industries thereafter; at 5.1 percent, manufacturing is the fourth most common industry for Wellesley's labor force.<sup>19</sup> Many jobs in these fields require post-secondary education and certification, such as finance, education, science, and health care. However, within any given industry, one's **occupation** (the type of work someone does) can heavily influence earnings. Nearly three-quarters of Wellesley's residents employed full-time work in Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations, which typically have significantly higher earnings than other types of jobs, as is the case for Wellesley residents. (**Table 14**). According to the Census Bureau's OnTheMap tool, nearly a third of Wellesley's employed population works in Boston (32.4%), followed by Wellesley (12.2%), Cambridge (6.9%), and Newton (4.0%) and Waltham (3.4%), with 90 percent commuting 24 miles or less to work.<sup>20</sup> (Note: these figures do not reflect the self-employed population and are based on 2022 estimates, two limitations of OnTheMap.)

**Table 13. Top Five Industries for Wellesley's Labor Force**

Industry	%
Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	32.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	21.4%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	18.7%
<i>All Other Industries</i>	27.5%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B08126

**Table 14. Occupation and Median Earnings**

Occupation	Wellesley		Norfolk County		Massachusetts	
	% Labor Force	Median Earnings	% Labor Force	Median Earnings	% Labor Force	Median Earnings
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	74.3%	\$200,890	59.4%	\$109,497	51.1%	\$100,118
Service	5.8%	\$14,563	12.3%	\$49,376	15.5%	\$46,033
Sales And Office	16.5%	\$221,875	17.5%	\$70,503	17.7%	\$61,695
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance	1.5%	\$56,438	5.0%	\$76,609	6.7%	\$66,275
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	1.9%	\$35,147	5.8%	\$56,141	9.0%	\$51,397

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5 -Year Estimates, Tables B08124 and B24022

<sup>19</sup> 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B08126

<sup>20</sup> US Census Bureau, OnTheMap, Work Area Profile Analysis for Wellesley, 2022

## ■ EMPLOYMENT BASE

While resident employment trends directly influence a community's housing market, the jobs available within a community (known as the **employment base**) also provide critical insight, particularly when there are significant differences between those who *work* in a community and those who are able to *live* in it. The top three industries represented among local jobs are the same as those for Wellesley residents, although the split and ranking order differs slightly – see **Table 15**, which extends to show the top five industries of those who work in Wellesley. Over half (57.8 percent) of these jobs are in Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations, significantly less than the 74.3 percent for those living in the community; as discussed above, these occupations typically yield higher incomes. Comparatively, service occupations (which yield some of the lowest earnings) are much more common among Wellesley's workers, representing 13 percent of local jobs compared to 5.8 percent for Wellesley residents. Thus, median earnings for those who work in Wellesley (\$65,723) are much lower than those living Wellesley (\$111,595).<sup>21</sup> Wellesley's workers also travel from a greater variety of communities and farther distances compared to Wellesley's employed residents – see **Table 16** below.

**Table 15. Top Five Industries for Workers in Wellesley**

Industry	%
Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	34.8%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	16.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	15.8%
Retail Trade	7.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	6.1%
<i>All Other Industries</i>	20.1%

Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates, Table B08526

**Table 16. Commuting Patterns for Wellesley Residents and Workers**

Employed Residents		Working in Wellesley	
Communing TO		Communing FROM	
Boston	32.4%	Boston	10.3%
Wellesley	12.2%	Wellesley	7.3%
Cambridge	6.9%	Framingham	3.7%
Newton	4.0%	Newton	3.2%
Waltham	3.4%	Needham	2.5%
<b>All Other Communities</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>All Other Communities</b>	<b>73.0%</b>
Distance Traveled		Distance Traveled	
Under 10 Miles	40.8%	Under 10 Miles	41.3%
10-24 Miles	49.3%	10-24 Miles	38.5%
<b>25+ Miles</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>25+ Miles</b>	<b>20.1%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap, 2022

<sup>21</sup> American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates, Tables B08521 and B08128.

## Housing Conditions

This section provides an overview of the housing stock in Wellesley, which includes approximately 9,428 dwelling units and 9,101 households.<sup>22</sup> Knowledge of the existing housing type, size, and age of available units in Wellesley contribute to housing policies that encourage diversity of housing in response to identified needs.

### ■ HOUSING TYPES

The large majority of Wellesley’s dwelling units are single-family detached homes, as shown in **Table 17**. Among adjacent communities, Dover and Weston have a higher share of single-family homes than Wellesley, while Newton and Natick have more diverse housing stocks.

**Table 17: Housing Inventory by Building Type**

	WELLESLEY	Dover	Natick	Needham	Newton	Weston
Total Units	9,428	1,951	15,889	11,754	33,531	3,814
<b>1, Detached</b>	<b>82.0%</b>	<b>96.1%</b>	<b>56.5%</b>	<b>77.3%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>87.6%</b>
1, Attached	2.7%	2.6%	4.2%	4.7%	7.3%	3.6%
Duplex	3.4%	0.0%	6.1%	2.9%	16.0%	1.9%
3 or 4 Units	2.6%	0.2%	4.8%	0.8%	4.6%	1.5%
5 to 9 Units	1.3%	1.2%	5.7%	2.4%	2.4%	1.6%
10 to 19 Units	0.8%	0.0%	7.2%	0.8%	3.4%	0.0%
20 to 40 Units	3.5%	0.0%	5.6%	2.3%	2.8%	2.0%
50+ Units	3.8%	0.0%	9.9%	8.9%	7.1%	1.8%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B25024

While Table 18 above is based on American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for broad comparison purposes, local Assessor’s records provide greater detail. Land use codes do not align perfectly with ACS categories – for example, the “1, Attached” description in Table 18 includes townhouses, which for assessing purposes may include smaller multifamily rentals or condominiums. However, both ACS estimates and Assessor’s records reflected in **Table 18** below confirm the prevalence of single-family homes within Wellesley, both in number of properties and land area.

<sup>22</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023, Table B25002

**Table 18. Select Residential Land Uses in Wellesley**

Housing Type	Number of Parcels	Total Land Area (Acres)
Single-family	7,315	3020.1
Condominiums	666	--
Two-family	91	27.0
Three-family	17	4.0
Multiple houses one parcel	20	45.5
Mixed-Use with Residential	15	5.8
Multifamily 4-8	15	17.5
Multifamily 8+	14	13.6
Housing Authority	5	20.1
Source: FY2024 Assessor's Records, Town of Wellesley via MassGIS		

Specialized types of housing in Wellesley include two assisted living facilities (including Waterstone, which also includes an independent living component), group homes, and housing affiliated with Wellesley's private educational institutions, both for students as well as faculty housing.

### Single Family Homes

**Table 19** below provides a detailed look at Wellesley's single-family housing stock based on local Assessor's records, looking at key data points for all single-family properties compared to those in the lower and upper quartiles by value. In addition, **Map 2** displays Wellesley's single-family homes by year built, although it is important to note that many of the newer homes reflect demolition/rebuilds as opposed to new construction on previously vacant land, as described in the Development Trends section below.

**Table 19. Wellesley Single Family Home Characteristics**

	All Single Family	Lower 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Value	Upper 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Value
# Parcels	7,315	<b>1,826</b>	1,829
Median Assessed Value	\$1,656,000	<b>\$1,282,000</b>	\$2,211,500
Median Building/Land Value Ratio	0.47	<b>0.17</b>	1.05
Median Year Built	1950	<b>1937</b>	1991
Median Lot Size	15,000	<b>10,298</b>	23,295
Median Residential Area	2,086	<b>1,692</b>	4,544

**Table 19. Wellesley Single Family Home Characteristics**

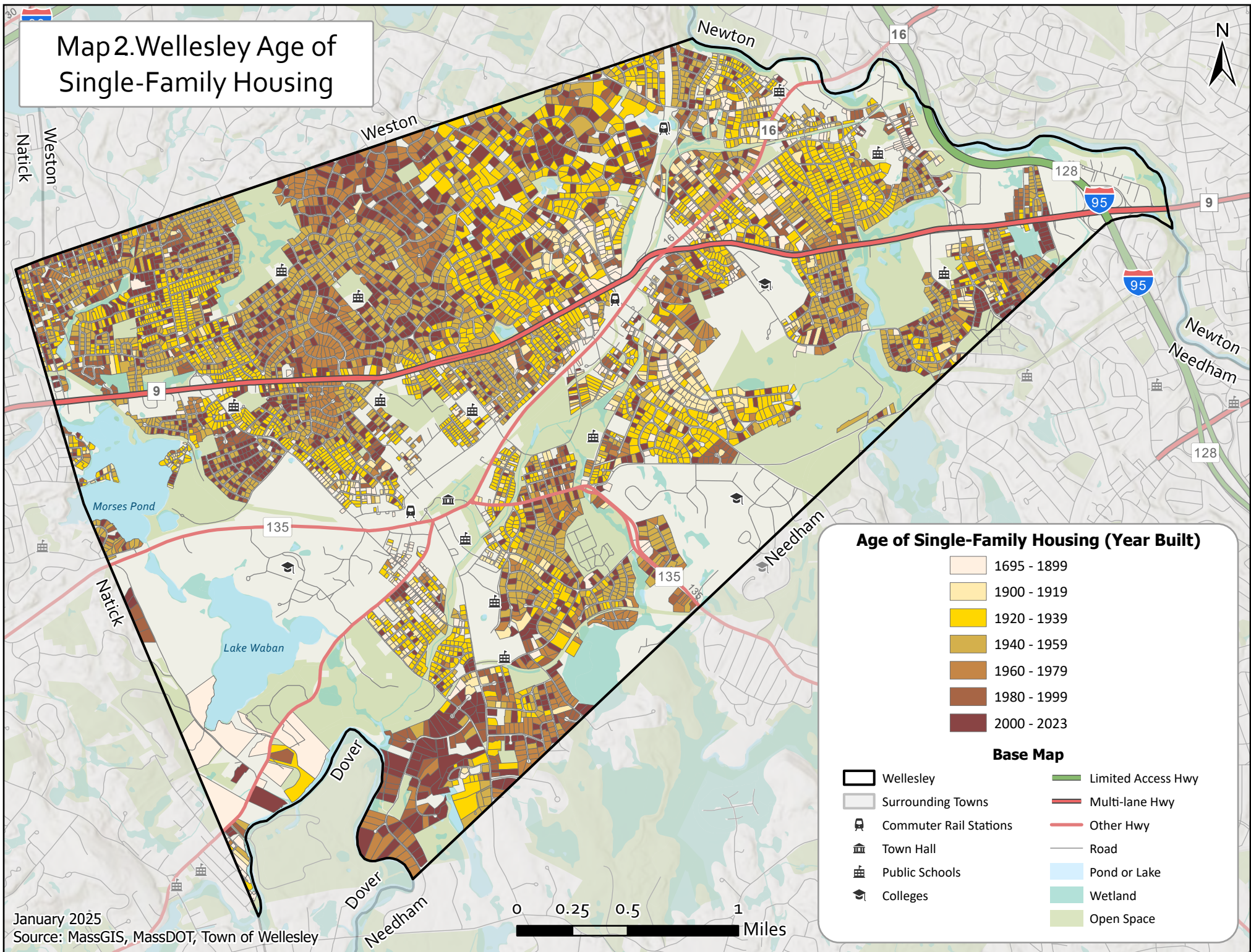
	All Single Family	Lower 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Value	Upper 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Value
Median # Rooms	9	7	10
% Last Sold Pre 2000 (For properties with year sold listed)	12%	18%	6%
#1 Most Common Style	Colonial: 57%	Colonial: 29%	Colonial: 83%
#2 Most Common Style	Garrison: 11%	Old Style: 24%	Garrison: 8%
#3 Most Common Style	Cape Cod: 11%	Cape Cod: 21%	Tudor: 3%

Source: FY2024 Assessor’s Records, Town of Wellesley via MassGIS

In general, single-family homes with Assessed Values in **lower 25th percentile**:

- Have a median assessed value of **\$1.3M**
- Hold most of their value in the land as opposed to the building
- Are older (median year built: 1937)
- Are comparatively smaller (1,692 sq ft, with median of 7 rooms) and situated on smaller lot sizes (median 1/4 acre)
- Comprise a much lower share of Colonial-style homes, although this is still most common
- Are much more likely to have same owner for 25+ years than the upper quartile homes
- Represent some of Wellesley’s limited more “naturally affordable” housing stock

## Map 2. Wellesley Age of Single-Family Housing



## ■ NUMBER OF BEDROOMS

The variety of number of bedrooms in available owner and rental housing units can offer choice for households of different size in a community. However, it can also create challenges for households when available housing stock is “mismatched” with household sizes. Nearly half of Wellesley’s owner households are either 1- or 2-person households, yet 63.6 of owner-occupied units are 4 or 5 bedrooms (**Table 20**).<sup>23</sup> This reflects the concern of many residents during the engagement process that there is a lack of smaller units for long-term residents who wish to stay in Wellesley but cannot find a suitable home. This prevents natural housing turnover and contributes to a market bottleneck for families looking to move into Wellesley completing for highly in-demand single family homes.

**Table 20. Tenure by Number of Bedrooms for Wellesley Households**

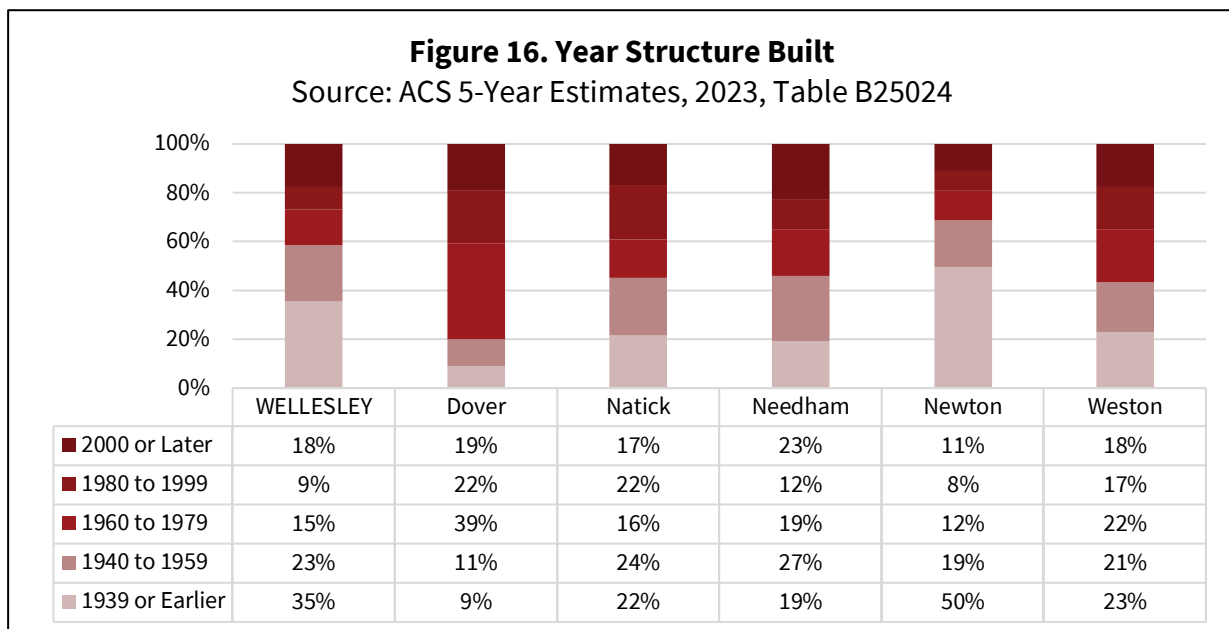
	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied	
<b>No bedroom</b>	33	0.4%	99	6.8%
<b>1 bedroom</b>	69	0.9%	313	21.5%
<b>2 bedrooms</b>	557	7.3%	522	35.8%
<b>3 bedrooms</b>	2,121	27.8%	243	16.7%
<b>4 bedrooms</b>	2,846	37.2%	174	11.9%
<b>5+ bedrooms</b>	2,016	26.4%	108	7.4%

Source: American Community 5-Year Estimates, 2023, Table B25042

<sup>23</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023, Tables B25042 and B25009

## ■ AGE OF HOUSING STOCK

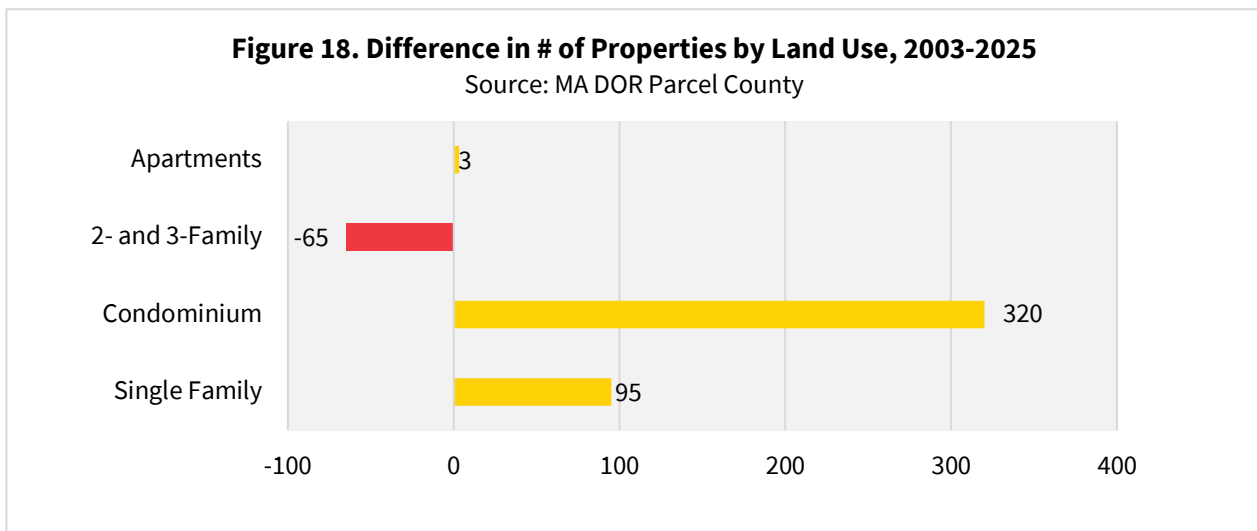
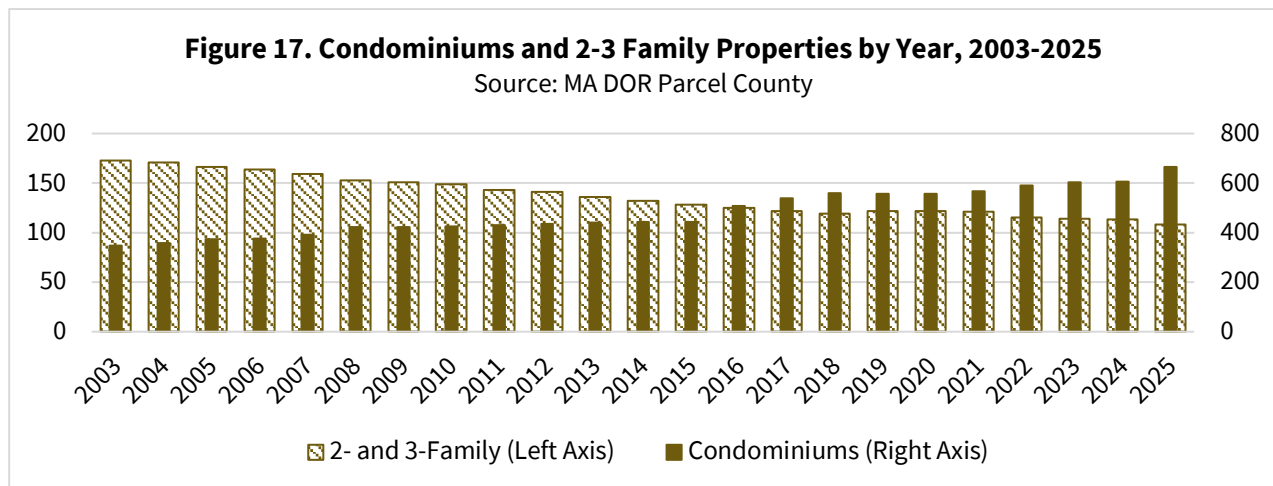
The majority of housing units in Wellesley were built before 1960, reflecting the postwar boom along Route 95 and Route 128 and the corresponding population growth shown in **Figure 1**. (See also **Figure 16** below for a comparison of housing age across neighboring towns.) On the newer end, an estimated 12 percent of Wellesley’s current stock has been built in since 2010; however, this new development has not led to an increase in total housing units available because many new units are based on existing unit teardowns, as described in the “Development Trends” below. These demolitions occur across Wellesley, although some areas have relatively higher concentrations of teardown activity relative to the number of units. Based on available demolition permits over the past five years, about 30 percent of total demolitions have occurred on lots larger than half an acre. The Development Constraints section of this plan details the Town’s demolition delay bylaw, which attempts to curb this trend.



## Housing Market

### ■ DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Between 2003 and 2025, Wellesley's single family housing stock rose by just 95 homes, although current single family Assessors records indicate that *over 1,200 single family homes* were built between 2003 and 2025, speaking to the trend of demolition and rebuild for older single-family homes that go on the market. During this same period, condominiums jumped by 320 units while two- and three-family homes fell by 65 properties (a loss of approximately 122 units).<sup>24</sup> These shifts reflect that smaller multifamily properties are being lost (either due to conversion to condominiums or teardowns, with these shifts shown in **Figures 17 and 18** below.



<sup>24</sup> MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, "Parcel Counts and Valuations by Use," accessed January 2025.

## ■ HOUSING SALES AND RENTAL PRICES

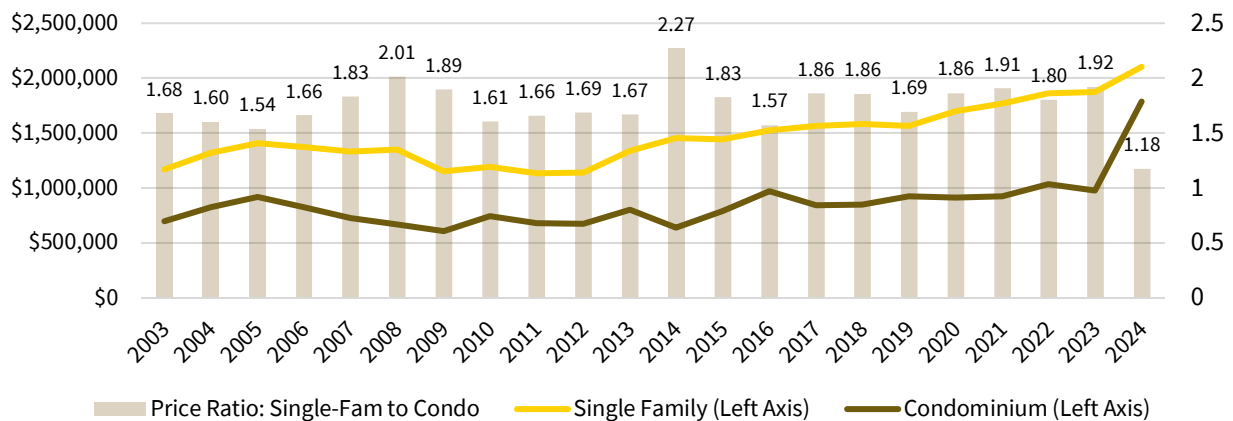
### Sale Prices

Sales of single-family homes and condominium units have remained stable over the previous 40 years, with spikes occurring in 1991-1993, 1997-2000, and 2004-2007. In 2024, the median price of a single family home in Wellesley reached \$2,103,500, while **the median sale price for a condominium jumped dramatically from \$975,000 in 2023 to \$1,787,500 in 2024 – nearing prices for single family homes (Figure 19).** This may stabilize as the units from new high-cost condominium projects (the Bristol and Terrazza) sell; these recent projects led to a jump in condominium sales in 2024 (**Figure 20**). While home sales fell in 2023, they appear to have rebounded, with nearly 100 sales in 2024.

**Figure 19. Wellesley Single Family & Condominium Median Sales Prices, 2003-2024**

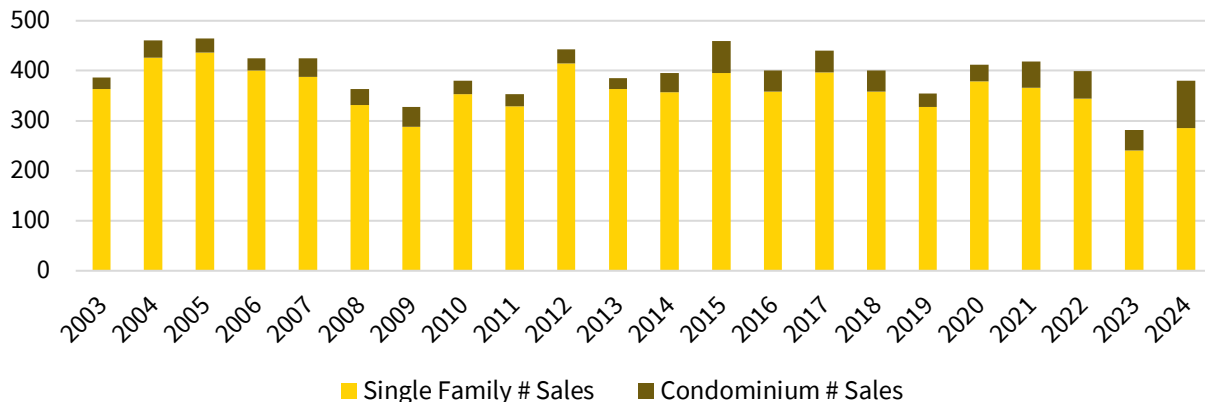
Source: Banker & Tradesman Town Stats for Wellesley, MA

A ratio approaching 1.0 indicates similar median sale prices for single family homes and condominiums.



**Figure 20. Wellesley Single Family & Condominium # Annual Sales, 2003-2024**

Source: Banker & Tradesman Town Stats for Wellesley, MA



## Market Rents

**Table 21** below shows median market rents for Wellesley based on sample listings pulled and analyzed via the proprietary source, Rentometer. However, these figures do not reflect the rents at Wellesley’s newer multifamily rental developments, including Highland Park (680 Worcester Road) and the Nines (40 Williams Street). As of May 2025, the median price for 2-bedroom listing at the Nines was \$6,061 and \$4,250 for Highland Park (based on public listings for available 2-bedroom units – just four units for each development).<sup>25</sup> **Table 22** below shows the affordability gap a household earning the median rent for renter households in Wellesley faces for a 2-bedroom unit compared to HUD’s Small Area Fair Market Rents for Wellesley as well as the Nines’ current pricing.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 21. Wellesley Rental Prices**

Rental Median Rents, 2024 via Rentometer						
	Studio	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms	5 bedrooms
Median	\$1,795	\$1,677	\$2,025	\$4,350	\$6,150	\$8,500
Minimum	\$1,600	\$592	\$842	\$1,000	\$3,200	\$5,700
Maximum	\$4,083	\$3,017	\$3,400	\$9,461	\$13,500	\$15,000
25th Percentile	\$1,561	\$1,394	\$1,772	\$3,007	\$4,736	\$7,975
75th Percentile	\$3,425	\$2,040	\$2,538	\$5,805	\$8,291	\$11,343

Source: Rentometer, September 2024 Market Overview for Wellesley

**Table 22. Estimated Affordability Gaps for Wellesley Renter Households**

ACS 2023 Median Renter Income		Affordability Gap	
Income	Max. Rent + Utilities (30% Monthly Income)	2-BR, HUD FY25 SAFMR: \$3,735	Median 2-BR, May 2025, The Nines, \$6,061
\$123,125	\$3,078	-\$657	-\$2,983

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023; HUD FY2025 Small Area Fair Market Rents, Median of Wellesley’s SAFMR zip codes; The Nines rental listings, May 2025

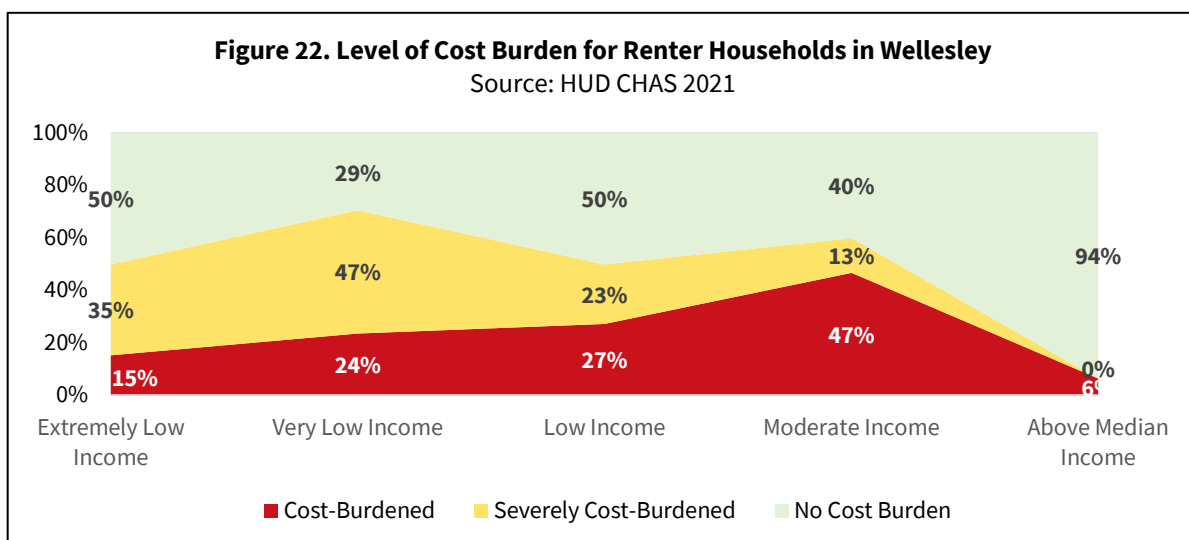
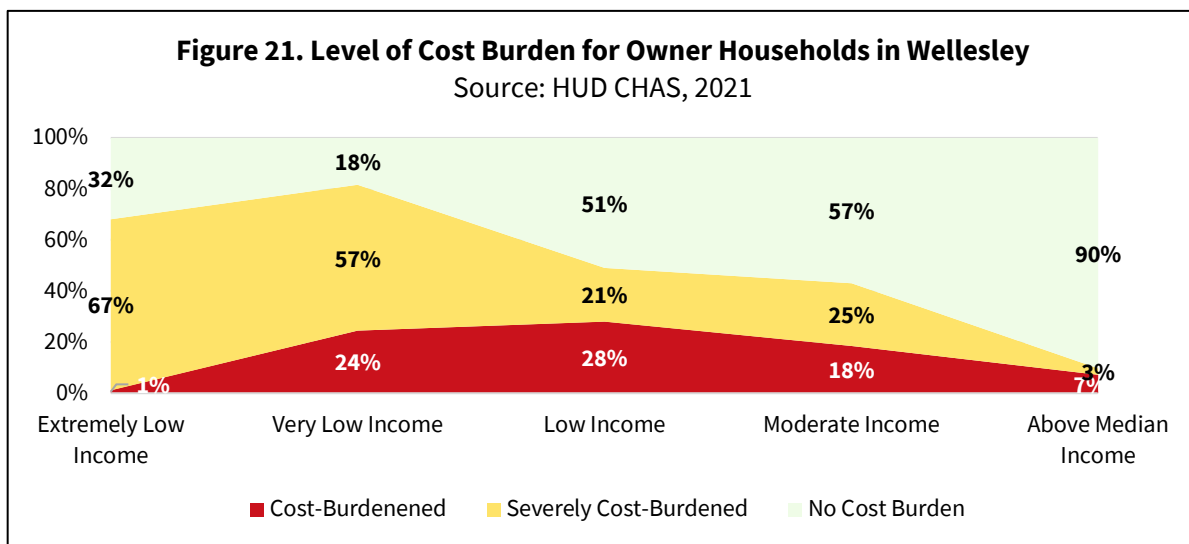
<sup>25</sup> The Nines, “Find Your Home,” accessed May 2025 at <https://thenineswellesley.com/floorplans/>; Highland Park Wellesley, “2-Bedroom Listings,” accessed May 2025 at <https://highlandparkwellesley.com/1-bedrooms-1>

<sup>26</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY2025 Small Area Fair Market Rents

## ■ HOUSING INSTABILITY

### Cost Burden

Cost-burdened households include those that pay 30 percent or more of their income on housing, while severely cost-burdened households spend 50 percent or more. As a result of high housing costs and scarcity of available affordable homes, many households spend a large majority of their income on housing, making other interactions with local and regional economies nonviable. **Figures 21 and 22** shows the breakdown of cost burdened households by tenure in Wellesley for different income groups. For owners, extremely low and very low-income groups are by far most likely to experience cost burden, while among renters, extremely low-income households are slightly less vulnerable because a fair amount of these renter households may be in subsidized housing or have access to a mobile renter voucher. **Among renters, households with incomes above 80% AMI but under the area median income are by far the most likely to experience severe cost burden**, as they do not qualify for most affordable housing programs but are faced with an extremely costly rental market.



## Eviction and Foreclosure

Eviction filings also provide a valuable measure of housing insecurity. While filings do not necessarily result in actual evictions, they still indicate a period of extreme housing instability. **Eviction filings for Wellesley renters more than doubled between 2023 (22 filings) and 2024 (49 filings).** For regional context, the ratio of eviction filings to rental units in Wellesley was far smaller than Norfolk County for 2021 and 2022; however, by 2024, the frequency of filings in Wellesley was on par with the county.<sup>27</sup> **Table 23** details the number of filings by year relative to the number of housing units for Wellesley and Norfolk County.

**Table 23. Wellesley Eviction Filings, 2021-2024**

Year	Wellesley		Norfolk County	
	Eviction Filings	% of Renters	Eviction Filings	% of Renters
2024	49	3.1%	3,135	3.3%
2023	22	1.4%	3,229	3.4%
2022	11	0.7%	2,794	3.0%
2021	10	0.6%	1,642	1.8%

Source: MassLandlords Massachusetts Eviction Data and Housing Court Statistics; US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census for count of Renter Households.

Like eviction *filings*, foreclosure *petitions* do not necessarily indicate an actual loss of housing, as many foreclosure petitions become resolved. Nonetheless, jumps in petitions in any given year may be an indicator that more households in the community are struggling to make ends meet and are at risk of displacement. In 2023, there were just three foreclosure petitions recorded in Wellesley, but in 2024 this tripled to nine petitions filed.<sup>28</sup>

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### Defining Affordable Housing

By law in Massachusetts, all communities are supposed to have affordable housing for low-income people – housing that remains affordable to them over time because a deed restriction controls the price or the rent. Designated “affordable housing” requires income restricted units in some of all of a

<sup>27</sup> MassLandlords, “Massachusetts Eviction Data and Housing Court Statistics,” accessed March 2025 at <https://masslandlords.net/policy/eviction-data/>

<sup>28</sup> Massachusetts Housing Partnership, “Housing Stability Monitor: Massachusetts Evictions and Foreclosures,” accessed February 2025 at <https://www.mhp.net/news/2024/housing-stability-monitor>

development. This means that when a household applies to lease or purchase a restricted unit, their income must fall below the applicable income limit for that unit. Housing available at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income, adjusted for household size, is one of the most common income restrictions as stipulated in Chapter 40B.

### Naturally Occurring affordable or Attainable Housing

There are other types of affordable housing besides those known as Chapter 40B-certified units. Older, moderately priced dwellings without deed restrictions, for example, can help to meet housing needs - but only for as long as the market allows. While any household may purchase or rent an unrestricted, “naturally occurring” affordable unit, only a low-income household that has determined income-eligible can purchase or rent a deed-restricted unit. Each of these differing forms of affordable housing meet a variety of housing needs. In a strong market like Wellesley and its secondary market area, unrestricted units tend to become unaffordable under unforgiving pressures on the Towns housing market.

### Chapter 40B

The Chapter 40B statute provides for a regionally equitable distribution of housing for low or moderate income households. The law establishes a minimum “fair share” target that 10 percent of a community’s housing stock will be eligible for inclusion of that state’s Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) at any given time in the decennial count of units total.

As of the completion of this report, Wellesley had a total of 981 “SHI-eligible units,” bringing the Town to 10.68 percent, shown in **Table 24**. These units include a mix of Wellesley Housing Authority properties, private rental developments that also include market rate units, group homes, the 350-unit project permitted under the Town’s 40R overlay (the Nines), and more recently, some ownership units.

**Table 24. Wellesley’s Subsidized Housing Inventory**

Project Name	Address	Type	SHI Units	Comp Permit	Affordability Term
Barton Rd Development	190 Barton Rd	Rental	90	No	Perpetual
Dean House/List House	41 River St/315 Weston Rd	Rental	57	No	Perpetual
Kilmain House	505-513 Washington St	Rental	40	No	Perpetual
Morton Circle Development	487-503 Washington St	Rental	36	No	Perpetual
Linden Street Development	Waldo Ct/Linden	Rental	12	No	Perpetual
Ardemore at Wellesley	4 Cedar St	Rental	36	Yes	Perpetual
Jubilee House	10 Cross St	Rental	4	No	Perpetual
Glen Grove	50 and 60 Grove Street	Rental	125	Yes	Perpetual
DDS Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	12	No	N/A

**Table 24. Wellesley's Subsidized Housing Inventory**

Project Name	Address	Type	SHI Units	Comp Permit	Affordability Term
Hastings Village	54-66 Hasting St	Rental	52	Yes	Perpetual
Waterstone at Wellesley	27 Washington St	Rental	82	No	Perpetual
Wellesley Place	978 Worcester St	Rental	36	No	Perpetual
Linden Street	Linden Street	Rental	2	Yes	Perpetual
680 Worcester Rd	680 Worcester Rd	Rental	20	Yes	Perpetual
Wellesley Park	20-40 William St	Rental	350	No - 40R	2050
Cedar Place	2-3 Burke Lane	Rental	0	Yes	Perpetual
Worcester St	136-140 Worcester St	Rental	0	Yes	Perpetual
Townhouses at Edgemoor Circle	Edgemoor Ave and Overbrook Dr	Ownership	3	Yes	Perpetual
Walnut Street Fire Station	182 Walnut Street	Ownership	1	Yes	Perpetual
Wellesley Manor	874-878 Worcester St	Ownership	7	Yes	Perpetual
Peck Avenue and Mellon Rd	Peck Avenue and Mellon Rd	Ownership	3	No	Perpetual
Wellesley Commons	65 Washington St	Ownership	1	Yes	Perpetual
The Belclare Wellesley	580 Washington St and 53 Grove St	Ownership	5	No	Perpetual
Fieldstone Way	135 Great Plain Ave	Ownership	7	Yes	Perpetual
16 Stearns Rd	16 Stearns Rd	Ownership	0	Yes	Perpetual
# Affordable Units			981		
Year-Round Housing Units			9,184		
% Affordable Units			10.68%		

Source: EOHLC, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, Wellesley, July 2024

The majority of nearby municipalities have achieved the 10 percent minimum requirement of affordable housing stock under Chapter 40B. Adjacent communities still working to develop affordable housing in compliance with state regulation include Dover (2.82) and Weston (3.8 percent).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, 2024.

## Development Constraints

The following section discusses the most significant constraints that may affect Wellesley’s ability to address its housing needs. In housing plans, terms such as “barriers” or “constraints” are typically used as a *value-neutral* way to describe factors that objectively limit housing development. While some “barriers” such as sensitive environmental areas or historic resources can limit development, they are also **community assets** — moreover, these barriers are unlikely to change if under special protections. Other “barriers” can be remedied if desired, particularly those stemming from local regulations and policies under the community’s direct control. This analysis focuses on development constraints relating to the natural environment, infrastructure capacity, regulatory framework, and available resources. By understanding these interconnected factors, policymakers can make informed decisions about Wellesley’s future development while maintaining the quality of life for its residents and protecting features the community values.

## Natural Resources Protection

Sustainable planning and development principles encourage minimal disruption of natural resources, instead channeling activity where it currently exists, and supporting new development and redevelopment with suitable infrastructure. This section explores Wellesley’s sensitive environmental resources, as well as the steps Wellesley has taken to protect them.

### ■ WATER RESOURCES

Wellesley is within the Charles River Watershed, a drainage basin covering approximately 310 square miles across over thirty communities.<sup>30</sup> This larger watershed consists of smaller drainage basins, several of which are located within Wellesley and named after the brooks that define their boundaries (see **Map 3, Watershed Drainage Basins & Water Supply Protection Districts**).

#### Groundwater

The Waban Brook and Rosemary Stream Brook basins largely correlate to Wellesley’s **Water Supply Protection District**, which prohibits or limits certain land uses within the district; while this protective overlay follows the aquifer recharge areas *within Wellesley*, both aquifers are vulnerable to contamination from land uses in adjacent communities. As such, the Town’s 2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) identified the need to “Reduce non-point source pollution in water bodies from regional activities in upstream communities, particularly in the watershed area bordering Morses Pond...through

#### What is a watershed?

A watershed, or drainage basin, is a land area in which all flowing surface waters and precipitation eventually converge at a single outflow point such as a river mouth, reservoir, bay, or ocean.

#### What is an aquifer?

An aquifer is an area of porous, water-bearing rock and sediment underground. Groundwater naturally fills the pockets created by geologic formations below the water table, such as cavities or cracks within rocks and spaces between particles of sand. An aquifer’s **recharge area** is the area on land where water can pass through the surface and refill the aquifer.

<sup>30</sup> MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *Major Watersheds*, June 2000.

**educational outreach to residents of Weston and other neighboring communities.”<sup>31</sup>**

## Ponds

Wellesley’s surface waters include thirteen ponds of varying sizes, with the two largest ponds (Morses Pond and Lake Waban) covering around 220 acres on the western side of town. High amounts of sedimentation and fertilizer runoff cause algal blooms affecting many of Wellesley’s ponds.<sup>32</sup> To improve the quality of these water resources, the Natural Resources Commission follows a **Comprehensive Management Plan** for eight of the Town’s public ponds. Morses Pond, however, is collaboratively managed by the Natural Resources Commission, Department of Public Works, and Recreation Department to meet quality and preservation goals for the pond.<sup>33</sup>

## Rivers & Streams

The Town’s surface water network also includes the Charles River, an 80-mile river that creates Wellesley’s southwestern corner as well as its entire eastern border with Newton.<sup>34</sup> To the west, the Waban Brook, Fuller Brook, and Polluck Brook join the Charles as it flows between Wellesley and Dover while the Cold Stream Brook, Rosemary Stream Brook, and Hurd Brook drain into the Charles at various points along the town’s eastern border with Newton.<sup>35</sup> Wellesley’s **Floodplain/Watershed Protection District**, which generally runs adjacent to these stream systems and the Charles River, requires a special permit for any new construction. While Wellesley’s hilly topography limits the extent of floodplain areas, bridge crossings, culverts, dams, and impervious surfaces such as driveways and parking lots contribute to water backup and flooding.<sup>36</sup>

### What is a floodplain?

A floodplain is a low-lying area generally next to a river or stream that is prone to flooding. Communities that participate in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) must adopt floodplain management standards for Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) that have a 1 percent chance of flooding every year. As an NFIP participant, Wellesley adopted its **Floodplain/Watershed Protection Overlay District**, which corresponds to these FEMA-designated SFHAs.

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<sup>31</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 62 and 139

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 57 and 61

<sup>33</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Pond Management” and “Morses Pond,” accessed January 2025 at [www.wellesleyma.gov/1008/Pond-Management](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/1008/Pond-Management) and [www.wellesleyma.gov/455/Morses-Pond](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/455/Morses-Pond).

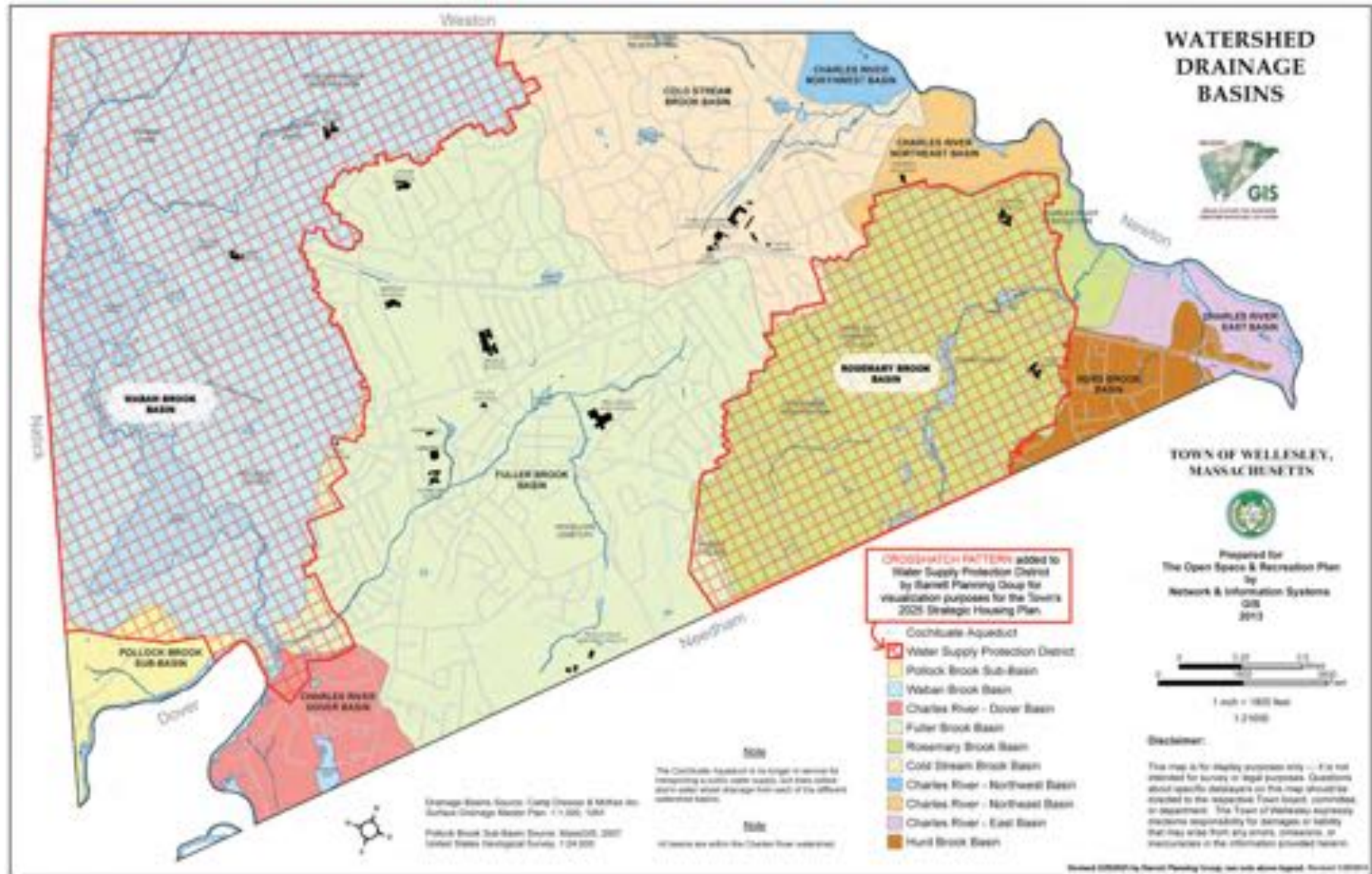
<sup>34</sup> US Environmental Protection Agency, “Urban Waters – The Charles River,” accessed February 2025 at [www.epa.gov/charlesriver](http://www.epa.gov/charlesriver); Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 82.

<sup>35</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 61

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 64 and 89



**Map 3. Watershed Drainage Basins & Water Supply Protection Districts**  
*Original map prepared for OSRP by Network & Information Systems GIS, 2013*



## Wetlands & Vernal Pools

Forested and emergent wetlands are scattered throughout the town, with the largest wetland areas located: adjacent to the Recycling and Disposal Facility and continuing into Needham; along the Rosemary Brook near the Town Forest; and within the Overbrook neighborhood along Bogle Brook.<sup>37</sup> (See **Map 4, Water Resources**.) Wellesley also has at least twelve certified **vernal pools**, or small, shallow ponds that lack fish and are dry for part of the year. Because vernal pools have wet and dry cycles, they provide a unique habitat for many wildlife communities such as salamanders, frogs, turtles, snakes, and various insects.<sup>38</sup>

The Wetlands Protection Committee reviews wetland permit applications for projects within a required resource area buffer zone, generally 100 feet. Unlike state or federal wetlands protection laws, the **Wellesley Wetlands Protections Bylaw** and associated **Wetlands Protection Regulations** include *uncertified* vernal pools as protected resource areas. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) has identified thirty potential vernal pools within Wellesley, while the Town's Natural Resources Commission (NRC) estimates dozens more potential pools – all of which may be subject to protection under the Town's bylaw.<sup>39</sup>

## ■ OPEN SPACE

Approximately 33-40 percent of Wellesley is open space, although around half of this open space is privately owned and potentially at risk of conversion to other uses in the future.<sup>40</sup> As such, the 2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) prioritizes expanding the amount of protected open space and identifies several parcels of interest for open space protection. Some of these properties were also pointed out in the Town's 2018 Housing Production Plan (HPP), such as Massachusetts Bay Community College and North 40.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to identifying specific sites, the 2022 OSRP advocates for zoning measures that would preserve additional open space through zoning. Specifically, the plan encourages the Planning Board to “require that the Town's open space goals are considered when reviewing site plans and should encourage developers to use low-impact design strategies on these parcels.”<sup>42</sup> **Map 5, Wellesley's Natural & Built Environment**, juxtaposes the Town's open space resources along its building landscape.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 64

<sup>38</sup> MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), *NHESP Certified Vernal Pools*, prepared by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), 2009. GIS data appear to show 13 certified vernal pools within Wellesley.

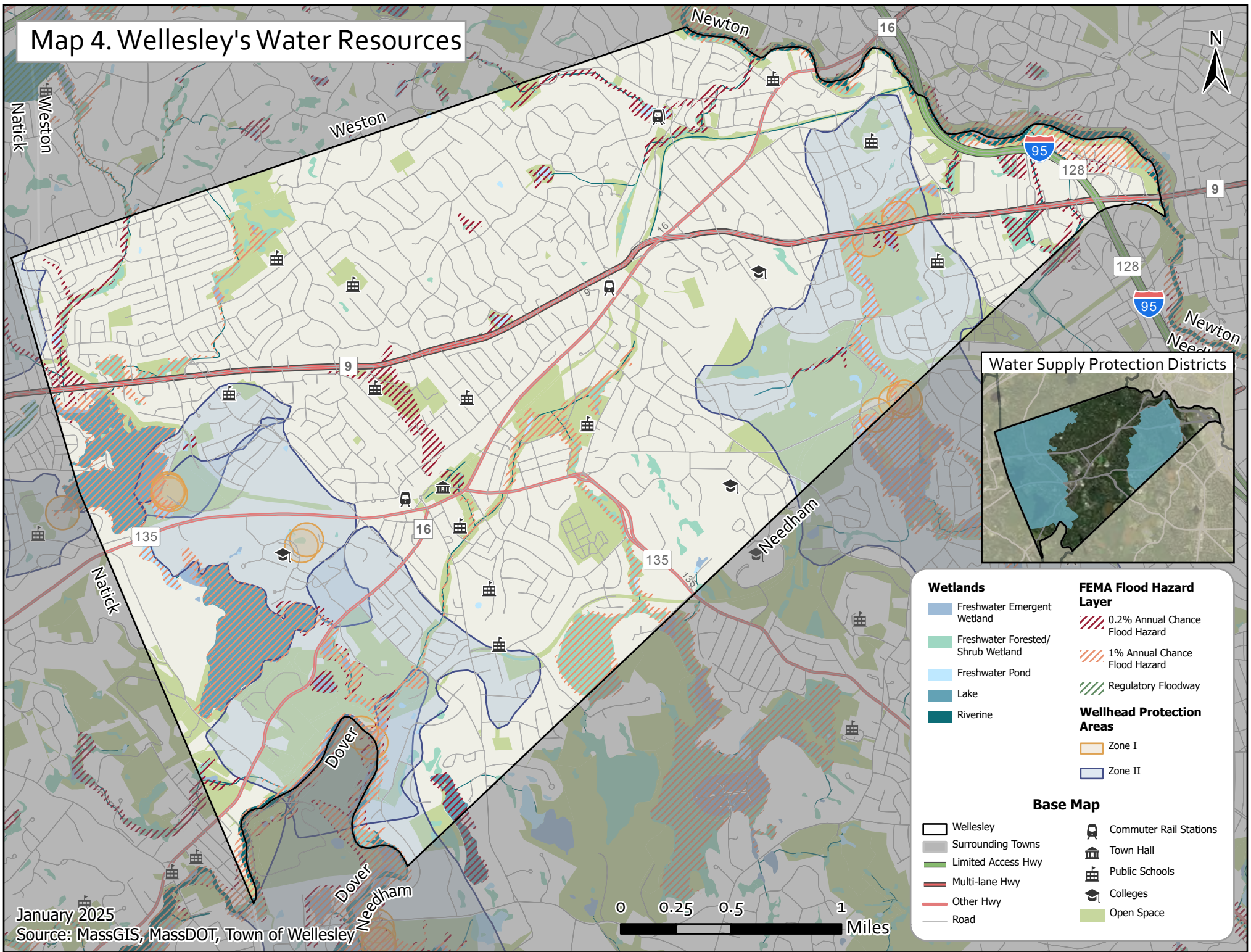
<sup>39</sup> MassGIS, *NHESP Potential Vernal Pools*, prepared by NHESP, July 2013; Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 65

<sup>40</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 142, 148, and Table 8, 105-131

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 159; Barrett Planning Group & JM Goldson, *Wellesley Housing Production Plan*, September 24, 2018, 48-50

<sup>42</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 143.

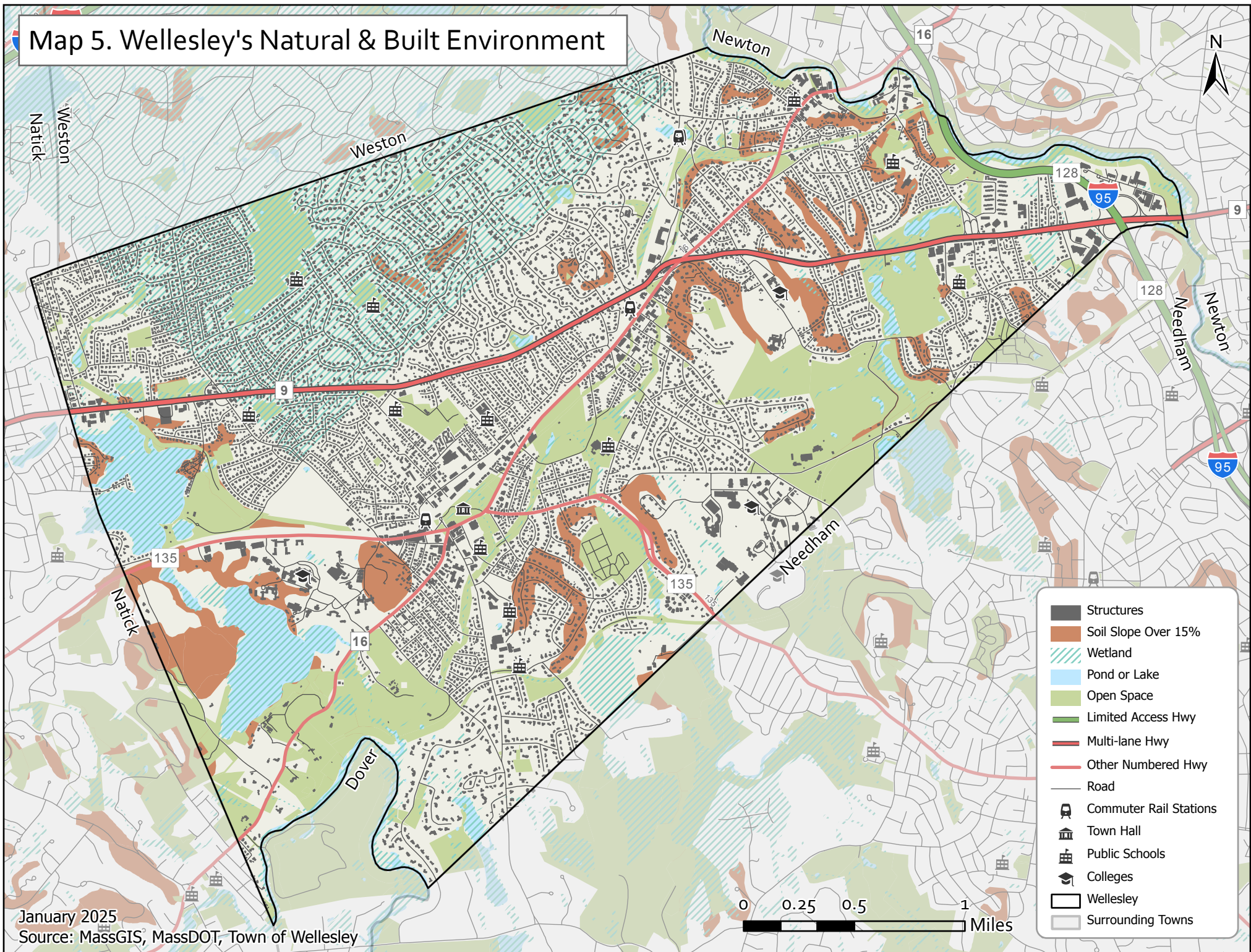
# Map 4. Wellesley's Water Resources



January 2025

Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Town of Wellesley

# Map 5. Wellesley's Natural & Built Environment



## Infrastructure Considerations

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### ■ DRINKING WATER

Wellesley's drinking water comes from a combination of groundwater pumped from ten Town-operated wells and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), a regional water utility that draws from surface water supplies located in central Massachusetts. The Town's MWRA connection provides a maximum of 4.2M gallons per day, with the Town's current maximum daily demand of over 6M gallons per day met through a combination of both local and MWRA sources.<sup>43</sup> In 2023 the MWRA completed a project evaluation of an expansion project to Weston, Wellesley, and Natick which would meet all of Wellesley's demand. The project, estimated at \$70 million, would take between five to seven years to complete.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the Town's ten wells, the Department of Public Works (DPW) operates three water treatment facilities, two large storage facilities, and around 150 miles of distribution mains.<sup>45</sup> The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) routinely inspects Public Water Supplier (PWS) systems such as Wellesley's to assess their technical, financial, and managerial capacity to provide safe drinking water. MassDEP conducted a sanitary survey of the Wellesley Water System in 2022 and found no violations or deficiencies requiring action.<sup>46</sup>

In response to updated state drinking water standards, the Town began Per- and PolyFluorAlkyl Substances (PFAS) sampling in 2021 and found elevated levels in the four Morses Pond wells. The Town took the Morses Pond Drinking Water Treatment Plan facility offline until it was able to implement an interim treatment system that removes PFAS 6 to non-detection levels.<sup>47</sup> In April 2024, the US Environmental Protection Agency issued new national water standards for PFAS that the Town's two other treatment plants would likely be unable to meet; as such, the Town has begun

#### **What are PFAS?**

Per- and PolyFourAlkyl Substances (PFAS) are widely used, persistent chemicals that break down very slowly and are found in water, air, fish, and soil. Because some PFAS have been linked to harmful health effects, Massachusetts began requiring PFAS testing under 310 CMR 22, the state's drinking water regulations.

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<sup>43</sup> Town of Wellesley, "FAQs: DPW – PFAS," #23, accessed February 2025 at [wellesleyma.gov/FAQ.aspx](https://www.wellesleyma.gov/FAQ.aspx).

<sup>44</sup> CDM Smith, *MWRA Water System Expansion Evaluation to MetroWest Communities* (July 2023), 6-4 (Table 6-1) and 7-8 (Table 7-2), prepared for the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

<sup>45</sup> Town of Wellesley Department of Public Works, "Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report," (2023), 2, accessed February 2025 at [www.wellesleyma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/817](https://www.wellesleyma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/817)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>47</sup> Town of Wellesley Department of Public Works, "Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report," (2021), 3; (2022), 4 accessed February 2025 at [www.wellesleyma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=43](https://www.wellesleyma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=43)

planning for a permanent PFAS treatment system for Morses Pond and interim solutions at the Town's two other treatment plants.<sup>48</sup>

## Wastewater

Wellesley is part of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) Wastewater System. Most residences are connected to the Town's wastewater collections system, which includes collection lines, lift stations, sewer manholes, and pumping stations. The Town's wastewater is discharged into the MWRA's collection sewers, which flow to the Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Facility. Wellesley's contribution to the total MWRA flow tends to increase during wet conditions, potentially due to illegal connection of sump pumps to household sanitary plumbing.<sup>49</sup>

At the time of the 2022 OSRP, just over 200 properties in Wellesley remained on septic systems.<sup>50</sup> The Town's Health Codes and Regulations add stricter requirements for septic systems compared to state regulations ("Title 5," 310 CMR 15). These additional requirements include but are not limited to: larger minimum tank size; greater minimum distance between the highest groundwater elevation and the bottom of leaching elements, based on stricter percolation rates; and limiting groundwater testing to the months of March and April.<sup>51</sup>

## Stormwater

Since 2003 the Town has operated its stormwater system under the Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit, which is jointly overseen by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Due to permit obligations and federal requirements to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff, the Town must continue to improve its stormwater infrastructure management. To support these improvements, the Town implemented a monthly **stormwater utility fee**, the revenue from which will support a recently established Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund. Stormwater utility fees are based upon the amount of impervious area on a parcel, as impervious surfaces increase the volume and rate of stormwater runoff, which in turn contributes to flooding and pollution of surface waters.<sup>52</sup>

# ■ TRANSPORTATION

## Roadways

Wellesley is located just southwest of the interchange of **Interstate 90 (I-90)** and **I-95**. Several state-owned arterial roadways provide east-west regional access and include most of the signalized intersections in town. **Route 9**/Worcester Street extends across Wellesley from its eastern corner with

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<sup>48</sup> Town of Wellesley Department of Public Works, "PFAS Information – PFAS Update April 2025," Accessed April 2025 at [www.wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information)

<sup>49</sup> Town of Wellesley, *2023-2024 Annual Town Report: Water & Sewer Division*, 117.

<sup>50</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029*, 95.

<sup>51</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Health Codes and Regulations, Chapter V, "Sewage,"* accessed March 2025 at [www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/234/Chapter-V-PDF](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/234/Chapter-V-PDF).

<sup>52</sup> Town of Wellesley, "FAQs: DPW – Stormwater Utility," #23, accessed February 2025 at [wellesleyma.gov/FAQ.aspx](http://wellesleyma.gov/FAQ.aspx).

Needham and Newton (also where its junction with I-95 is located), intersecting several arterial or collector roads (including Route 16 in Wellesley Hills) before entering Natick above Morses Pond. The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)'s draft FY2026-2030 *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) includes planned drainage improvements along Route 9 for flood mitigation.<sup>53</sup>

**Route 16**/Washington Street and **Route 135** (Central Street/Wellesley Avenue/Great Plain Avenue) briefly merge and split off in Wellesley Square, where both routes intersect with collector roads around the downtown including Weston Road, Linden Street and Grove Street. Recently, the Boston Region MPO selected the Linden Street and Weston Road intersection as a study area for their Intersection Improvement Program; based on traffic data collected for this study, the MPO recommended solutions including improving signal timing, narrowing vehicle lane widths, and creating shared-use lanes among multiple modes of travel.<sup>54</sup>

Several arterials and major collector roads in Town experience daily traffic exceeding 6,000 vehicles (Routes 9, 16, and 135; Weston Road, Walnut Street, Cedar Street), while several minor collectors experience between 3,000 and 6,000 vehicles per day (Glen Road, Cliff Road, Forest Street, Linden Street, Oak Street, Dover Road, Grove Street, and Benvenue Street).<sup>55</sup>

### Regulations for Traffic Management

Potential increases to traffic patterns in high-use corridors remains a central concern for residents in the context of building new housing. To mitigate the effects of development on circulation and mobility, the Town's Project of Significant Impact (PSI) special permit requires the applicant to submit a Municipal Systems Impact Analysis (MSIA) that details the project's ability to meet minimum standards for traffic and pedestrian safety (among other areas of concern); upon review, the Board may impose conditions including design alternatives, off-site negotiated improvements, or completion of multiple traffic studies within a year of a project's completion. (See "Regulatory Considerations" section for more detail on PSI requirements.)

In an effort to minimize bottlenecks on the road, the Town's Traffic Regulations forbid standing or parking vehicles on any roadway where parking will not leave a clear and unobstructed lane at least twelve feet wide of passing traffic – including delivery vehicles, which are limited to loading and unloading in indicated service zones for no more thirty minutes. Fines for violation of these parking provision range from fifteen to fifty dollars.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, *Transportation Improvement Program FFYS 2026-2030 [DRAFT]*, April 2025, 279-280. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is five-year rolling capital plan for the 97 cities and towns in the MPO's planning area,

<sup>54</sup> Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, *Technical Memorandum: Wellesley Intersection Improvement*, August 2023, 22-25. Accessed October 2024 at <https://www2.bostonmpo.org/data/pdf/studies/bikeped/2023-intersection-improvement/Wellesley-Intersection-Improvement.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Kittleson & Associates, *Wellesley Townwide Safe Routes Plan* (February 2025), 36

<sup>56</sup> Town of Wellesley, Traffic Regulations, Articles V and X, updated March 2025

## Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety

**Safe Routes Plan:** Wellesley maintains a commitment to multimodal mobility, highlighted most recently in the Town’s *Safe Routes Plan* (2025), which identifies gaps in Wellesley’s pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure and suggests improvements that will grow a network of “low-stress” walking and biking routes in Wellesley. The plan identified portions of arterial roadways (Worcester Street/Route 9), Washington Street/Route 16), Central Street/Route 135, Weston Road) with partial sidewalk gaps (i.e. sidewalks absent on one side of the roadway), as well as collector streets including Wellesley Avenue and Oakland Street with complete sidewalk gaps (i.e. sidewalks absent on *both sides* of the roadway). In addition, the study noted that the Town’s existing bicycle infrastructure primarily consists of shared use paths within parks and conservation areas, with some bike lanes on portions of Washington Street and Great Plain Avenue.<sup>57</sup>

**Complete Streets:** The Town of Wellesley’s 2020 *Complete Streets Prioritization Plan* (currently undergoing an update) identified thirty infrastructure projects that would improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities in town under the state’s Complete Streets program.<sup>58</sup> Since adopting a Complete Streets Policy, Wellesley has received nearly \$900,000 in Complete Streets funding, shown in **Table 25**.

**Table 25. Complete Streets Projects**

Year	Amount	Project(s)
2021 <sup>59</sup>	\$382,000	<b>Great Plain Avenue:</b> New crosswalks, extended sidewalks, and new bicycle accommodations at Great Plain Avenue rotary
2025 <sup>60</sup>	\$500,000	<b>Amherst Road:</b> New sidewalk to create a continues connection between Wellesley Avenue to Radcliff Road <b>Alba Road, Wall Street, and Windemare Road:</b> New sidewalks to create a connecting sidewalk from these roads to Linden Street sidewalk. <b>Dover Road &amp; Ingrahm Road:</b> New sidewalks to complete missing gaps on the Ingraham Road sidewalk and extending the Dover Road sidewalk between Ingraham Road and Benvenue Street.

## Public Transportation

**Commuter Rail:** The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)’s Framingham/Worcester commuter rail line runs from Worcester to Boston and includes three stations in Wellesley: Wellesley Square, Wellesley Hills, and Wellesley Farms.<sup>61</sup> All three stations are slated for accessibility improvements in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)’s draft FY2026-2030

<sup>57</sup> Kittleson & Associates, *Wellesley Townwide Safe Routes Plan* (February 2025), 36

<sup>58</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Sustainable Mobility Plan* (2020), 24

<sup>59</sup> MassDOT, “Awarded Project Narratives: Complete Streets Funding Program Tier 3 Grant Recipients: Fiscal Year 2021 Round 1,” accessed April 2025 at <https://madothway.my.site.com/GrantCentral/s/complete-streets-public-overview>.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.wellesleyma.gov/1414/Complete-Streets>

<sup>61</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Commuter/Regional Railroad,” accessed October 2024 at <https://wellesleyma.gov/1695/CommuterRegional-Railroad>

*Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*, a five-year rolling capital plan for 97 cities and towns in the MPO’s planning area.<sup>62</sup>

**Bus:** The MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)’s #1 bus makes connections from Natick to Newton, with Wellesley stops including Wellesley Square, Babson College, MassBay Community College, and Lower Falls. MWRTA bus services In addition, MWRTA operates a free MassBay Community College shuttle running between the Wellesley campus and the Riverside T station in Newton.<sup>63</sup>

MWTRA’s **CatchConnect** service is a curb-to-curb microtransit system that allows users to book rides in advance on a first-come, first served basis. Wellesley’s service area covers the entire Town as well as select stops in Newton and Natick. While this service helps close public transportation gaps affecting multifamily housing in Wellesley, it is currently only available on weekdays.

**Micro-Transit:** Various shuttle services requiring pre-registration serve to fill in network gaps, including MWRTA’s Boston Hospital Shuttle, CatchConnect, Council on Aging Bus, and MetroWest Ride, the latter of which is for people with disabilities who are unable to independently access the fixed route bus system.<sup>64</sup>

## Market Conditions

*While the “Housing Market” section of this report details these factors in more detail, this speaks to the barrier Wellesley’s **real estate market** creates for affordable housing development.*

### ■ LIMITED DEVELOPABLE LAND

As noted in the 2018 HPP, Wellesley is “a substantially built-out community” that “will probably see much of its future affordable housing created from redevelopment and reuse of existing properties.”<sup>65</sup> Assessor’s records confirm this limited availability of developable land, indicating that the majority of vacant residential parcels and Tax Title properties are under 10,000 square feet in size. In addition to the Tax Title properties in **Table 26**, the Town owns another 81 vacant non-conservation properties, with about half under 10,000 square feet in size.<sup>66</sup>

#### What are Tax Title properties?

A Tax Title is a lien placed on a property for nonpayment of taxes. The Tax Title gives a municipality the right to foreclose on a property and assume ownership.

<sup>62</sup> Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, *Transportation Improvement Program FFYS 2026-2030 [DRAFT]*, April 2025, Table 3-8 “FFYs 2026–30 TIP Transit Table (MBTA Federal Capital Program)”

<sup>63</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Bus, Shuttle and Paratransit Services,” accessed October 2024 at <https://wellesleyma.gov/1698/Bus-Shuttle-and-Paratransit-Services>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Barrett Planning Group & JM Goldson, *Wellesley Housing Production Plan*, September 24, 2018, 55

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. By comparison, Assessor’s records indicate that the Town owns 82 conservation properties totaling over 545 acres.

**Table 26. Characteristics of Vacant Residential Land & Tax Title Properties in Wellesley**

	Vacant Residential Land			Tax Title Properties
	“Developable” designation generally relates to conformity with dimensional requirements and may not reflect other factors such as environmental constraints.			
	Developable	Potentially Developable	Undevelopable	
# Properties	52	4	145	31
Total Acres	119.40	0.92	41.71	5.80
Median Lot Size (Acres)	0.49	0.29	0.13	0.14
Median Assessed Value	\$1,335,000	\$125,000	\$25,000	\$22,000

Source: Town of Wellesley Assessors Records, FY2025, via MassGIS.

## ■ PROPERTY VALUES

The vacant residential properties preliminarily designated as “developable” or “potentially developable” have a median assessed value of \$1.3M, making the cost of acquiring even vacant land for residential development unattainable (**Table 27**). By comparison, the median assessed value for developed single family lots in Wellesley is currently \$1.66M.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 27. Characteristics of Vacant Residential Land & Tax Title Properties in Wellesley**

	Single Family	Two Family	Three Family	Apts 4-8 Units
# Properties	7,315	91	17	15
Median Lot Size (Acres)	0.34	0.24	0.21	0.36
Median Year Built	1950	1910	1900	1902
Median Assessed Value	\$1,656,000	\$1,300,000	\$1,232,000	\$2,470,000

Source: Town of Wellesley Assessors Records, FY2025, via MassGIS.

<sup>67</sup> Town of Wellesley Assessor’s Records via MassGIS, FY2025.

## Regulatory Considerations

Wellesley's zoning bylaw is complex, containing many different (often similar) zoning districts and several different layers of regulation that appear to require redundant review of projects for municipal staff and review boards.

### ■ APPROVAL PROCESSES

Wellesley has three categories that proposed developments can fall under depending on scale. One or two-unit dwellings are never considered Major or Minor Construction Projects unless located in a Flood Plain or Watershed Protection overlay district.

#### Major & Minor Construction Projects

**Major Construction Projects** require **Site Plan Review** by the Zoning Board of Appeals and include:

- New construction of 2,500 square feet or more of gross floor area
- An increase in gross floor by at least 50 percent
- All MBTA Communities projects<sup>68</sup>
- Activities in the Flood Plain, Watershed Protection, and Water Supply Protection Districts

**Minor Construction Projects** are all other projects not fitting the above criteria that include a change in the outside appearance of a building from a public way, or enlargement of a parking or storage area. Any projects not meeting the criteria for Major or Minor Construction Projects are not subject to additional project review.

Both Major and Minor Construction Projects require **Design Review**. The Design Review Board, appointed by the Planning Board, considers aspects of project design including the preservation of existing landscaping, the massing and scale of buildings, and the appearance of signs. Wellesley's Design Guidelines Handbook, which has not been updated since 1989, is currently under revision.

#### Projects of Significant Impact

**Projects of Significant Impact (PSIs)** involve 10,000 square feet of new construction or a renovation or alteration of a structure over 15,000 square feet to facilitate a change in use. **A PSI requires a special permit from the Planning Board, and an applicant cannot seek Site Plan Review or Design Review for Major Construction Projects until after the Planning Board has approved the related PSI special permit.** Both processes require staff review of project applications, potentially creating inefficiency for departments, boards, and applicants.

As part of the PSI approvals process, applicants must submit a Municipal Systems Impact Analysis (MSIA) prepared by professional engineers that quantifies the impact of the Construction Project on

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<sup>68</sup> In 2021, the state legislature passed the MBTA Communities Act, requiring municipalities with commuter rail stations to have at least one zoning district in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right. To comply with the law, Wellesley designated the Wellesley Square Commercial, Business, Business A, Industrial, and Industrial A Districts as areas where MBTA Communities-compliant projects can be proposed as of right. These projects are exempt from Project of Significant Impact (PSI) regulations because MBTA multifamily districts cannot require a Special Permit, which is part of the Town's PSI review process.

water, sewer, storm drainage, electric, traffic, intersections, sidewalks and footways, building occupant life safety, refuse disposal and recycling. The Planning Board grants PSI special permits with conditions intended to mitigate the impacts of the project on each of these areas reviewed under the MSIA, including provision of sidewalks and other potential “Negotiated Improvements” to municipal facilities to meet service needs. The Planning Board can also require multiple traffic studies within a year of a project’s completion.

## ■ ZONING DISTRICTS

As shown in **Table 28**, Over 70 percent of Wellesley is zoned **Single Residence**, where the only residential uses allowed by right are single-family dwellings and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).<sup>69</sup>

**Table 28. Wellesley’s Zoning Districts**

District Category	Total Acres	% Zoned	District Category	Total Acres	% Zoned
<b>Single Residence</b>	<b>4286.5</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>Educational</b>	<b>631.4</b>	<b>10.5%</b>
Single Residence 10	1,296.5	21.6%	Educational	560.2	9.3%
Single Residence 15	630.6	10.5%	Educational A	44.0	0.7%
Single Residence 20	1,486.0	24.7%	Educational B	27.2	0.5%
Single Residence 30	219.6	3.7%	<b>Business</b>	<b>134.1</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Single Residence 40	646.9	10.8%	Business	51.6	0.9%
Single Residence A	6.9	0.1%	Business A	45.4	0.8%
<b>General Residence</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	Limited Business	10.5	0.2%
General Residence	82.2	1.4%	Lower Falls Village Commercial	8.9	0.1%
General Residence A	--	--	Wellesley Square Commercial	17.6	0.3%
<b>Other Residential</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
Limited Apartment	7.0	0.1%	Industrial	10.5	0.2%
Limited Residence	8.6	0.1%	Industrial A	17.6	0.3%
Multi-Family Residence	6.0	0.1%	<b>Administrative/Professional</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
Town House	4.0	0.1%	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Parks, Recreation, Conservation</b>	<b>708.8</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>Total Zoned Area</b>	<b>6,008.3</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Town of Wellesley GIS Department, 2024

<sup>69</sup> Two-family homes are allowed in Single Residence districts by special permit in buildings that existed prior to the adoption of the bylaw.

## Residential Uses

All zoning districts except for the Transportation and Parks, Recreation, and Conservations Districts (totaling 12.7% of the Town) allow some kind of residential use. **Table 29** shows the major types of residential development allowed in Wellesley and where these uses are allowed. However:

- **This table does not take the project-specific approvals discussed in the previous “Approval Processes” section into account;** as noted, even uses listed in the Zoning Bylaw as “allowed” in a district may trigger review as either a Major or Minor Construction Project or Project of Significant Impact, the latter of which requires a special permit with substantial requirements.
- **Many similar zoning districts have overlapping regulations.** For example, there are “A” versions of Single Residence, General Residence, Educational, Business, and Industrial where regulations differ very little from the base district. There are only a few scattered parcels designated under each A district.
- **Some definitions for residential uses appear inconsistent and overlapping.** For example, the term “apartment” is never clearly defined or distinguished from other terms like “multi-unit residence.” In addition, “multifamily housing” is defined as containing four or more units, yet districts like Lower Falls Village Commercial District describe multifamily projects as “residence[s] for more than two families.” These inconsistencies make it difficult to summarize Wellesley’s zoning in a traditional Use Table.
- Because the bylaw includes many exceptions, this table is for informational and summary purposes only.

While several districts allow multifamily housing, these are all relatively small, as shown in **Maps 6A and 6B** which display all zoning districts permitting some form of multifamily development.

**Table 29: Wellesley Zoning Districts: Allowed Residential Uses, Consolidated**

District	Single Family	ADUs	2-unit	3+ units (Varying Definitions)
Single Residence (2.1)	Yes	Yes	SP*	No
General Residence (2.2) <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town houses only, 3-6 unit row</li> <li>• 3-8 unit row if includes affordable</li> </ul>
Town House (2.3) <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town houses only; 4-8 unit row</li> </ul>
Multi-Unit Residence (2.4) <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4+ units</li> <li>• Uses allowed in Limited Residence (age-restricted)</li> </ul>
Limited Residence (2.5)** <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3+ units if operated by nonprofit for age 62+**</li> <li>• “Public housing for the elderly”***</li> </ul>
Limited Apartment (2.6) <i>Allows all SR and Edu District uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20+ units with 75% open space</li> <li>• Uses allowed in Educational Districts</li> </ul>
Educational (2.7)***	Yes***	No	Yes***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Town houses and multi-unit dwellings” for faculty, staff, or employees of educational institution</li> </ul>
Planned Development (2.8)	No	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Town houses” or “apartment houses”</li> </ul>
Administrative & Professional (2.9) <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	No
Business (2.10) <i>Allows all SR, GR, Edu District uses</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Residence for more than two families,” “apartment house”</li> <li>• Uses allowed in Gen Res and Educational Districts</li> </ul>

**Table 29: Wellesley Zoning Districts: Allowed Residential Uses, Consolidated**

District	Single Family	ADUs	2-unit	3+ units (Varying Definitions)
Limited Business (2.10.2) <i>Allows all SR uses</i>	Yes	Yes	SP*	No
Lower Falls Village Commercial (2.11)	No	No	No	• “Residence for more than two families,” “apartment house”
Wellesley Square Commercial (2.12) <i>Allows all SR, GR, Edu District uses</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	• “Residence for more than two families,” “apartment house” • Uses allowed in Gen Res District
Industrial (2.13) <i>Allows all SR, GR, Edu, Bus District uses</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	• Uses allowed in Gen Res, Educational, Business Districts

\*Only in a building where the use has been in existence since before adoption of zoning. \*\*Operated by a non-profit organization, with 3+ independent dwelling units for households with at least half age 62+. \*\*\*For use by faculty, staff, or employees of an educational institution.

## ■ DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS

Section 5.2 and 5.2.A state that 10/15/20/30/40 Area Regulation Districts apply to any underlying districts (not just Single Residence) — yet in practice, these Area Regulation Districts seem to refer to the Single Residence Districts only. Further, the Area Regulation Districts are not included on the Town’s Zoning Map for Single Residence Districts, nor are they described by location in the bylaw. This makes it difficult to determine the minimum lot size necessary for single family homes *outside* of the Single Residence Districts, as the bylaws for other districts only refer to lot sizes for allowed use types *other* than single family. As such the minimum lot sizes in **Table 30** below for any district outside of Single Residence reflect the requirements for the district’s primary, not single-family use.

**Table 30: Dimensional Regulations, Consolidated**

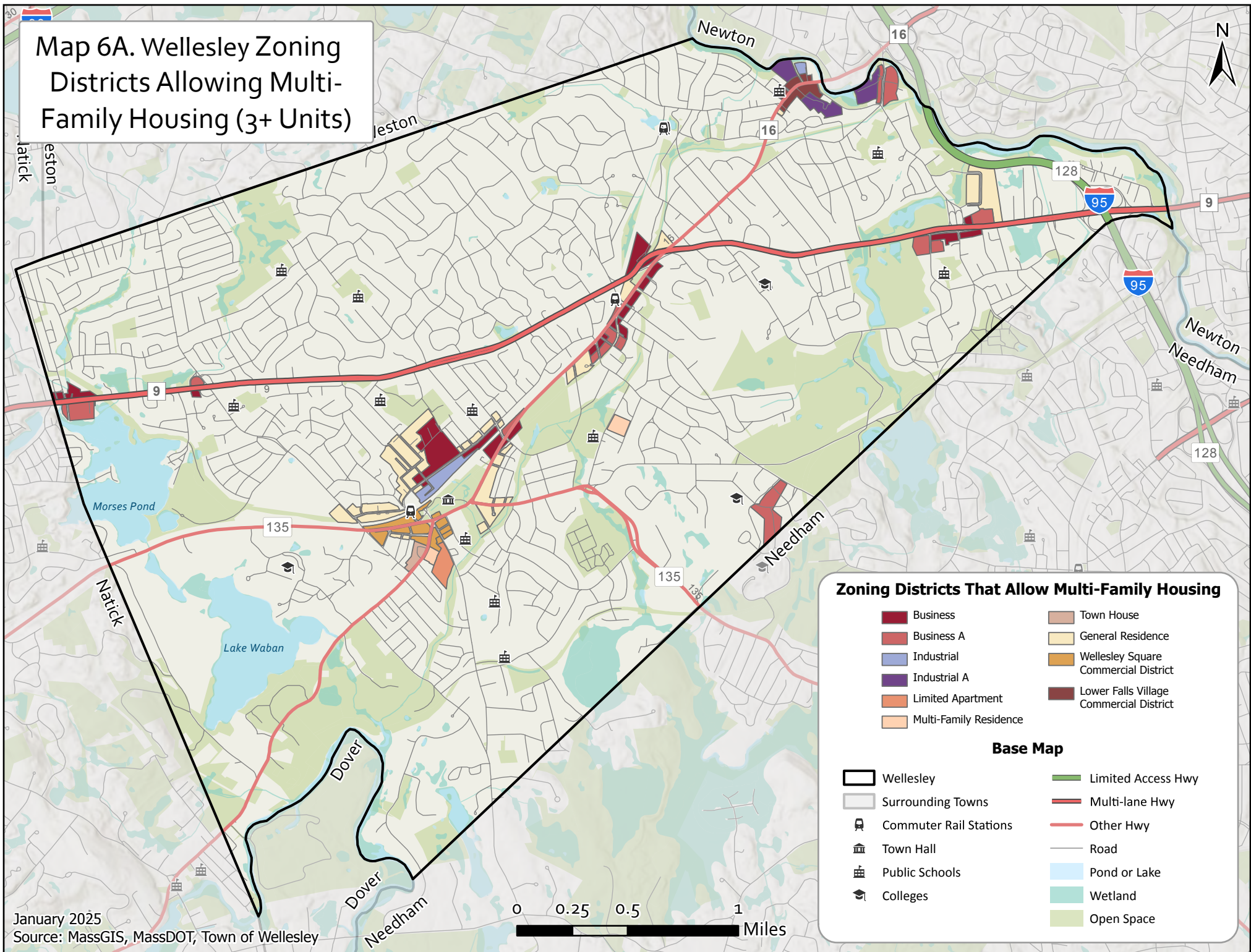
District	Min. Lot Size <sup>70</sup>	Max. Res Density (lot size per unit)	Max. Lot Coverage	*Min. Frontage	Max. Building Height <sup>71</sup>
Single Residence 10	10,000 sq ft		Maximum lot coverage ranges from 15-25% depending on lot size in SR and GR districts	60/75/90 ft	36 ft
Single Residence 15	15,000 sq ft			60/80/100 ft	36 ft
Single Residence 20	20,000 sq ft			60/100/110 ft	36 ft
Single Residence 30	30,000 sq ft			60/120/175 ft	36 ft
Single Residence 40	40,000 sq ft			60/140/200 ft	36 ft
General Residence**	15,000-21,000 sq ft	5,000-7,000 sq ft	20%	100-200 ft	36-40 ft
Town House**	20,000 sq ft	4,000-6,000 sq ft	25%	100 ft	36-40 ft
Multi-Unit Residence	20,000 sq ft	3,000 sq ft	30%	80 ft	3 stories/40 ft
Limited Residence	40,000 sq ft	2,500 sq ft	20%	Not specified	2.5 stories/30 ft
Limited Apartment	80,000 sq ft	1,800 sq ft	Not specified***	Not specified	4 stories/45 ft

\*SR districts have three different sets of frontage and setback requirements depending on when an individual lot was recorded or endorsed, with each newer set more intensive than the previous one: pre-1985/between 1985 and 1997/after 1997. \*\*GR and Town House districts offer increased density for: affordable units (GR) and additional open space (Town House). \*\*\*However, 75% of the lot in Limited Apartment District must be open space.

<sup>70</sup> Unless NRP triggered by subdivision of 5+ lots, in which case SR dimensional requirements are reduced in exchange for required open space.

<sup>71</sup> Per Section 5.4, the 36-foot height limit only applies to single-family, two-family, and town house buildings permitted after November 5, 1996. This appears inconsistent with the 40-foot limit for town houses established in 2.2.A.3 (General Residence Districts) and 2.3.B.2.e (Town House Districts)..

# Map 6A. Wellesley Zoning Districts Allowing Multi-Family Housing (3+ Units)



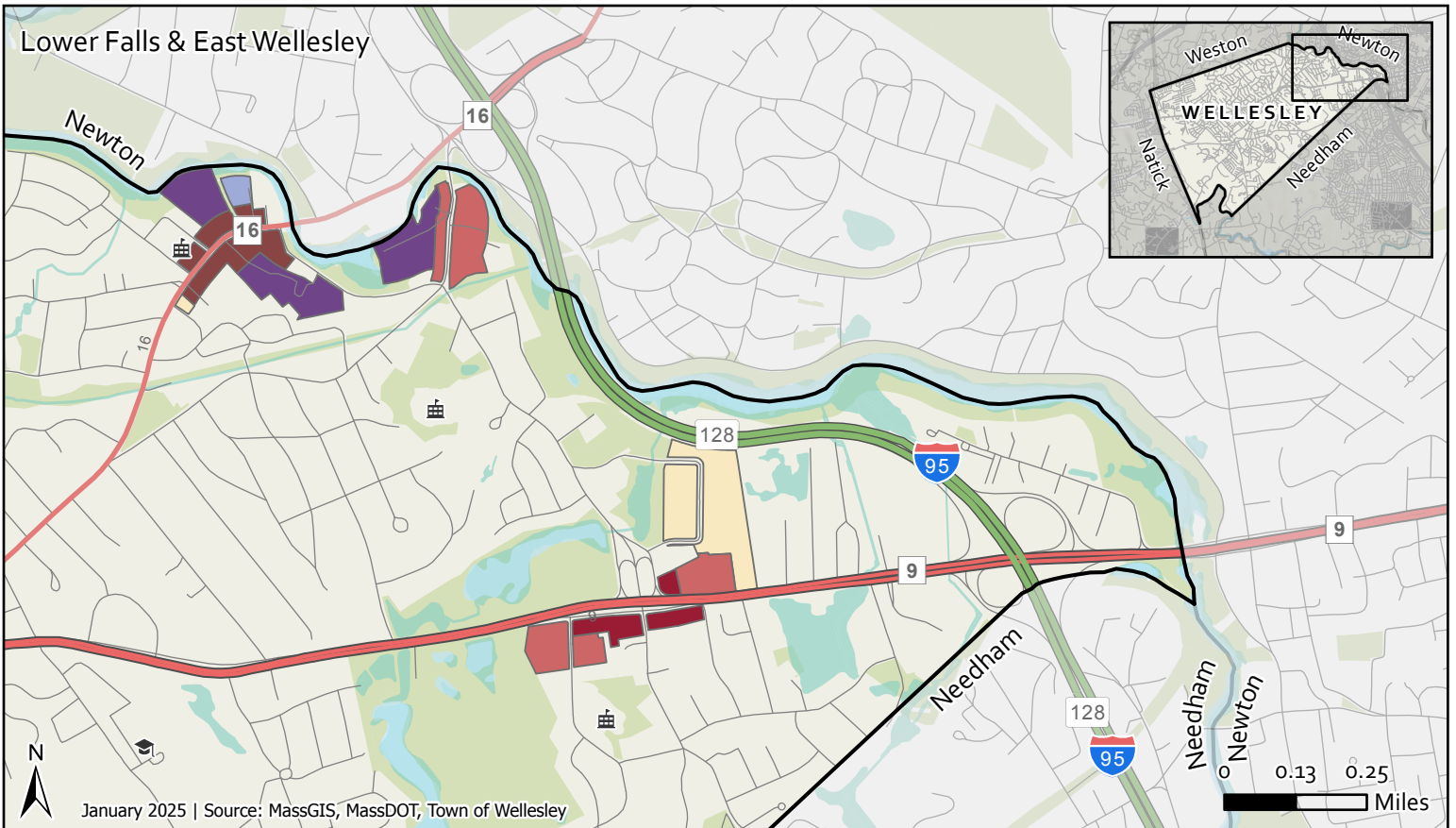
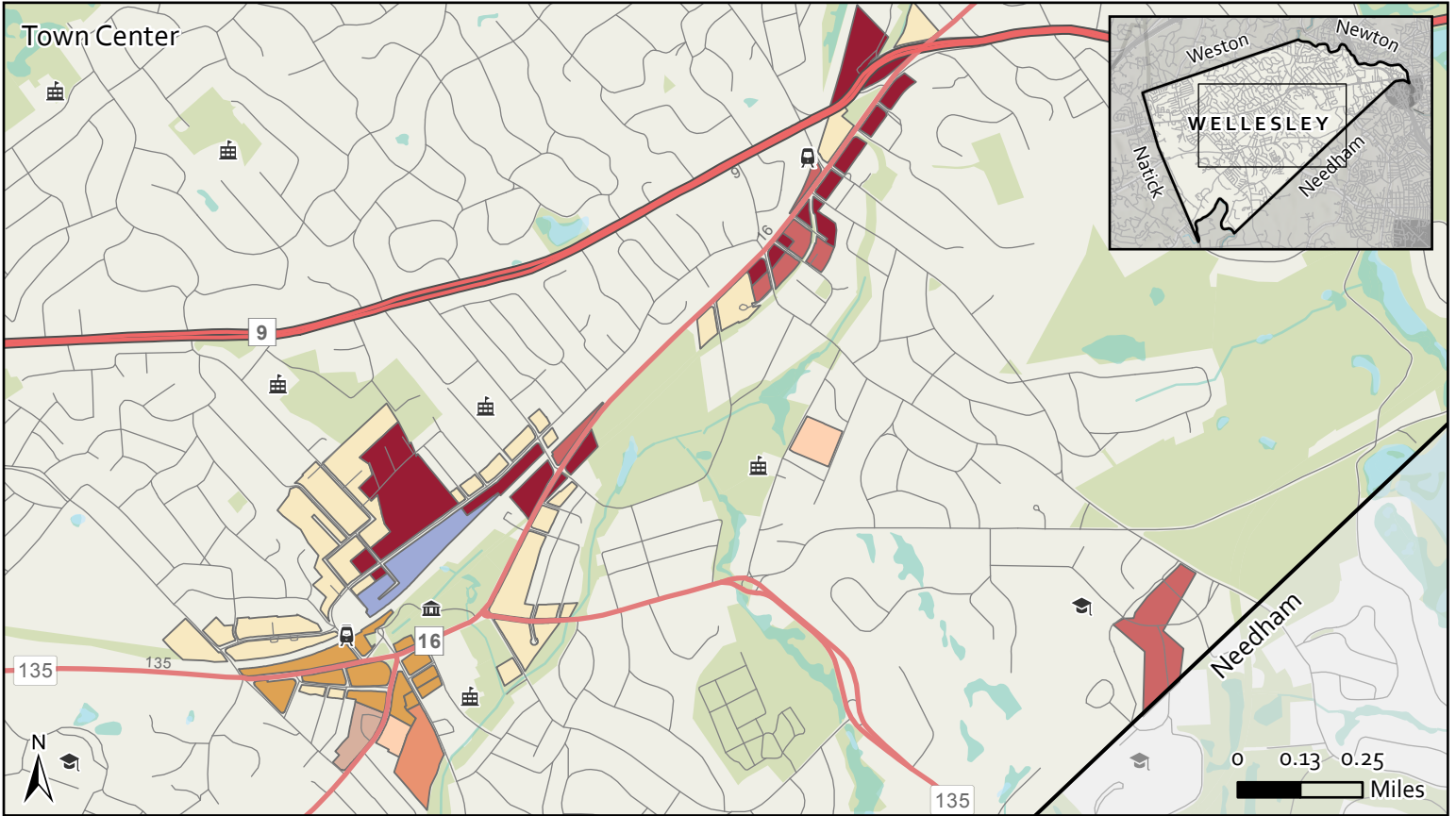
# Map 6B. Wellesley Zoning Districts in Town Center Allowing Multi-Family Housing

## Zoning Districts Allowing Multi-Family Housing (3+ Units)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Business    | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Limited Apartment           | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:darkorange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Wellesley Square Commercial District |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Business A  | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightorange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Multi-Family Residence | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Lower Falls Village Commercial District |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Industrial     | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightbrown; border:1px solid black;"></span> Town House              |  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Industrial A | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> General Residence           |  |

## Base Map

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; border:1px solid black;"></span> Wellesley                                | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Limited Access Hwy |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; border:1px solid black;"></span> Surrounding Towns                        | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Multi-lane Hwy        |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Pond or Lake | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span> Other Hwy                 |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:teal; border:1px solid black;"></span> Wetland           | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:gray; border:1px solid black;"></span> Road                     |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Open Space  |  |



Residential uses included in Educational, Business, Lower Falls Village Commercial District, and Wellesley Square Commercial District, require 2,500 sq ft minimum lot area per unit, potentially reduced to 1,800 in the WSCD in exchange for community benefits (e.g. open space or additional affordable units). In addition, Wellesley's commercial districts also use Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to regulate density based on the size of a lot. For example, a FAR of 0.3 means that the total floor area of a building on a given lot can add up to no more than 30 percent of the lot's area. In the Lower Falls District, the Planning Board may increase project density up to a FAR of 1.0 if a project meets all design guidelines and enhances pedestrian infrastructure and access to the river front.

## ■ OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Wellesley has the following overlay districts designed to encourage residential redevelopment:

### **Residential Incentive Overlay (RIO)**

The RIO provides incentives “for a parcel or parcels greater than one acre located in close proximity to the Town’s Commercial Districts and public transportation.” The overlay:

- Allows multifamily housing, including elderly housing and assisted living
- Requires 45,000 sq ft for new construction and 25,000 sq ft for conversion
- Has a maximum density of 1,400 sq ft lot area per unit for assisted or independent elderly housing and 1,800 for conventional multi-unit housing
- Limits height to 36-45 ft depending on the underlying district and type of residential use
- Requires 30 percent open space, with half of this required to provide “enhanced open space” that provides significant benefits to the community such as walking paths and other recreation amenities that enhance the aesthetics of public ways.
- Applies to four sites across Wellesley to date

Resident concerns about RIOs have centered around their applicability to properties in Single or General Residence districts that may be considered “in close proximity to” commercial districts and public transportation.

### **Wellesley Park Smart Growth Overlay**

Chapter 40R is a program where a Town may adopt a “smart growth” zoning district that promotes denser residential and mixed-use development than would otherwise be allowed in exchange for financial incentives from the state. Wellesley's Smart Growth overlay facilitates the redevelopment of Wellesley Park at the Town's eastern boundary. The overlay requires 25 percent of units (higher than the 40R requirement of 20 percent) to be affordable, which ensures that all units in rental projects will count on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory. Incentives include allowable building height of up to 85 feet and a maximum density of up to 20 units per acre. To date, the district has produced The Nines, a 350-unit multi-family rental development.

### **Linden Street Corridor Overlay**

The Linden Street Corridor Overlay is located on a section of Linden Street north of Wellesley Square and is designed to promote redevelopment. The overlay allows all uses in the underlying zoning district (Business), with opportunities to increase residential density in exchange for community benefits

including extra affordable units and additional or enhanced open space beyond the 18 percent required for the overlay.

### MBTA Communities Projects

In 2021, the state legislature passed the MBTA Communities Act, requiring municipalities with commuter rail stations to have at least one zoning district in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right. To comply with the law, Wellesley designated the Wellesley Square Commercial, Business, Business A, Industrial, and Industrial A as areas where MBTA Communities-compliant projects can be proposed as of right if within 0.5 miles of an MBTA Commuter Rail Station. **These projects are exempt from Project of Significant Impact (PSI) regulations because MBTA multifamily districts cannot require a Special Permit**, which is part of the Town's PSI review process.

### ■ INCLUSIONARY ZONING

Inclusionary zoning regulations require that residential developments over a certain size include a percentage of units deed-restricted as affordable to low or moderate income households. In Wellesley, inclusionary zoning applies to:

- Major Construction Projects in the Lower Falls and Wellesley Square Commercial Districts, Business and Industrial Districts, and the Residential Incentive Overlay
- New subdivisions of five units or more

Under the bylaw, developers are required to set aside 20 percent of units in these projects as affordable housing; fifteen percent must be aimed at households with incomes at or below 80% AMI while 5 percent must be aimed at households with incomes between 80-140% AMI. Via a special permit from the Planning Board, a developer may locate the affordable units elsewhere in Wellesley or provide a cash payment to the Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust fund. Cash payments are based on the difference in sale price between a market rate and affordable unit.

### ■ OTHER REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSING

#### Natural Resource Protection (NRP) Development

NRP development is an alternative form of subdivision development that allows for more flexible and creative site design to minimize sprawl and impervious area. Any subdivision of land resulting in five or more residential lots (based on a yield formula taking conservation areas into account) must utilize NRP Development. Applicants require a special permit to opt for a traditional subdivision option. Design guidelines for NRP Developments require developers to identify high-priority preservation areas and cluster residential development away from these areas, using less intensive dimensional regulations than the underlying district would otherwise allow. At least half of the site must be preserved as open space.

#### Historic District

Wellesley's **Historic District** is centered on Cottage Street, south of Wellesley Square, and is meant to protect the historic architectural character of the neighborhood. In addition, the Town has six single building historic districts. The Historic District Commission reviews all proposals that effect the exterior of a building in the district to ensure that the design and materials used match the existing area.

## Large House Review

In Single Residence and General Residence districts, single family homes exceeding the total floor area thresholds in **Table 31** are subject to review by the Planning Board and Design Review Board; these thresholds apply to new homes and alterations of existing homes resulting in a 10 percent increase in size. The review criteria include standards for preservation of landscape, building scale, lighting, open space, drainage, and circulation

**Table 31. Large House Review Thresholds**

District	Floor Area Threshold*
Single Residence 10	3,600 sq ft
Single Residence 15	4,300 sq ft
Single Residence 20	5,900 sq ft
Single Residence 30 and 40	7,200 sq ft
General Residence	3,600 sq ft
*Based on "Total Living Area plus Garage Space" for new construction and alterations increasing floor area by more than 10 percent.	

## Demolition Delay Bylaw

In 2017, the Town adopted its Historic Preservation Demolition Review (Article 46C of the Town's General Bylaw) for the "preservation and enhancement of the Town of Wellesley's historical and cultural heritage by curbing by preserving, rehabilitating or restoring whenever possible, buildings that have distinctive architectural features or historical associations that contribute to the historic fabric of the Town."<sup>72</sup> The bylaw is triggered by partial demolitions of 50 percent or more, in addition to total demolition. Applicants seeking a demolition permit for buildings constructed before December 31, 1949 first must apply to the Wellesley Historical Commission for a determination of eligibility. The Commission may determine an eligible building is "preferably preserved" based on specific criteria, with such a determination allowing the Commission to impose a delay of up to twelve months before a demolition permit can be issued. The Planning Department processes many for eligibility notices each year (an average of 62 over the past five years), as shown in **Table 32**.

**Table 32. Demolition Delay Applications**

Year	Applications	Determination Hearings	Waiver Requests
2024	63	27	9
2023	56	20	7
2022	80	30	7
2021	62	30	13
2020	50	29	8

Source: Town of Wellesley Annual Town Reports, 2020-2024, <https://wellesleyma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=53>

<sup>72</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Town Bylaws*, Article 46C, 2017

### Conversion of Municipal Buildings

By special permit and contingent upon Select Board recommendation and a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting, municipal buildings in residential zones can be converted to a use otherwise permitted in the district. Prior to Town Meeting, the Planning Board is tasked with holding a public hearing and make a report to Town Meeting regarding the need for the use and its compatibility with the Town's comprehensive plan and surrounding uses. This provision in the bylaw does not appear to provide for incentives to encourage this reuse strategy (e.g. density bonuses).

### Parking Requirements

Residential parking requirements differ from district to district and are not clearly communicated for all uses – e.g. minimum parking requirements for single-family dwellings and duplexes are never explicitly stated, nor does the Wellesley Square Commercial District specify parking requirements for residential uses in the district (only for business, industrial, educational or commercial purposes).

**Table 33** below shows the minimum number of spaces per unit required for various residential uses.

**Table 33. Off-Street Parking Requirements**

Use	Zoning District	Spaces per Unit
Apartments	Business A, Industrial A, Limited Residence	1
Apartments, 3+ (Age Restricted)	Limited Residence	1
Apartments, 20+ Units	Limited Apartment	1.5 per 2-br, 2 per 3+ br
Conventional Multi-Unit	Residential Incentive Overlay	2
Assisted or Independent Elderly Living	Residential Incentive Overlay	0.65
Town House	Town House, General Residence	2
All Residential Uses	Linden St. Corridor Overlay	2.5

Source: Town of Wellesley Zoning Bylaw, Section 5.17, Table 21.1

## Resources

### ■ WELLESLEY HOUSING AUTHORITY (WHA)

The Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA) is a State and Federally funded public housing authority that manages a total of 245 rental units, including housing for elderly and disabled tenants (**Table 34**). In addition, the WHA holds twelve “mobile vouchers” (one state and eleven federal) that allow the holder to rent market rate housing.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 34. Wellesley Housing Authority Properties**

WHA Property	Type	Units
Barton Road	Family	40 2-br, 48 3-br
Waldo Court/Linden Street	Family	12 2-br
Morton Circle	Elderly/Disabled	36 1-br
Washington Street	Elderly/Disabled	40 1-br
Weston Road	Elderly/Disabled	31 1-br
River Street	Elderly/Disabled	26 1-br

Source: Wellesley Housing Authority, <https://wellesley-housing.org/developments/>

In 2022, Town Meeting approved a home rule petition to allow the Town to use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for WHA properties (generally not allowable), and this Special Act was signed into law in 2024.

### ■ WELLESLEY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION/ WELLESLEY AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

Established in 1998 by Special Act, Wellesley Housing Development Corporation's mission was to sponsor and assist in the development of affordable housing opportunities for persons of low, moderate, and middle income in the Town of Wellesley in order to implement the Town's Affordable Housing Policy.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing that the state's provisions for establishing an Affordable Housing Trust under G.L. c. 44 § 55C (not yet in place in 1998) would better serve the Town, in April 2025 the WHDC, Select Board, and Planning Board gained Town Meeting approval to dissolve the WHDC, establish an Affordable Housing Trust, and update to the Town's zoning bylaw to replace references to the WHDC.

### ■ COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA)

The Community Preservation Act (MGL44B) is a statewide legislation that allows municipalities to exercise control over decision that affect community preservation issues. In Wellesley, the CPA is funded by a surcharge of 1 percent on the annual property tax bill assessed on real property, as

<sup>73</sup> Wellesley Housing Authority, “WHA Home Page,” accessed March 2025 at <https://wellesley-housing.org/>

<sup>74</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Housing Development Corporation,” accessed December 2024 at <https://wellesleyma.gov/410/Housing-Development-Corporation>

approved by Town Meeting in 2002.<sup>75</sup> Recent housing-related Community Preservation Committee projects have focused on planning efforts, including funding for an analysis of Wellesley Housing Authority properties to explore options for improving or redeveloping several sites (2018) and funding for this Strategic Housing Plan (2023).

## ■ STAFF & BOARD CAPACITY

Many of the planning and administrative strategies included in this Strategic Housing Plan require additional capacity to be successfully implemented, either through local/internal, regional, or combined professional support. Given the volume of applications alone that the Planning Department reviews on behalf of various boards (see discussion below), the Department likely does not have capacity to undertake the level of community-centered land use planning and engagement suggested in this document without additional support. In addition, encouraging the creation of affordable and workforce units through *redevelopment under zoning* requires significant time to work with local developers producing the units, interface with EOHLC to ensure their inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and to simply *monitor* the units created.<sup>76</sup>

The Planning Department provides support for the Planning Board, Design Review Board, Historic Commission, Historic District Commission, and Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District. The Department spends substantial time reviewing Large House Review applications, major modifications, and waiver requests (22 LHR-related reviews in FY2024), as well as applications for design review and eligibility notices under the Demolition Bylaw.

**Table 35. Planning Department Applications & Review, 2024**

Board	Applications/Review
Planning Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 Large House Review Applications</li> <li>• 9 Large House Review Major Modifications</li> <li>• 3 Large House Review Waivers</li> <li>• 1 PSI Application</li> <li>• 3 Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR) Applications</li> <li>• 3 Reviews for Adequacy of Way</li> <li>• 5 Applications for Work on Scenic Road</li> <li>• Comments on 83 petitions to ZBA</li> </ul>
Design Review Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70 Applications</li> <li>• + Review of Large House Review Applications</li> </ul>
Historic District Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Applications</li> </ul>
Historic Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 63 Applications under the Demolition Delay Bylaw, with 27 leading to Preservation Determination hearings and 9 to waiver requests</li> </ul>

Source: Town of Wellesley, 2023-2024 *Annual Town Report*, Planning Department, 88-89

<sup>75</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Community Preservation Act,” <https://wellesleyma.gov/1444/Community-Preservation-Act>

<sup>76</sup> Under state requirements, the Town is responsible for monitoring Local Action Units and confirming annual compliance to EOHLC.

Currently the Select Board's Office has numerous housing-related tasks planned for 2025, as outlined in the Select Board's draft FY2025 Work Plan.<sup>77</sup> This includes launching the new Affordable Housing Trust, which will require staff support, possibly under the Select Board's Office as was done for the WHDC. (Per the 1998 Special Act establishing the WHDC, the organization was under the direct supervision of the Select Board.)

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<sup>77</sup> Wellesley Select Board, "Draft FY2025 Work Plan Items," updated January 22 2025, accessed May 2025 at [https://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38116/Priorities--Work-Plan-FY25\\_1222025](https://www.wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38116/Priorities--Work-Plan-FY25_1222025)

# Housing Goals and Strategies

The goals and strategies included in this Strategic Housing Plan assume that, like all communities, Wellesley has housing needs that extend beyond the ten percent minimum under Chapter 40B. While this target serves an important purpose and assesses progress, it is a *minimum* and does not consider the diverse or unique needs within each community. Recognizing this, the Town's scope for the Strategic Housing Plan included a range of topics and issues to explore, with an aim to develop connected, feasible strategies tailored to the community.

## ■ DEFINING WELLESLEY'S HOUSING NEEDS

To have purpose, strategies should respond to identified needs. Broadly speaking, housing needs may refer to: needs of the community's current households; barriers to housing access; and the impacts both types of needs have on the community. The Needs Assessment of this plan highlighted the following:

### Housing Needs of Current Wellesley Residents

- Tenants of existing affordable housing in need of modernization
- Nonfamily households, particularly seniors living alone or in other nonfamily situations (e.g. renting a room), are most likely to be living in poverty
- Very low income households (owners and renters) and moderate income renters are most likely to be unaffordably housed
- Long-term residents are unable to find or afford a different home in Wellesley that meets changing needs

### Housing Concerns for Current Wellesley Residents

- Existing neighborhood character
- Degradation of the environment
- Impact on traffic and infrastructure capacity
- Effect on the above on overall quality of life for existing households

### Broader Housing Needs

- Little to no opportunity for "middle income" housing in such a high-cost market
  - Significantly less representation of younger households in Wellesley over time
  - Challenging for those who work in the community to live in or near Wellesley
- Current regulations do not facilitate redevelopment, which is the primary path forward for integrating housing into the existing fabric of the community
- Extremely high cost of real estate makes acquiring property for affordable housing challenging

The value of real estate in Wellesley objectively limits socioeconomic diversity, which is an unavoidable truth for highly sought-after communities with competitive housing markets. As such, the Town's best opportunities for encouraging the types of housing that can meet specific needs is through proactively planning for redevelopment in suitable areas.

This section outlines goals and strategies relating to these identified needs, as well as tools aimed at promoting leadership and increasing the Town's capacity for acting on such strategies. The next chapter, "Approach to Implementation," organizes these strategies by timing and responsible parties.

## ■ GOAL 1

### **Empower the Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust (WAHT) to create, support, preserve, and improve affordable housing for the benefit of the community.**

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**1A Launch the Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust.** In 2025, Town Meeting approved Article 34, which included a series of actions necessary to establish an Affordable Housing Trust:

- Accept G.L. c. §55C, the state’s Municipal Affordable Trust Fund Law
- Amend Wellesley’s General Bylaws to add Article 20, “Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust”
- Petition the Legislature to dissolve the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation (WHDC), which was established by Chapter 311 of the Acts of 1998
- Amend the Zoning Bylaw to replace references to the WHDC with the WAHT

Once the Select Board has appointed members to the WAHT, one of the Trust’s first actions should be to execute and record a **Declaration of Trust** with the Registry of Deeds. The recorded declaration provides record notice of the Trust’s establishment and its authority to hold and convey title to real estate.

Recognizing the advantages of a municipal affordable housing trust under G.L. c. §55C, the WHDC proposed the warrant article, which was also sponsored by the Planning Board and Select Board and received votes of support from the Community Preservation Committee and Wellesley Housing Authority. Under the Town’s newly-adopted bylaw, the WAHT will include seven voting members appointed by the Select Board, as well as the Town’s Executive Director as a non-voting member. While the WHDC required Select Board approval for any expenditures, the WAHT will have greater autonomy in its use of funds and participation in real estate transactions relating to the creation and preservation of affordable housing. That said, Wellesley’s bylaw applies additional safeguards to the Trust’s authority, imposing a higher voting threshold compared to G.L. c. §55C or requiring Select Board approval for certain actions.

**1B Appoint Trustees to the WAHT, ensuring that the Trustees represent a collective breadth of relevant experience within the community.** The Town’s WAHT bylaw (Art. 20 of General Bylaws) specifies that, in addition to a Select Board member, the seven voting resident members should bring skills and expertise from areas including affordable housing/affordable housing advocacy, development and construction, law, real estate, banking, finance, and social services, and that an appointed member may be a tenant of subsidized housing. Unlike the WHDC bylaw (which merely specified that the WHDC shall comprise five members appointed by the Select Board), the WAHT bylaw encourages selection of qualified members representing a breadth of experience. However, the WAHT should consider modifying the membership language, as it currently reads as though up to “one of the six Wellesley residents may be a tenant who resides in subsidized housing units...” (emphasis added) and appears to distinguish this one member from the five members bringing aforementioned skills and expertise to the group.

**1C Pursue training and technical assistance for the WAHT members and supporting staff with MHP, CHAPA, or another entity, or solicit proposals for preliminary technical assistance as**

**the WAHT launches.** While the WAHT may include experienced members from the WHDC, the new Trust has additional powers, responsibilities, and an expanded membership. Seeking technical assistance would enable the WAHT and supporting Town staff to launch on a strong foot, guided by professionals familiar with the roles and responsibilities of affordable housing trusts established under G.L. c. §55C. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) provides assistance for such efforts and has offered free trainings for Trust members in the past. In addition, the WAHT is authorized to “employ advisors and agents” and could independently procure consultant services specifically for this purpose.

**1D Develop a WAHT Strategic Plan that defines the Trust's mission, goals, policies, and potential initiatives for its first 3-5 years, beginning with the existing framework established by the WHDC.** The Town’s WAHT bylaw tasks the Trust with developing an action plan for its first 3-5 years and updating the plan every five years. In their efforts to establish the WAHT, the WHDC proposed a mission and preliminary objectives for the Trust’s first five years:

- Establish full board as defined in newly established AHT.
- Collaborate with Wellesley Housing Authority to evaluate their current portfolio and ways to improve or enhance utilization of property.
- Advocate for affordable housing and support the town in maintaining proper affordable housing stock and development.
- Facilitate public-private partnerships for affordable housing projects.
- For properties that may come under Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust control, direct the development and/or redevelopment of affordable housing, including occupying 156 Weston Road with an affordable household.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to defining actions relating to these objectives, the WAHT’s Strategic Plan should include formal policies that reinforce the Trust’s mission and can provide objective guidance for decision-making. Crafting a formal strategic plan may require professional support, emphasizing the importance of Strategy 1C above.

**1E Revisit and (if warranted) revise the Town’s Affordable Housing Policy.** The Town’s Affordable Housing Policy was first adopted by Town Meeting in 1989 and amended eight years later when Town Meeting voted in 1997 to establish the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation. Nearly thirty years later, the newly-established WAHT should work with the Select Board to review this policy and determine whether it should be amended to reflect the Town’s priorities and housing needs.

**1F Within or as an appendix to the AHT Strategic Plan, develop a Public Engagement Plan.** Goal 2 of this Strategic Housing Plan emphasizes the need for strong public outreach, engagement, and dialogue relating to community housing initiatives. The WAHT should take a lead role in this focus and prepare an engagement strategy to plan accordingly. This document should prioritize

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<sup>78</sup> Town of Wellesley, “Presentation to Town Meeting, ‘Article 34: Affordable Housing Trust (AHT)’,” April 2025, Slide 10

transparency and visibility, introduce the AHT to the community, provide for education and advocacy opportunities, and aim to build partnerships.

**1G Research potential funding streams and resources to capitalize the WAHT.** Since the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2002, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has awarded over \$2M to the WHDC for affordable housing projects (in addition to funds awarded to other housing groups including the Wellesley Housing Authority).<sup>79</sup> As the WAHT demonstrates its effectiveness, it should annually seeking CPA funds — just as the WHDC had in the past — to ensure it has available funds to act quickly on opportunities that arise. In addition to CPA funds, the WAHT should continue to research and pursue additional funding mechanisms, including:

- *Future opportunity to establish a real estate transfer fee:* Current bills H.3056 and S.1937 seek to enable communities to adopt a real estate transfer fee, with funds directed to the local affordable housing trust. Although several previous bills failed, these filings — in addition to numerous related home rule petitions — show continued interest in this funding mechanism. As the bills are written, the local option fee would be imposed on real estate transactions over \$1M and communities would be able to: designate whether the fee would be paid by the seller, buyer, or both; establish different thresholds based on the tax classification of the property (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, etc.); and exempt parties including but not limited to first time homebuyers and those eligible for the senior circuit breaker tax exemption under G.L. c. 62 §6k.
- *Earmarked funds:* While a housing bond bill is likely several years away, *looking ahead*, the WAHT should confer with legislators and advocate for a WAHT earmark in future spending bills. The 2024 Affordable Homes Act, for example, included earmarks for the Sudbury Housing Trust (\$1M to “develop affordable housing”) and the Lincoln Affordable Housing Trust (\$500k “acquire and maintain affordable housing”), in addition to earmarks for numerous local housing authorities for specific projects.<sup>80</sup>
- *Tax-deductible donations:* As the WAHT establishes its presence and earns community trust by delivering on its mission, the Trust can promote G.L. c. 44 § 53A, which allows municipalities to accept tax-deductible gifts for public purposes. While this strategy primarily relates to direct funding sources, the WAHT can also encourage donation of property or purchase properties below market, resulting in a tax benefit to the seller.

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<sup>79</sup> Community Preservation Coalition, “Commonwealth of Massachusetts CPA Project Database,” accessed May 2025 at <https://www.communitypreservation.org/databank/projectsdatabase>

<sup>80</sup> Section 2A



**Community Example: CPA-funded “Opportunity Fund”**  
**TOWN OF HINGHAM**

The Town of Hingham’s Community Preservation Committee has awarded funds to Hingham Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) under its “Opportunity Fund” nearly every year since 2014. Even with the Town surpassing 10 percent on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, the HAHT and CPC recognize that the Town continues to have unmet housing needs. Most recently, for Hingham’s 2025 Annual Town Meeting, the CPC recommended \$700,000 in funding for the HAHT Opportunity Fund (\$200,000 more than the Trust had requested) noting that “Replenishing the Opportunity Fund will allow the Trust to respond quickly to those opportunities...to create new affordable housing units...that require immediate responses.”

Source: Town of Hingham, *Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting*, April 2025, Article 21

- 1H Ensure an active AHT presence in other municipal planning initiatives to enhance awareness of the links and compatibility between housing and other public interest topics.** Housing relates to nearly all aspects of local governance and planning for a sustainable community, highlighting the need for the WAHT to build partnerships with other municipal groups. Section 20.5 of the Town’s WAHT bylaw already specifies that WAHT will plan to coordinate their work with other boards, committees, and commissions “which address the issue of housing.” However, the Trust can go beyond this to establish connections with Town bodies whose missions may not be directly housing-focused, potentially identifying opportunities for shared projects or outreach initiatives.
- 1I Identify programs and initiatives for the WAHT to pursue in the future based on their alignment with the AHT’s mission, goals, and policies.** Before the WAHT nears completion of its initial Strategic Plan, Trustees should begin preparing an updated five-year plan, as outlined in Section 20.5 of the Town’s General Bylaws. At this time, the Trust may find itself ready to tackle new initiatives, taking care to review future projects for compatibility with WAHT policies and the Town’s Affordable Housing Policy. As projects are identified, the WAHT should outline an implementation timeline & program budget to incorporate into their updated strategic plan and to support future applications for CPA or other funding sources.

## ■ GOAL 2

### **Prioritize public outreach and engagement for housing and planning initiatives; foster continued, responsive community-wide dialogue about housing in Wellesley.**

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- 2A Invite representatives from all Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions to a listening session to share questions, concerns, or ideas about housing as it relates to their work;** where possible, explore opportunities for co-sponsored community events or projects. The work of nearly all Town departments, boards, committees, and commissions connects to housing, either as their primary charge or because of the impacts housing (and housing needs) have on their areas of focus. Holding a listening session will allow various Town bodies to learn from each other and may help inform the WAHT's development of its own Strategic Plan.
- 2B Provide an annual Housing Report to Town Meeting.** While this could come from the WAHT or the Select Board's Office, the report should discuss the implementation of this plan, highlight the Town's accomplishments over the year, reflect on what could be improved in the next year, and identify strategies from this or other plans to prioritize going forward.
- 2C Build up the "Housing in Wellesley" page on the Select Board Office website to include links or subpages for specific audience** - e.g. general housing information, resources and assistance, developer guidelines, etc. This strategy will be most successful with dedicated staff or outside professional assistance (see 6C), as materials should be tailored to the audience and updated regularly.
- 2D As applicable, support rezoning initiatives with participatory visioning activities such as design charettes, guided tours of the areas under discussion, and listening sessions.** Before implementing later recommendations for potential zoning amendments, plan an engagement process that involves and informs the community — neighborhood-level if applicable based on the proposal. For larger area-wide planning efforts (such as 4E for Lower Falls), begin with a figurative zoning *blank slate* and encourage participants to think about what they imagine the area could be - i.e. work back from a vision rather than forward from existing regulations.
- 2E Work with the Wellesley Civil Discourse Initiative (WCDI) to plan a structured, connected series of housing-focused conversations.** To establish a general theme, each dialogue within the series could focus on the relationship between housing and a specific topic of interest to the community, with a new topic for each dialogue.
- 2F As part of the AHT's Public Education & Engagement Plan, organize a series of expert panel-led discussions on housing-related topics.** Like the WCDI strategy above, this will be most effective and powerful with an established theme and *purpose*. Consider partnering with neighboring towns or regional entities to broaden the reach and impact.

### ■ GOAL 3

**Align housing and land use planning with the principles of the Unified Plan and other relevant local or regional planning efforts as appropriate.**

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- 3A Launch a tiered zoning audit to (1) identify conflicting, redundant, or unclear provisions and (2) assess the bylaw's ability to encourage development types that meet Town needs and align with the Unified Plan.** While the Unified Plan made specific recommendations for evaluating the zoning bylaw, reviewing general clarity, and ultimately reworking to create a “hybrid” bylaw that incorporated elements of conventional and form-based zoning, this work has not been done to date. While this plan specifies some specific challenges of Wellesley’s zoning bylaw in the Needs Assessment, a much deeper dive into Wellesley’s zoning is necessary so that the Town can make informed decisions about future zoning changes.
- 3B With input from all departments, document the implementation status of existing plans or initiatives.** Create a matrix that can be used on an ongoing basis to review potential housing strategies for compatibility with other planning efforts. Integrating findings and policies from existing plans will help prepare staff to implement 3E and 3G in particular, as these actions require thoughtful review of a wide range of land use considerations.
- 3C Confer with the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) regarding potential opportunities for disposition and redevelopment of state-owned land.**
- 3D Engage with Wellesley’s educational institutions (Babson, Wellesley, Tenacre, Dana Hall) to discuss their housing needs and partnership opportunities.**
- 3E Hold a series of interdepartmental staff workshops to identify areas appropriate for development and redevelopment, focusing on locations identified in other planning efforts.** These areas include but are not limited to MassBay Community College, the Tailby/Railroad parking lots, North 40, WHA properties, and office parks. Draft an updated “working map” that proactively documents staff considerations about infrastructure capacity, safety, mobility, natural resource protection, and other concerns.
- 3F Identify and pursue strategies for addressing transportation and mobility gaps to meet existing needs and facilitate residential or mixed-use redevelopment within industrial or administrative/professional districts.** In 2024, Wellesley hired its first Transportation and Mobility Manager to assist with the development and implementation of neighborhood- and town-wide transportation plans. Current focus areas for the Transportation and Mobility Manager include soliciting resident input to guide the Town’s Complete Streets Prioritization Plan Update. These findings may help highlight necessary circulation improvements that could inform decision-making about areas best suited for housing redevelopment.
- 3G Commence an ongoing interdepartmental effort to develop criteria for determining the best use(s) of properties under municipal consideration (either for acquisition or disposition).** Use findings from existing plans as a basis for the criteria, and seek additional input from Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions, and the community before finalizing and making use of the criteria. The initial holistic review of Town plans and policies suggested

above 3B will help set up a framework for this exercise.

**3H Using the criteria established under 3G, assess vacant or underutilized Town-owned properties and use findings to make formal recommendations to the Select Board and Town Meeting for action.**



**Community Example: Town-Owned Land Inventory  
TOWN OF DENNIS**

In 2020 the Town of Dennis completed a comprehensive inventory of Town-owned properties, an initiative previously identified by the Select Board as a priority goal. The Town's Administration, Planning, and Finance Departments developed a process for conducting the inventory, beginning with defining Guiding Principles and Guidelines based upon findings from other Town plans including the Town's Housing Production Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Local Comprehensive Plan. From there, Town departments, boards, committees, and commissions each reviewed a total of sixty-three tax title properties and provided comments to the Planning Department. Based on this input, staff made formal recommendations to the Select Board either to **sell** or **use** properties for specific uses including affordable housing, conservation, drainage, economic development, recreation, schools, and more.



Source: Town of Dennis, *Town-Owned Land Inventory*, January 2020

## ■ GOAL 4

**Pursue strategies to create, support, and sustain a diverse housing stock that addresses identified needs and supports other community-wide priorities.**

- 4A In partnership with the Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA), plan for redevelopment of Barton Road and Morton Circle to improve quality of life for existing tenants and provide additional mixed income units.** Both the 2019 Unified Plan and 2018 Housing Production Plan identified Barton Road (88-unit state family two- and three-bedroom units) and Morton Circle (36 state elderly-disabled one-bedroom units) as potential redevelopment projects. The Town has considered Barton Road in particular for some time, with Community Preservation Act funds awarded in 2006 and 2018 to study opportunities for improvement, redevelopment, or expansion of the site, with the later study also including Morton Circle. Funds for major modernization projects



### **Community Example: Housing Authority Redevelopment Projects CITY OF CHELSEA**

The City of Chelsea and Chelsea Housing Authority (CHA), in partnership with Joseph J. Corcoran Company, is in the midst of redeveloping the CHA's Innes Apartments, a 96-unit state family project built in 1950. Renamed DUO, this mixed income project now totals 330 units - the newly constructed 96 CHA family units (mostly 3- and 4-bedroom apartments), plus 40 "middle income" units (120% AMI) and 194 market rate units with a mix of studios, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom apartments. The CHA retains ownership over the property and has entered into a 99-year ground lease with the developer. Chelsea plans to follow a similar path for the redevelopment of the CHA's Prattville Apartments, a 128-unit family state project built in 1951.

- 4B Track projects permitted under the Town's Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) Bylaw to assess its effectiveness.** If warranted, consider adjusting the income range within the 20 percent required IZ units to meet the demand for attainably priced middle/upper-middle income housing while continuing to provide SHI-eligible affordable units. Alternatively, consider offering incentives for providing *additional* middle-income units over the 20 percent minimum.
- 4C Formalize and communicate a long-term, planned approach for land use decisions that encourage housing diversity, protect environmental resources, and is otherwise consistent with the Unified Plan.** The first goal in the "Land Use, Zoning, and Urban Design" chapter of the Town's Unified Plan is simply that "General principles guide land use decision making."<sup>81</sup> Proposals for zoning amendments aimed at encouraging housing variety and attainability should be considered alongside established principles, as well as the Town's Affordable Housing Policy. While such Town policies should provide a solid foundation for decision making, they also should be continually revisited over time as the community's vision, priorities, and needs evolve. Consider the following policies to the greatest extent possible:

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<sup>81</sup> Town of Wellesley, *Wellesley Unified Plan*, prepared by Stantec, March 2019, I3-8

- Maintain single family neighborhoods; however, consider rezoning **commercial use** properties within Single Residence districts to General Residence if along a major route or abutting a higher-density district.
- Prioritize redevelopment of Wellesley's commercial centers to encourage vibrant, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods with transitional areas along the Washington Street corridor.
- Encourage maximum preservation of open space in future housing development, partnering closely with the Natural Resources Commission to plan for joint open space/housing projects that cluster housing and minimize land disturbance.

**4D Review the Residential Incentive Overlay (RIO) Bylaw to determine its efficacy in addressing Wellesley's housing needs.** In response to community concerns about the broad applicability of the Town's Residential Incentive Overlay Bylaw, the Planning Board recently created a RIO Task Force to review the bylaw and suggest potential changes. Possible areas to explore include:

- *Refining the applicability thresholds.* Currently, with a zoning amendment, a RIO can be applied to a parcel or parcels greater than one acre "located in close proximity to the Town's Commercial Districts and public transportation."
- *Intensifying IZ requirements.* Consider requiring more intensive inclusionary zoning within a RIO for multi-unit dwellings over a certain threshold. Also consider removing references to "conventional" (i.e. market rate) for multi-unit dwellings.
- *Incorporate additional parameters based on the underlying district.* The RIO bylaw currently includes different maximum building heights by district. In a similar fashion, it could further diversify allowable density and design guidelines depending on the underlying zoning district.

**4E Launch a "zoomed out" visioning process for Lower Falls and surrounding commercial areas to explore redevelopment scenarios that integrate housing within the existing built environment.** The Lower Falls/Washington Street/Walnut Street area includes a checkered mix of land uses across *ten* underlying zoning districts including the Lower Falls Village Commercial District, which connects to the floodplain along the Charles River. This greenway, which includes the Charles River Reservation and connected walking trails, acts as a protective buffer between intensive land uses and the river. Also adjacent to this critical open space corridor are several Business, Industrial, and Administrative/Professional Districts primarily in use as office parks, as well as a senior living facility permitted under a Residential Incentive Overlay. Redevelopment of these office parks to create multifamily housing or an enhanced mixed use commercial village center extending from the existing district would involve newer environmental regulations and practices for stormwater management and protection of water resources. Reimagining Lower Falls and surrounding areas should involve a participatory community process and opportunities to visualize scenarios that support connectivity, context-appropriate mixed use, and multifamily housing through redevelopment while prioritizing environmental protection and input from surrounding neighborhoods.

- 4F To support and encourage smaller projects that would trigger IZ, prepare guidance materials and resources for local developers.** Resources could include an overview of the permitting process and requirements for specific uses, affordability thresholds for applicable income limits, document templates (e.g. affirmative fair housing marketing and resident selection plans, regulatory agreements, etc.), and a clear, concise overview of the developer's ongoing responsibilities for marketing and resident selection. Also consider utilizing AHT or CPA funds to support the lottery and tenant selection process for local developers who have not previously developed affordable housing and sponsoring trainings for affordable housing compliance.
- 4G Conduct an inventory of existing nonconforming vacant lots in residential districts and consider strategies to encourage manageable infill of allowed uses that create affordable units (including affordable single-family homes.** Depending on the results of this inventory, (1) consider allowing affordable single-family homes on undersized or irregular lots that otherwise meet health, safety, and environmental regulations, or (2) facilitating partnerships between owners of nonconforming lots and Habitat for Humanity to create affordable ownership opportunities as individual single family home LIP 40Bs. In addition, the Affordable Homes Act amended G.L. §10 to exempt nonconforming lots under common ownership and within SR districts from merging *if* the lots meet minimum dimensional requirements and are used to construct single family homes no larger than 1,850 square feet and with at least three bedrooms. Conducting this inventory would allow the Town to assess the number of lots (if any) to which this could apply.
- 4H Encourage conversion of underutilized non-residential buildings to multifamily housing (or mixed use if within commercial areas) by special permit.** In addition to establishing specific review criteria for conversion projects, consider density bonuses appropriate for the district to ensure efficient use of the structure and compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. (Note: conversion to residential is allowed under RIO. In addition, Single Residence Districts (and subsequently all districts that allow SR District uses) permit conversion of municipal buildings to uses *allowed in the underlying district* with Town Meeting approval.<sup>82</sup> However, this provision does not create opportunities in districts that do not allow multi-unit dwellings, nor are conversion projects always feasible without incentives to offset development costs. As such, this strategy suggests a broader redevelopment special permit, potentially tailored to each zoning district.)
- 4I Allow conversion of large older single-family homes into neighborhood-scale multifamily (up to four units) by special permit, provided the building's exterior is preserved and the project includes an affordable or workforce housing component.** The Town's current IZ bylaw would not cover such conversions because it only applies to Major Construction Projects in specific districts (including RIOs) or subdivisions of five or more units in any district. Without an affordability requirement, these conversions would likely only produce high-end condominiums because they are so costly to undertake.

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<sup>82</sup> 2.1.9A.11 but

While this recommendation may seem at odds with a policy of preserving single residence districts, it can actually help *protect* the existing built environment of these neighborhoods because the special permit would require preservation of the building's exterior as a condition of approval. Otherwise, these older properties would be vulnerable to demolition and replacement with new construction of large single-family homes that may appear out of sync with established neighborhoods.

- 4J Identify areas within single family residential districts that include enough developable land to consider for a “Starter Home Zoning District.”** Under G.L. c. 40Y, communities can establish Starter Home Zoning Districts requiring that at least ten percent of units in projects over twelve homes be affordable to households earning no more than 110% AMI. In addition, starter homes are capped at 1,850 square feet with a minimum density of four homes per acre, which could allow such a district to fill identified needs for smaller, more naturally affordable homes. The Town could also explore opportunities to ensure greater affordability within the district, such as partnering with Habitat for Humanity to include ownership opportunities under 80% AMI. (Note: If not Town-owned land, WAHT or CPA funds could provide local subsidy to support the inclusion of such SHI-eligible units.) While there are only a handful of vacant residential parcels large enough to yield substantial subdivisions, these properties potentially already can be subdivided and developed under current regulations. Although the combined effects of Town's existing Inclusionary Zoning and Natural Resource Protection Bylaws already offer some of the same protections that a Starter Home Zoning District could provide (i.e. guaranteed affordability and open space protection), the 1,850 sq ft cap on heated living area for Starter Homes adds another regulatory layer that encourages more attainable ownership opportunities.

## ■ GOAL 5

### Prevent displacement of Wellesley residents.

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- 5A Explore the adoption of a Means-Tested Residential Exemption (MTRE) for homeowners meeting age, asset, income, residency, and other requirements.** As the Legislature considers a reintroduced bill (H.3105/S.2096) to authorize local adoption of an MTRE, the Town can take the time to explore this pathway to help lower income senior homeowners struggling to remain in their homes. This strategy has become increasingly popular, although it would currently require legislative approval of a home rule petition; in the Acts of 2024, the Legislature approved Special Acts for nearly a dozen communities, allowing them to establish MTREs to offer property tax relief for households based on measurable needs.
- 5B Consider adopting G.L. c. 59 § 50, which grants a tax exemption to property owners renting an affordable unit up to 200% AMI (among other criteria).** Under this exemption, taxes are reduced proportionally based upon the percentage of the square footage of the structure occupied by a qualifying household. This tax incentive can provide a fairly low-commitment option for property owners interested in participating, as it would not require a deed restriction or adherence to strict marketing and resident selection requirements; instead, communities can simply require submission of an annual application and supporting documentation to confirm eligibility. While such units would not count toward a community's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), they help supply much-needed relatively affordable rental units.
- 5C Explore additional regulatory or programmatic strategies to encourage their preservation of older properties and reduce teardown activity.** In addition to the conversion option addressed in 4I, the Town could consider other incentives to encourage preservation of older homes. For example, G.L. c. 59 §5J allows communities to adopt a special assessment policy for the substantial rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes listed on state register of historic places. Under this provision, the increase in assessed value resulting from the rehabilitation is phased over a five-year period rather than all at once. While these options would not discourage a buyer fully intent on demolishing and rebuilding a custom home, they may appeal to others — or in the case of the tax incentive, it may even make the difference between allowing someone to afford rehabilitation needed to remain in their home versus being forced to sell.
- 5D Investigate methods for encouraging the inclusion of more adaptable or accessible homes (beyond ADA requirements) within larger projects.** Review the Town's Design Guidelines Handbook to assess whether it could be updated to support this goal, or include requirements for a number of adaptable units as part of development agreements for future housing projects.
- 5E Consider launching programs (or partnering with existing programs) to help income-eligible households with housing needs — e.g. rental assistance or rehabilitation/repair loans.** Such programs could make a significant difference for current Wellesley households facing severe cost burden and struggling to remain in their homes.
- 5F Partner with developers to “buy down” market rents to affordable levels for some units within new rental projects — on top of their obligation under the Town's Inclusionary Zoning.** While the Town could also consider doing this for ownership developments, the

affordability gap for market rate condominiums in Wellesley is so staggering that this would be very costly to implement outside of rental projects.

- 5G Assess the feasibility of acquiring or deed-restricting the limited supply of older, smaller multifamily properties upon resale.** While this effort could also include small, older single-family homes, doing so would cost more on a per-unit basis than the limited remaining 2- and 3-family homes, which typically have lower assessed values than single-family homes. Based on findings, develop a program to engage proactively with property owners and express interest in partnering with them to deed-restrict or acquire the property upon resale. (Note: acquisition would need to adhere to procurement law - see strategy 6H regarding RFPs).

## ■ GOAL 6

### Strengthen the Town's capacity for advancing its housing and land use goals, policies, and planning.

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- 6A Conduct an internal assessment of current staff capacity to implement the Strategic Housing Plan, monitor the Town's deed-restricted affordable housing, and support the efforts of the newly-launched WAHT.** Because actions fall primarily under the Select Board's Office and Planning Department, this should be a collaborative effort to review the implementation plan and determine potential capacity gaps.
- 6B Revisit joining the Regional Housing Services Office to expand the Town's capacity for supporting housing initiatives.** The RHSO offers numerous housing services, including monitoring existing affordable housing, providing administrative support for housing-related boards, administering local housing programs (e.g. rental assistance), and other professional support. Member towns enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA), generally renewed every three years, and pay into the program based on varying needs. Under the most recent IMA, annual hours per town range from a low of 159 for Maynard to a high of 1,121 for Sudbury. Base regional hours are included for all towns, while monitoring and other professional services vary widely across communities.
- 6C Based on findings from above actions (6A-6B), consider adding a housing staff position to oversee housing-related initiatives, administer affordable housing programming, assist residents with housing needs, and facilitate other actions suggested in this Strategic Housing Plan.** Communities with housing staff generally establish the position either under administration or planning depending on their organizational structure and responsibilities of the position. Because the Select Board's Office has traditionally been the "home" for housing initiatives in Wellesley and the WAHT bylaw requires that the Trustees include a Select Board member and the Town's Executive Director, such a position could offer support to Select Board staff. In addition to the heavy administrative responsibilities of potential housing staff, this position could also include support for residents navigating housing issues. (Currently, residents "with inquiries related to housing services and issues" are directed to email the Select

Board's Office.)<sup>83</sup> As a final consideration, while CPA funds may be able to support the cost of hiring a housing-related position, these funds also would limit the position's purview to housing up to 100 percent AMI, the limit established for community housing under the Community Preservation Act.

**6D Conduct a review of the Town's existing deed-restricted units and establish a tracking method to review their long-term compliance.** In 2006, the WHDC received CPA funds to obtain professional services to develop a monitoring system for the Town's affordable housing stock.<sup>84</sup> However, since then, the state's Chapter 40B Guidelines have been updated, and the Town has adopted inclusionary zoning as well as a 40R district. Both of these zoning mechanisms produce projects that require annual certification to EOHLC that the project and affordable units are in compliance with the applicable program. The Town should revisit any existing monitoring procedures and ensure adequate staff or other professional capacity for carrying out this tracking.

**6E Implement a standard policy of charging monitoring fees or requiring a Monitoring Services Agreement for any units created through the Town's Inclusionary Zoning or under the Chapter 40B Local Initiative Program.** Conducting the monitoring referenced in 6E requires staff time or outside professional support. Either way, this important task carries a cost. However, the Town can execute a Monitoring Services Agreement where the developer pays a fee (typically a one-time fee plus continued annual payments for rental projects) to offset this cost.



**Community Example: Monitoring Fees for Town-Sponsored Affordable Housing  
REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICES OFFICE**

The Regional Housing Services Office has successfully helped member towns (Acton, Bedford, Lexington, and Sudbury) negotiate annual payments with developers of larger rental Local Initiative Projects. Under the LIP program, the municipality is responsible for compliance monitoring. These fees help offset the cost of membership in the RHSO, which in turn provides the monitoring, among other requested services, for the participating towns.

**6F Using the criteria for assessing properties under 3G, develop standard RFPs to enable the Town or WAHT to acquire property for affordable housing purposes.** The town could craft multiple RFPs compatible with various desired development types (cottage-style development, retirement community, mixed income housing, affordable ownership, joint open space/housing projects, etc.). The Town does not need to issue these immediately and should in fact hold off doing so unless ready to act; however, collaboratively and proactively drafting these RFPs

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<sup>83</sup> Town of Wellesley, Select Board's Office, "Housing in Wellesley," accessed March 2025 at <https://wellesleyma.gov/1907/Housing-in-Wellesley>

<sup>84</sup> Community Preservation Coalition, "Commonwealth of Massachusetts CPA Project Database," Project ID 3607, accessed May 2025 at <https://www.communitypreservation.org/databank/projectsdatabase>

ensures compliance with procurement law and allows the Town to respond quickly as opportunities arise.

**6G Remain current on technical assistance opportunities and planning grants relating to housing.** The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (in particular the MetroWest Regional Collaborative [MWRC]), Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), and Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), regularly offer opportunities for training, technical assistance, and collaboration on housing-related issues. In addition, the Town should continue to review (and seek if warranted) planning and infrastructure grants made available through the state's Community One Stop for Growth application portal. As a designated Housing Choice Community (HCC), Wellesley and other HCCs are currently prioritized for MassWorks and other infrastructure grants in support of housing projects.

**6H Re-engage with the WestMetro HOME Consortium to determine future pathways for membership when program has capacity.** The Consortium includes thirteen communities, including the City of Newton as the lead. Under HUD's HOME Investment Partnerships Program, the Consortium receives around \$1.5M annually for eligible affordable housing projects. The Consortium has also used funds for regional efforts, such as recent fair housing testing to assess the extent of racial and income source discrimination throughout the Consortium.<sup>85</sup> Membership could open funding opportunities for affordable housing projects, but also would facilitate active involvement in regional conversations about housing.

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<sup>85</sup> City of Newton, "WestMetro HOME Consortium," accessed April 2025 at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/housing-community-development/westmetro-home-consortium>

## Approach to Implementation

This Strategic Housing Plan includes the **6 goals** and **48 strategies** detailed in the previous section, and assumes an implementation timeframe of **7-10 years**. The SHP's strategies are further organized across five categories shown in **Table 36**, with many actions falling into multiple categories. The implementation program proposed in this section includes *suggested* timeframes for launching the strategies described. These timing designations do not indicate the length of time an action may take; rather, they propose a sequence in which the actions logically commence. Short-term timeframes may indicate that: the strategy is a higher priority, later actions depend on a particular strategy, or simply that the recommendation can be addressed faster than most. However, the Town can and should adjust these timeframes in response to new opportunities or unforeseen challenges.

- Short-Term:** Action should commence as soon as possible *or* within one year, whichever occurs first.
- Near-Term:** Action should commence following the implementation of short-term actions *or* within one to three years, whichever occurs first.
- Mid-Term:** Action should commence following the implementation of short-term and near-term actions *or* within three to five years, whichever occurs first.
- Long-Term:** Action should commence following the implementation of short-, near-, and mid-term actions *or* within five years, whichever occurs first.
- Ongoing:** Action should become ongoing.

**Table 36. Strategies by Category**

Strategy Category	Count
Resources & Capacity	24
Planning & Collaboration	17
Zoning & Land Use	14
Leadership	9
Location-Based	5
<b>Total Strategies*</b>	<b>48</b>

*\*Line items exceed total because many strategies fall into multiple categories.*

The implementation table also suggests lead and supporting responsible parties comprising Town staff, elected officials, and appointed Boards, Committees, or Commissions. Ultimately, this is meant to be a flexible document that allows for discretion in the timing and assignment, particularly as community priorities and available resources evolve over time.

**GOAL 1. Empower the Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) to create, support, preserve, and improve affordable housing for the benefit of the community.**

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>1A</b> Launch the Wellesley Affordable Housing Trust.	Leadership Resources & Capacity	Short-Term	SB	WHDC, AHT	
<b>1B</b> Appoint Trustees to the AHT, ensuring that the Trustees represent a collective breadth of relevant experience within the community.	Leadership Resources & Capacity	Short-Term	SB		1A
<b>1C</b> Pursue training and technical assistance for the AHT members and supporting staff with MHP, CHAPA, or another entity, or solicit proposals for preliminary technical assistance as the AHT launches.	Resources & Capacity	Short-Term & Ongoing	AHT	SBO	1A, 1B
<b>1D</b> Develop an AHT Strategic Plan that defines the Trust's mission, goals, policies, and potential initiatives for its first 3-5 years, beginning with the existing framework established by the WHDC.	Resources & Capacity	Short-Term	AHT	SBO	1A, 1B
<b>1E</b> Revisit and (if warranted) revise the Town's Affordable Housing Policy.	Leadership	Near-Term	AHT	SB	1A, 1B, 1D
<b>1F</b> Within or as an appendix to the AHT Strategic Plan, develop a Public Engagement Plan that prioritizes transparency and visibility, introduces the AHT to the community, and aims to build partnerships.	Resources & Capacity	Near-Term	AHT	SBO, Planning	1A-1D, 2D
<b>1G</b> Research potential funding streams and resources to capitalize the AHT.	Resources & Capacity	Near-Term & Ongoing	AHT	SBO	1A-1C
<b>1H</b> Ensure an active AHT presence in other municipal planning initiatives to enhance awareness of the links and compatibility between housing and other public interest topics.	Resources & Capacity Planning & Collaboration	Near-Term & Ongoing	AHT	SBO	1A-1D, 2A
<b>1I</b> Identify programs and initiatives for the AHT to pursue in the future based on their alignment with the AHT's mission, goals, and policies.	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	AHT	SBO	1A-1E, 1G

**GOAL 2: Prioritize public outreach and engagement for housing and planning initiatives; foster continued, responsive community-wide dialogue about housing in Wellesley.**

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>2A</b> Invite representatives from all Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions to a listening session to share questions, concerns, or ideas about housing as it relates to their work.	Leadership Planning & Collaboration	Short-Term	SBO	AHT, Planning	1A
<b>2B</b> Provide an annual Housing Report to Town Meeting.	Leadership	Short-Term & Ongoing	AHT	SBO, Planning	1A, 1B
<b>2C</b> Build up the "Housing in Wellesley" page on the Select Board Office website to include links or subpages for specific audiences.	Leadership	Near-Term & Ongoing	SBO	Planning, AHT	
<b>2D</b> As applicable, support rezoning initiatives with participatory visioning activities such as design charettes, guided tours of the areas under discussion, and listening sessions.	Leadership Zoning & Land Use	Near-Term & Ongoing	Planning	SBO, AHT	1D, 2D, 3A
<b>2E</b> Work with the Wellesley Civil Discourse Initiative to plan a structured, connected series of housing-focused conversations.	Planning & Collaboration	Mid-Term	AHT, WCDI	SBO, Planning	1F, 1H, 2A
<b>2F</b> As part of the AHT's Public Education & Engagement Plan, organize a series of expert panel-led discussions on housing-related topics.	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	AHT	SBO, Planning	1F

### GOAL 3. Align housing and land use planning with the principles of the Unified Plan and other relevant local or regional planning efforts as appropriate.

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>3A</b> Launch a tiered zoning audit to (1) identify conflicting, redundant, or unclear provisions and (2) assess the bylaw's ability to encourage development types that meet Town needs and align with the Unified Plan.	Zoning & Land Use	Near-Term	Planning		
<b>3B</b> With input from all departments, document the implementation status of existing plans or initiatives.	Planning & Collaboration	Short-Term & Ongoing	SBO	Dept Heads	
<b>3C</b> Confer with the state's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) regarding potential opportunities for disposition and redevelopment of state-owned land.	Planning & Collaboration Location-Based	Short-Term & Ongoing	SBO	Planning	
<b>3D</b> Engage with Wellesley's educational institutions (Babson, Wellesley, Tenacre, Dana Hall) to discuss their housing needs and partnership opportunities.	Planning & Collaboration Location-Based	Near-Term & Ongoing	SBO	Planning	3B
<b>3E</b> Hold a series of interdepartmental staff workshops to identify areas appropriate for development and redevelopment, focusing on locations identified in other planning efforts.	Planning & Collaboration Zoning & Land Use Location-Based	Near-Term	SBO	Dept Heads	3B, 3C, 3D
<b>3F</b> Identify and pursue strategies for addressing transportation and mobility gaps to meet existing needs and facilitate residential or mixed-use redevelopment within industrial or administrative/professional districts.	Resources & Capacity Zoning & Land Use	Near-Term	TMM	SBO	3A, 3B, 3E
<b>3G</b> Commence an ongoing interdepartmental effort to develop criteria for determining the best use(s) of properties under municipal consideration (either for acquisition or disposition).	Planning & Collaboration	Mid-Term	SBO	Planning, Dept Heads	3B, 3C
<b>3H</b> Using the criteria established under 3G, assess underutilized municipally-owned properties and use findings to make formal recommendations to the Select Board and Town Meeting for action.	Planning & Collaboration	Mid-Term	SBO	Planning, Dept Heads	3G

## GOAL 4. Pursue strategies to create, support, and sustain a diverse housing stock that addresses identified needs and supports other community-wide priorities.

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>4A</b> In partnership with the Wellesley Housing Authority, plan for redevelopment of Barton Road and Morton Circle.	Planning & Collaboration Leadership	Short-Term	WHA, WAHT	SBO, Planning	1A-1D
<b>4B</b> Track projects permitted under the Town's Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to assess its effectiveness.	Zoning & Land Use	Short-Term & Ongoing	Planning	AHT, SBO	
<b>4C</b> Formalize and communicate a long-term, planned approach for land use decisions that encourage housing diversity, protect environmental resources, and is consistent with the Unified Plan.	Zoning & Land Use Location-Based Planning & Collaboration	Near-Term	Planning	SBO, NRC, Dept Heads	3A-3E
<b>4D</b> Review the Residential Incentive Overlay bylaw to determine its efficacy in addressing Wellesley's housing needs.	Zoning & Land Use	Near-Term	Planning	SBO	3A, 3E
<b>4E</b> Launch a “zoomed out” visioning process for Lower Falls and surrounding commercial areas to explore redevelopment scenarios that integrate housing within the existing built environment.	Location-Based Zoning & Land Use	Mid-Term	Planning	SBO, NRC, Others?	3A, 3B, 3F
<b>4F</b> To support and encourage smaller projects that would trigger IZ, prepare guidance materials and resources for local developers.	Leadership Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	Planning	AHT	1D, 1G, 2C, 3A
<b>4G</b> Conduct an inventory of existing nonconforming vacant lots in residential districts and consider strategies to encourage manageable infill of allowed uses that create affordable units (including affordable single-family homes).	Zoning & Land Use Planning & Collaboration	Long-Term	Planning	AHT, SB, NRC	1D, 1E, 3E, 3G, 4C
<b>4H</b> Encourage conversion of underutilized non-residential buildings to multifamily housing (or mixed use if within commercial areas) by special permit.	Zoning & Land Use	Long-Term	Planning	SB, HC (possibly?)	2E, 3A, 3E, 4C

**GOAL 4. Pursue strategies to create, support, and sustain a diverse housing stock that addresses identified needs and supports other community-wide priorities.**

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>4I</b> Allow conversion of large older single-family homes into neighborhood-scale multifamily (up to four units) by special permit, provided the building’s exterior is preserved and the project includes an affordable or workforce housing component.	Zoning & Land Use  Planning & Collaboration	Long -Term	Planning	HC, SB	2E, 3A, 3E, 4C
<b>4J</b> Identify areas within single family residential districts that include enough developable land to consider for a “Starter Home Zoning District.”	Zoning & Land Use	Long-Term	Planning	NRC, Dept Heads	2E, 3E, 4C

## ■ GOAL 5. Prevent displacement of Wellesley residents.

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>5A</b> Explore the adoption of a Means-Tested Residential Exemption (MTRE) for homeowners meeting age, asset, income, residency, and other requirements.	Resources & Capacity	Near-Term	SBO	Assessor	
<b>5B</b> Consider adopting G.L. c. 59 § 5O, which grants a tax exemption to property owners renting an affordable unit up to 200% AMI (among other criteria).	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	SBO	Assessor	
<b>5C</b> Screen for properties at risk of teardown to identify areas or neighborhoods likely to experience turnover; explore additional regulatory or programmatic strategies to encourage their preservation.	Zoning & Land Use Planning & Collaboration	Mid-Term	Planning	HC, WAHT, SBO	3A, 3B
<b>5D</b> Investigate methods for encouraging the inclusion of more adaptable or accessible homes (beyond ADA requirements) within larger projects. Review the Town’s Design Guidelines Handbook to assess whether it could be updated to support this goal.	Zoning & Land Use	Mid-Term	Planning	DRB, COA	3A, 3B
<b>5E</b> Consider launching programs (or partnering with existing programs) to help income-eligible households with housing needs — e.g. rental assistance or rehabilitation/repair loans.	Resources & Capacity	Long-Term	WAHT	SBO	1D, 1E, 1G, 2C
<b>5F</b> Partner with developers to “buy down” rents for a number of units within new rental projects (on top of their obligation under the Town’s Inclusionary Zoning).	Resources & Capacity Planning & Collaboration	Long-Term	WAHT	Planning, SBO	1E, 1G, 1I
<b>5G</b> Assess the feasibility of acquiring or deed-restricting the limited supply of older, smaller multifamily properties upon resale. (Note: acquisition would need to adhere to procurement law - see strategy 6F regarding RFPs).	Resources & Capacity Planning & Collaboration	Long-Term	WAHT	HC, SBO	1E, 1G, 1I, 6G

## ■ GOAL 6. Strengthen the Town's capacity for advancing its housing and land use goals, policies, and planning.

Strategy	Category	Timing	Lead	Support	Dependency
<b>6A</b> Conduct an internal assessment of current staff capacity to implement the Strategic Housing Plan, monitor the Town's deed-restricted affordable housing, and support the efforts of the newly-launched WAHT.	Resources & Capacity	Short-Term	SBO, Planning	WAHT	
<b>6B</b> Revisit joining the Regional Housing Services Office to expand the Town's capacity for supporting housing initiatives.	Resources & Capacity	Short-Term	SBO, Planning	WAHT	6A
<b>6C</b> Based on findings from above actions (6A-6B), consider adding a housing staff position to oversee housing-related initiatives, administer affordable housing programming, assist residents with housing needs, and facilitate other actions suggested in this Strategic Housing Plan	Resources & Capacity	Near-Term	SBO	Planning	6A, 6B
<b>6D</b> Conduct a review of the Town's existing deed-restricted units and establish a tracking method to review their long-term compliance.	Resources & Capacity	Near-Term	TBD	WAHT, SBO, Planning	6B, 6C
<b>6E</b> Implement a standard policy of charging monitoring fees or requiring a Monitoring Services Agreement for any units created through the Town's Inclusionary Zoning or under the Chapter 40B Local Initiative Program.	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	WAHT	SBO	4F, 6D
<b>6F</b> Using the criteria for assessing properties under 3G develop standard RFPs to enable the Town or AHT to acquire or deed-restrict property compatible with various desired development types.	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	SBO	WAHT, Planning	3B, 3E-3G, 4C
<b>6G</b> Remain current on technical assistance opportunities and planning grants relating to housing.	Resources & Capacity Planning & Collaboration	Mid-Term & Ongoing	TBD	WAHT, SBO, Planning	6B, 6C
<b>6H</b> Re-engage with the WestMetro HOME Consortium to determine future pathways for membership when program has capacity.	Resources & Capacity	Mid-Term	WAHT	Planning, SBO	6B, 6C



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# Appendix

**Click on the titles below to access each summary.**

**[Appendix A: Community Interview Summary](#)**

**[Appendix B: Community Meeting #1 Summary](#)**

**[Appendix C: Community Meeting #2 Summary](#)**

**[Appendix D: Community Survey Summary](#)**