



# The Community Speaks

## TOWN ENTITIES REPRESENTED ON THE UNIFIED PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Advisory Committee  
Board of Health  
Board of Public Works  
Board of Selectmen  
Community Preservation Committee  
Council on Aging  
Design Review Board  
Historic District Commission  
Historical Commission  
Human Resources Board  
Library Trustees  
Municipal Light Plant Board  
Natural Resources Commission  
Permanent Building Committee  
Planning Boards  
Playing Fields Task Force  
Recreation Commission  
School Committee  
Sustainable Energy Committee  
Trails Committee  
Wellesley Housing Authority  
Wellesley Housing Development Corp.  
Wetlands Protection Committee  
Youth Commission  
Zoning Board of Appeals

The Wellesley Unified Plan is based on an engagement process designed to elicit the Wellesley community's values, aspirations and concerns for the future. The representatives of boards, commissions, and the public at large who served on the Steering Committee, as well as staff, were committed to outreach and public engagement. The public process incorporated a variety of outreach techniques and activities, allowing residents to participate in ways that worked best for them. Residents provided feedback to the consultant planning team by attending town-wide, precinct-level, or topic-focused public meetings, as well as participating in online surveys. The planning team used the community's feedback and guidance to shape all aspects of the plan, from drafting the Vision and Principles statement to the strategies and actions needed to achieve that vision. The individual chapters of the plan include the results of the process for specific topics.

## A. Ongoing Engagement

### Steering Committee

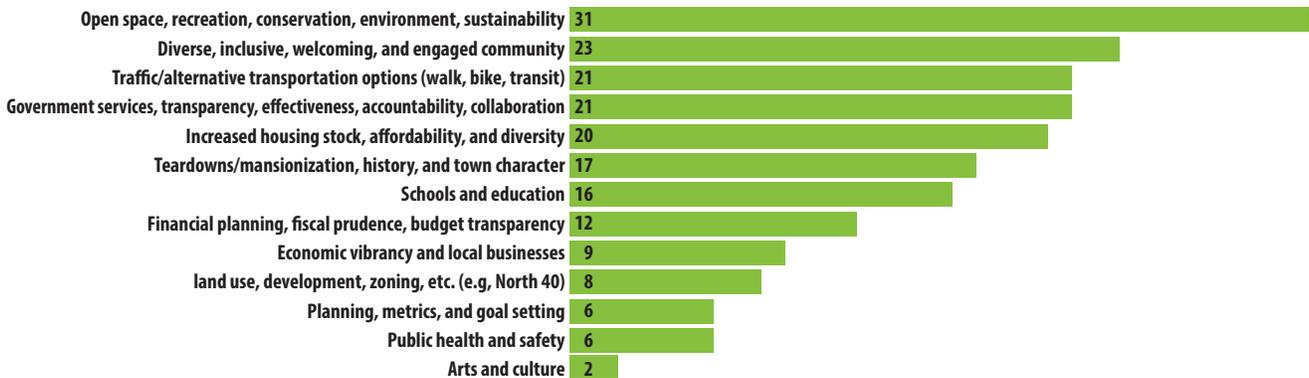
In August 2016, before selection of a consultant to assist the Town in creating the plan, the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board established a Steering Committee to guide the Unified Plan process. The Committee was designed to include representatives of elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees, as well as residents from the community at large who applied for membership

on the Steering Committee. Sixty people were appointed to the committee, including alternates for most boards and commissions and twenty at-large members who had applied for membership. The Town’s Planning Director and Assistant Executive Secretary also participated in Steering Committee meetings.

The Steering Committee met nine times between late 2016 and early 2018. In addition, committee members participated in focus groups and working groups, attended public workshops, and informed the boards, commissions, and other groups that they represented about the planning process. Committee members promoted public outreach and reviewed draft documents and the draft plan.

At the second Steering Committee meeting, members took part in several exercises in small groups to begin identifying priorities. This graphic shows the members’ top priorities, as represented by the number of mentions for each topic:

▶ EXHIBIT 2.1 **STEERING COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR THE PLAN**



### **Website and Digital Outreach**

The consultant team created a project website, [www.wellesleyunifiedplan.com](http://www.wellesleyunifiedplan.com). The planning team posted information and interim documents on the website. In addition, several online surveys were made available to the public. E-blasts and flyers were used to publicize meetings and survey opportunities.

## **B. Phase 1 Public Participation: October 2016–March 2017**

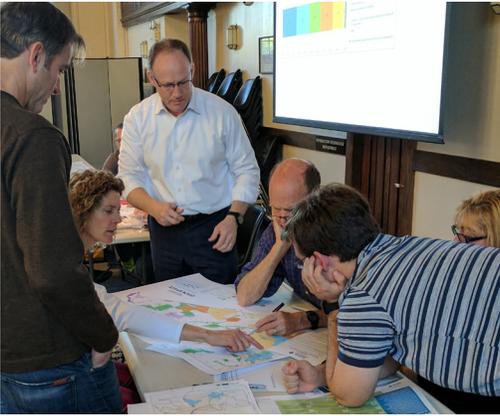
During the first phase of public engagement for the Unified Plan process, activities included interviews, a town-wide public meeting, precinct-based public meetings, and multiple online surveys. The results of these activities informed the existing conditions and needs assessment and the development of the Vision and Values statement to guide the plan.

## Interviews and Focus Groups

During October 2016, the consultant team conducted 22 individual interviews with staff and other stakeholders, both in person and by telephone, and 10 focus groups with members of the Steering Committee. Participants in these interviews and focus groups were asked to discuss the issues and challenges in their areas of interest and expertise, opportunities for the future, and their overall views on what Town government does well and where there is room for improvement.

## Public Meetings and Online Engagement: December 2016–January 2017

A total of 646 people participated in face-to-face and digital engagement during the first phase of public participation. The group was predominantly older (58% over 50 years of age) and female (64%). The majority (71%) have lived in Wellesley at least 10 years and the majority (65%) have not held elected or appointed office in town government. Underrepresented groups included non-white residents (6% vs. 12% in the town populations); Hispanics (4% vs. 3%); renters (5% vs. 19%); couples with children under 18 (35% vs 44%); and one-person households (7% vs 20%).



## Visioning Forum

On Saturday, December 10, 2016, 68 Wellesley residents spent the morning in an interactive workshop at Wellesley High School. Participants received a folder with an information sheet about the Unified Plan process, a summary of existing conditions information (“Wellesley At A Glance”), and a set of worksheets to complete for a series of exercises. They worked in small groups at tables with a base map of the town. Participants viewed exhibits of analytical maps and the forum began with a brief presentation on existing conditions and trends, including information on demographics, housing, jobs and employment, economic development, transportation, land use and zoning, and community facilities.



During the remainder of the workshop, a series of exercises guided participants through discussions to reveal town values and concerns. Activities included identifying the best of Wellesley and the challenges facing the town on worksheets and a base map at each table; writing personal visions and sharing them with the group; and identifying the top five elements or values that they would like to see represented in a vision statement for Wellesley’s future. In addition, smartphone polling was used to identify socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and to ask them about town character and values. At the end of the meeting, a volunteer table leader from each table reported back to the entire group on their priorities for Wellesley’s future.





Major priority themes that emerged from the visioning forum table groups were:

**Diversity**

- Diversity in housing—increased diversity of housing stock and affordability, especially for seniors, controlled demolitions and mansionization
- Diversity—racial, socio-economic, ethnic, age
- Diversity in neighborhoods; housing, schools, open space (village model)
- Diversity of retail

**School excellence**

- Maintain strong, high-quality education system
- Excellence in schools (e.g., keeping up with society and technology)

**Transportation**

- Manage traffic
- Improve and create alternatives to cars: public transit; more walkability and bikeability
- More efficient inter-town transportation
- Support safe, low-impact biking and pedestrian areas

**Open space and sustainability**

- Preserve/enhance open space: trails, parks, conservation land, waterways, community garden
- Preserve green space to protect the environment and natural resources
- Incorporate sustainability into decision making by

promoting open space; bicycling; energy efficiency; life cycle approach; renewable energy, zero waste, natural open space, reduced light and noise pollution, wildlife habitat

**Government issues**

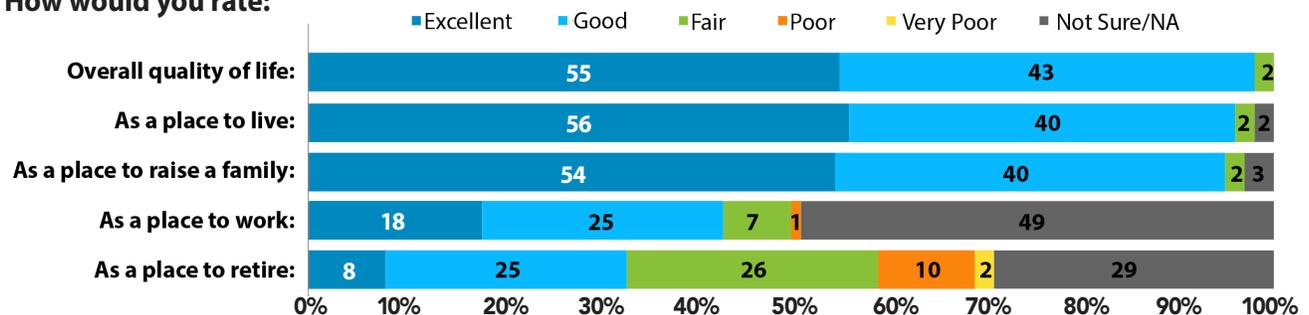
- Control spending and lower taxes
- Provide outcomes analysis of expenditures
- Maintain citizen-led, inclusive government
- Improve government communications
- Balance service delivery with focus on schools
- Maintain public participation in town government while promoting professional management/delivery of services

**Online Community Survey One: December 2016–January 2017**

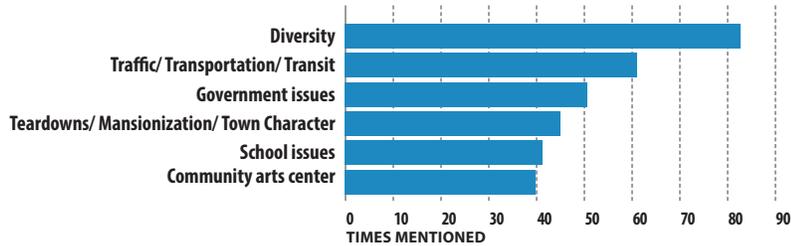
The first online survey conducted soon after the Visioning Forum had 464 respondents. Respondents were asked about their general satisfaction with Wellesley. Overwhelming majorities found the town to be an excellent or good place to live, raise a family, and for overall quality of life. Many felt they did not know enough about it as a place to work, and there was also some uncertainty about Wellesley as a place to retire.

▶ EXHIBIT 2.3 ONLINE SURVEY: SATISFACTION WITH WELLESLEY (n=464)

How would you rate:



▶ EXHIBIT 2.4 ONLINE SURVEY: ONE THING YOU WOULD CHANGE



**Precinct-Based Meetings—January 2017**

Three geographically-based public meetings were held for residents of Precincts A, B, G; Precincts C and D; and Precincts E, F, and H. The meetings were designed to encourage participants to identify assets and any issues that they saw in their neighborhoods and to comment on the initial draft Vision and Values statement. A total of 93 people participated in these meetings.



**Vision and Values Community Survey Two: February-March 2017**

The results of the initial public meetings and online survey guided development of a draft vision statement for the Unified Plan, which the Steering Committee reviewed and modified. The Steering Committee wanted additional participation in another online survey, which offered participants a chance to comment on the draft vision statement. This survey attracted 1,058 respondents who were somewhat more representative in age and years lived in Wellesley than first survey’s respondents. The topic-related chapters of this plan include the relevant results from this survey

**C. Phase 2 community engagement: May-June 2017**

During May and June 2017, five public workshops took place:

- **How We Live/Prosperity & Opportunity:** discussion on housing and neighborhoods; and economic development
- **Public Health:** discussion on public health issues in Wellesley
- **Sustainable Systems & Networks:** discussion on transportation; public services and infrastructure; and sustainability and resilience
- **Natural and Cultural Heritage:** discussion on natural resources; open space and conservation; recreation; historic preservation; and arts and culture
- **Town Government Strategic Concepts:** discussion on potential improvements to town government

Results from these discussions appear in the relevant chapters of the plan.

**Working Groups**

Unified Plan Working Groups mixed members of the Steering Committee and town staff. The five Working Groups reviewed preliminary drafts of the plan’s chapters. The five groups were:

- How We Live and Prosperity & Opportunity
- Sustainable Systems and Networks
- Natural & Cultural Heritage
- Town Government Strategic Concepts
- Public Health

Each Working Group met twice—once before the public topic workshop and once after the public workshop. The purpose of the Working Groups was to give guidance to the consultants on draft content for the Unified Plan

chapters. At the first meeting, the Working Groups reviewed preliminary draft plan chapters and discussed questions that they would like the public workshop to address. At the second meeting, the Working Groups reviewed a revised draft that was informed by the discussions and results of the public meetings.

The results of Working Group discussions were integrated into the plan chapters.

## D. Phase 3 public engagement: November 2017–March 2018

During the summer and fall of 2017, the consultant team prepared the draft plan and made it available for review and comment by members of the Steering Committee and town staff. Steering Committee meetings followed to identify priorities among the goals and strategies, as well as a public open house that asked participants to review and comment on the priorities.

### ***Planning Directions Open House: November 2017***

The Planning Directions public open house took place on a weekday evening. Participants were invited to view seven boards identifying key goals and strategies, and then to fill out a comment sheet on related planning recommendations, with the choices of “yes,” “no,” or “maybe.” The comment materials included opportunities for open-ended comments and/or questions.

Following the open house, the materials were posted online with the opportunity to complete the comment sheet digitally and email it to the planning team. In addition, a group of students from the Wellesley High School Evolutions took the boards and comment sheets into public places around Wellesley on December 15 to elicit additional responses. The seven topics were:

- Housing Choice
- Transportation and Mobility Choice
- Proactive Economic Development
- Environment and Open Space
- Modernizing Zoning and Design Guidelines
- Town Government Coordination/Strategy

The results of this activity are discussed in Chapter 15.



### ***Final (Approval) Draft Unified Plan Public Meeting and Public Review of the Plan: March 2017***

A public meeting was held to present the Final Draft of the Unified Plan and the draft was simultaneously put online for public comment, using the CiviComment platform allowing direct comment on a pdf document.

## E. Phase 4 public hearings and annual town meeting: March–April 2018

In March 2018, the final draft, with public comments, went to the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen for approval. The boards will see the public comments from the online platform as well as comments in the public hearings and, if they wish, may make approval contingent on changes to the draft plan.