

Housing in Wellesley: Zoning, Diversity, and Affordability

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Don McCauley, Planning Director



Wellesley Studies

Unified Plan

- Great source of information
- Plethora of objectives
- Increased Housing Diversity is major objective

Housing Production Plan

- Also a great source of information
- Provides excellent overview of constraints and opportunities for housing development



HPP views on Wellesley Zoning

Wellesley's Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) reflects practices and policies that have not kept pace with changes in modern land use regulation. Updated incrementally over time, the ZBL today contains 24 use districts and six overlay districts (Map 2.X), and some unusual project review requirements. It is a difficult bylaw to follow and understand, in part because it has so many districts and in part because it lacks the graphics, illustrations, and use of color that make contemporary bylaws and ordinances much easier to interpret. As Wellesley's *Unified Plan* notes, the town faces several significant land use and zoning challenges due in part to the following conditions:

- Wellesley's mostly built-out character;
- Wellesley has relatively few sites suitable for redevelopment or development;
- There are continuing "character" concerns about tear downs and replacement houses;
- There are concerns about traffic and other potential impacts of additional housing development;
- Wellesley lacks clear design standards and guidelines for impacts on the public realm of private development; and
- Wellesley does not have a consistent venue for boards, commissions, and departmental staff to collaborate about development and preservation issues.

These conditions, coupled with Wellesley's hard-to-navigate zoning, very high land costs, and potential for highly profitable market-rate sales and rents, have contributed to the recent arrival of several Chapter 40B comprehensive permits.



Housing Goals

1. Housing Production Plan (2018)

- Housing Needs Assessment:
 - Age-friendly housing, accessible homes for those with disabilities, workforce housing
 - Low, moderate, and middle income ownership units

Household Income Group	Total	% Cost Burdened	% Severely Cost Burdened
Low-Income Households	1,060	75.5%	58.5%
Owners	550	91.8%	68.2%
Renters	510	56.9%	48.0%
Moderate-Income Households	410	62.2%	30.5%
Owners	310	61.3%	29.0%
Renters	100	70.0%	40.0%

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data. Low and moderate income limits are shown in Table 2.7.

Many Districts

Single Residence

- Divided into 5 area districts
- Most lots are non-conforming

Other Districts

- 28 in total
- Many focused on particular types of development
- Even the various town house districts are hard to synchronize


What do we do?

Improve the Zoning Bylaw

Single Residence Districts

- Consider supplemental uses

Other Districts

- Facilitate construction and development
 - Allow increased density
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Accessory Dwelling Units

"Accessory dwelling unit", a self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a principal dwelling, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that: (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the principal dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress; (ii) is not larger in floor area than 1/2 the floor area of the principal dwelling or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller; and (iii) is subject to such additional restrictions as may be imposed by a municipality, including but not limited to additional size restrictions, owner-occupancy requirements and restrictions or prohibitions on short-term rental of accessory dwelling units.



Other Possibilities

Unifying and/or expanding districts that allow multifamily housing

Reviewing General Residence District

Revisiting Inclusionary Zoning requirements

Simplifying Zoning Bylaw concepts:

- Town House
- Two Family Dwelling
- Assisted Units
- Affordable Units
- Dwelling
- Elderly Housing
- And many more

Zoning Bylaw Amendment Rollout

Recodification

- Solved Roman Numerals
- Now onto definitions
 - Key to creating a unified bylaw

Reimagine Key Concepts

- Replace Family with Residential Unit
- Resolve ambiguity in key definitions such as Town House

Accessory Dwelling Units

Review of Districts

More of right, less special review



Thank You.

Questions?

