

TOWN OF WESTON  
**HOUSING PRODUCTION  
PLAN**

FY2022-2026

*APPROVED 9/14/21*

*PREPARED FOR:*

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## ACRONYMS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| ACS      | US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates   |
| ADA      | Americans with Disabilities Act                                     |
| AMI/AMFI | Areawide Median Family Income set by HUD (household of four)        |
| AUL      | Activity and Use Limitation designation, monitored by the DEP       |
| CHAS     | Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy                        |
| CPA      | State of Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (MGL Chapter 44B) |
| CPC      | Community Preservation Committee                                    |
| CPI-U    | U.S. Census Bureau's Consumer Price Index                           |
| CRA      | U.S. Federal Community Reinvestment Act                             |
| DEP      | Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection                |
| DHCD     | Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development       |
| EPA      | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency                                |
| FEMA     | Federal Emergency Management Agency                                 |
| FY       | Fiscal Year(s) (July 1-June 30)                                     |
| HPP      | Housing Production Plan   |
| HUD      | United States Department of Housing and Urban Development           |
| LIP      | <b>DHCD's Local Initiative Program</b>                              |
| LMI      | Low/Moderate- Income (at or below 80 percent AMI)                   |
| MACRIS   | Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System                 |
| MAPC     | Metropolitan Area Planning Council                                  |
| MassDOT  | Massachusetts Department of Transportation                          |
| MassGIS  | Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information                      |
| MBTA     | Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority                          |
| MGL      | Massachusetts General Laws  |
| MLS      | Multiple Listings Service (central real estate database)            |
| MSA      | Metropolitan Statistical Area                                       |
| MWRA     | Massachusetts Water Resources Authority                             |
| NHESP    | Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program       |
| SHI      | Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory                          |
| TODEX    | MHP's Transit Oriented Development Explorer                         |
| YTD      | Year to Date  |
| 40B      | Comprehensive Permit, per MGL Chapter 40B, §20-23                   |

## KEY DEFINITIONS

This list of key definitions is intended to assist the reader and is not intended to replace applicable legal definitions of these terms. The following definitions are for key terms used throughout the document, many of which are based on definitions in statutes and regulations.

**Areawide Median Income (AMI)**– the median gross income for a person or family as calculated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, based on the median income for the Metropolitan Statistical Area. For FY2020, the HUD area median family income (AMFI) for the Boston-Cambridge-Newton MA HUD Metro FMR Area was \$119,000.<sup>1</sup> AMI is also referred to in the document as median family income (AMFI).

**Cost-Burdened Household** – a household that spends 30 percent or more of their income on housing-related costs (such as rent or mortgage payments). Severely cost-burdened households spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing-related costs.

**Elderly Non-Families** – a household of one elderly person as defined by in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data.

**Extremely Low-Income** – an individual or family earning less than 30 percent of area median family income set by HUD (AMI).

**Family Household** - Family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people.

**Household** – all the people, related or unrelated, who occupy a housing unit. It can also include a person living alone in a housing unit or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit as partners or roommates. Family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. Nonfamily households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals.

**Labor Force** – all residents within a community over the age of 16 who are currently employed or *actively* seeking employment. It does not include students, retirees, discouraged workers (residents who are not actively seeking a job) or those who cannot work due to a disability.

**Low/Moderate-Income Housing** – housing for persons or families whose annual income is less than 80 percent of the areawide median family income (AMI) (as defined by Chapter 40B and DHCD). The AMI is determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For the Boston-Cambridge-Newton MA HUD Metro FMR Area, a four-person household with a gross household income of \$96,250 or less is considered low-income.<sup>2</sup> A one-person household with a gross household income of \$67,400 or less is considered low-income.

**Non-Family Households** – Non-family households consist of individuals living alone and individuals living with roommates who are not related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

**Open Space** – land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh and saltwater marshes and other wetlands, oceans, rivers, streams, lake and pond frontage, beaches, dunes and other coastal lands, lands to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve, and/or land for recreational use.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *FY 2020 Income Limits Summary*. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2020/2020summary.odn> (accessed May 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## DATA SOURCES

This plan utilizes data from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (ACS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), and The Warren Group (TWG), as well as projections from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst Donahue Institute (UMDI) and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). It also includes some economic data from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Data (EOLWD). Comparison communities used in the needs assessment were selected by the Town's HPP Steering Committee.

The Development Constraints is primarily based on the 2016 Weston Housing Production Plan Chapter 6 "Challenges to Producing Affordable Housing" and the 2017 Weston Open Space and Recreation Plan with updates as needed.

The U.S. Census counts every resident in the United States by asking ten questions, whereas the ACS provides estimates based on a sample of the population for more detailed information. It is important to be aware that there are margins of error (MOE) attached to the ACS estimates, because the estimates are based samples and not on complete counts.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## HPP PURPOSE

This Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a state-recognized planning tool that, under certain circumstances, permits municipalities to influence the location, type, and pace of affordable housing development. This HPP establishes a strategic plan for production of affordable and mixed-income housing that is based upon a comprehensive housing needs assessment and provides a detailed analysis of development constraints due to infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, protected open space, and regulatory barriers.

This HPP has been prepared in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requirements and describes how the Town of Weston plans to create and preserve affordable and mixed-income housing as well as create more housing options in the community.

When an HPP is certified by DHCD, then a denial of a Comprehensive Permit will be upheld—if the application is not consistent with local needs, as outlined in this plan. Weston would need to produce 20 units that count on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory for a one-year safe harbor certificate or 40 units for a two-year safe harbor certificate.<sup>3</sup>

Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B Section 20-23 (C.40B), the Commonwealth’s goal is for all Massachusetts municipalities is to have 10 percent of housing units affordable to low/moderate income households or affordable housing on at least 1.5 percent of total land area.

As of April 2021, 331 units in Weston were included on the SHI, which is about 8.38 percent of Weston’s total year-round housing units (3,952 according to the 2010 Census). The Town would need to create 64 more units to reach the 10 percent affordability target. Weston may need to create more—or less—units to reach the 10 percent affordability threshold depending on the Town’s total year-round housing units per the 2020 Census update and DHCD’s biennial update to the SHI. According to preliminary estimates from the Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO), Weston’s number of year-round housing units is anticipated to increase, but only slightly from 3,952 in 2010 to an estimated 4,097 in 2020, which would equate to a need for 79 more SHI-eligible housing units.

## REPORT ORGANIZATION

This Housing Production Plan is organized in six chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides an overview of the purpose of the plan, a community overview, description of the planning process, and summary of the Town’s housing needs, goals, and strategies and may serve as an executive summary for this report.
- Chapter 2 describes the Town’s five-year housing goals, strategies, and action plan as identified through the planning process associated with development of this plan.
- Chapter 3 provides a demographic profile of the community’s residents and was prepared by the Regional Housing Services Office.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Housing and Community Development. *Spreadsheet of 0.5% and 1.0% Thresholds for Each Community Based on 2010 Census Information*. 2010.

- Chapter 4 provides an analysis of local housing conditions including housing supply, residential market indicators, and affordable housing characteristics and was prepared by the Regional Housing Services Office.
- Chapter 5 describes the Town’s development constraints and limitations including environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, regulatory barriers as well as an analysis of potential development and redevelopment opportunities.
- Chapter 6 describes local and regional capacity and resources to create and preserve affordable and mixed-income housing in the community.

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

As described in the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), Weston is a high-income semi-rural community located in eastern Massachusetts in Middlesex County. According to the 2018 ACS, Weston had an estimated population of 12,067 and a relatively low population density of 717.4 people per square mile. In comparison, neighboring Newton had an estimated population of 88,660 and a population density of 4,973 people per square mile and, on the other end of the spectrum, Lincoln had an estimated population of 6,726 and a population density of 473 people per square mile.

Weston is among the 10 most affluent towns in Massachusetts and one of the most affluent towns in the country, with a median sale price of \$1.4M for all sales in 2019 (The Warren Group, Town Stats). According to PropertyShark, Weston’s median sale price was the fourth highest (by zip code) in Massachusetts and ranked 93<sup>rd</sup> highest zip code in the country.<sup>4</sup>

Weston’s strategic location in the Metrowest Boston area provides easy access to both Boston and surrounding towns via two major roadways, Interstate 95/Route 128, which runs north/south along the eastern side of town, and Interstate 90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike, or “Mass Pike”), which runs east/west through the southern portion of the town. In addition, several state highways through Weston, notably Route 20, Route 30, and Route 117, receive increasingly heavy use as alternate routes for those living in and commuting from surrounding towns and cities, as do the town roads connecting these thoroughfares.

Traffic congestion has grown on virtually all such roads over time, as increasing numbers of commuters seek to optimize their commutes from western suburbs. Continued development along the 128/95 corridor will likely intensify this congestion. The Fitchburg/South Acton commuter rail line on the north side makes three stops in Weston: Silver Hill, Hastings, and Kendal Green.

The Town of Weston is located between the Charles and Sudbury Rivers on a relatively rugged upland plateau in South-Central Middlesex County. The landscape character of Weston is formed by its numerous smoothly rounded hills, small, meandering streams, and low wetland areas.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

As described in the 2017 OSRP, Weston was originally part of the Watertown settlement of 1630, but until the end of the century, the land was used mainly for grazing cattle. In 1698, “The Farms” was set off as a separate precinct with its own meeting house; and in 1712-13, the “Farmers’ Precinct” was incorporated as a separate town, Weston. Early settlers discovered that the amount of useful agricultural land was limited, as was the potential for water-powered industries.

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<sup>4</sup> Kaufman, Amanda, *These four Massachusetts ZIP codes are among the most expensive in the US*, Boston Globe, November 19, 2020.

Weston did have one advantage: it was situated along the main route west from Boston. By the 18th century, residents were providing services to travelers on the Boston Post Road. Two taverns of great historical and architectural importance remain today: the Josiah Smith Tavern and the Golden Ball Tavern, which is now a museum. North Avenue was an important route to the northwest and, like the Post Road, hosted shops, blacksmiths, and taverns serving travelers. The opening of the Worcester Turnpike in 1810 (now Route 9) drew some commercial traffic from the Boston Post Road.

The Boston and Worcester Railroad was built through the southeast corner of town in 1834, and the Fitchburg Railroad (later the Boston and Maine) was built along Stony Brook on the north side of town around 1844. Population continued to grow, supported in part by small industries such as the pottery, tannery and related boot and shoe making, school desk and chair factory, tool factories, and shops making machinery for cotton and woolen mills.

The Hook & Hastings Company organ factory, Weston's largest industry, moved to the North Avenue area in 1888 and was a major town employer until it closed during the Great Depression. Thirteen properties that were workers' housing for the organ factory are extant and listed on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System and are part of the Kendal Green National Register District.

The Mass Central Railroad, the third to serve Weston, commenced service in 1881. The rural landscape of Weston and convenience to rail transportation also made it attractive as a summer resort area. The shingle-style Drabbington Lodge, once a popular summer resort, remains on North Avenue and is now a senior living community.

Development of country estates in Weston began on a small scale in the 1860s and was widespread by 1900. Wealthy businessmen were attracted to Weston by its convenience to Boston, quiet country atmosphere, and low taxes, as well as the beauty of the area and that same rocky topography that in earlier years had proved unsuitable for farming. By the turn of the century, Weston was described as a "country town of residences of the first class." Suburban development began in the early 20th century and increased with the advent of the automobile.

After World War II, construction of Routes 128 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, along with pent-up demand for housing, led to subdivision of former estate properties and farms throughout the town. The postwar period was characterized by exponential growth and proactive efforts to control and guide this growth in order to preserve the rural character of the town.

In the early 1950s, the Selectmen initiated two important growth-control measures: a zoning bylaw increasing the amount of land needed to build and a land acquisition policy reducing the amount of developable land by purchasing it for the town. The new zoning bylaw, which passed in 1954, established four residential districts, including the new "A" district with 60,000 square feet minimum lot sizes.

Much of the town's housing stock was built in the thirty years between 1950 and 1979 and consisted largely of single-family houses on increasingly expensive land. Population growth brought increased demand for town services including schools and five new schools were constructed between 1950 and 1969. In recent years, the major trend is for many of these post-war houses to be replaced by much larger houses.

## SUMMARY OF HOUSING NEEDS

As described in detail in Chapter 3 regarding Weston's demographic characteristics, the bulk of Weston's population growth took place from the 1950's through the 1970's. Weston's population has ebbed and flowed since then, but has been growing slowly, but steadily since 2010. Weston is still a majority white community, but there has been a modest increase in racial and ethnic diversity. Weston residents are overwhelmingly well-educated and have high incomes. However, income statistics show that older householders generally have much lower incomes than younger householders.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the HPP examine Weston's housing needs based both on the needs of current residents and on the needs of those who have been excluded from the Weston community. Some key findings are summarized below.

### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS KEY FINDINGS (CHAPTER 3)

- Growth is outpacing projections - Weston's population has grown faster in recent years than projections from both the Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC) and UMass Donohue Institute.
- Growing number of older residents - The over-65 population grew 23 percent since the 2010 Census.
  - Over half (52 percent) of those over 65 earn \$74,999 or less per year
  - 21 percent report a disability
- Population continues to be majority white - with some modest increases in racial and ethnic diversity.
- Weston households are predominately comprised of families - About 79.4 percent of current households are families (meaning two or more related individuals living together). This is consistent with adjacent communities of Wellesley, Wayland, and Lexington. However, only 38 percent of total households have children under 18.
- Household size increased - Between 2010 and 2018 the general population grew by 5.8 percent, but the number of households only increased by 2.2 percent.
- School Enrollment Declining - Slowly, but steadily declining since 2013.
- Weston is home to households earning a wide range of income levels - Family households' median income is \$232,500, but much lower for non-family households at \$32,037.

### HOUSING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS KEY FINDINGS (CHAPTER 4)

- Eighty-nine percent of Weston's housing units are single-family homes, indicating little housing diversity.
- Most of the comparison communities have significantly more housing type diversity than Weston.
- About 86.5 percent of Weston's housing stock is owner-occupied. Younger age groups and the oldest senior residents are most likely to rent.
- Weston home prices have been consistently high since the early 2000's but have risen even higher since 2017.
- U.S Census Building Permit Survey shows that Weston's housing development has been exclusively limited to single-family homes since 2000. Weston lags most of the comparison communities in the development of multi-family housing.

Chapter 5 reviews environmental constraints, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory barriers. This chapter also includes a mapping analysis of lot size, improvement to land value ratio, and land value, factors that may indicate potential opportunities for development or redevelopment. There are many factors that

influence the feasibility of housing production, from physical limitations to regulations that shape development and land use. Some key findings are summarized below.

## DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS KEY FINDINGS (CHAPTER 5)

### Environmental Constraints

- The semi-rural nature of Weston is highly valued by the community. Contributing elements include topography, scenic roads, contrast between forested and open areas, last remaining working farms, streams and ponds, parks, historic structures, and naturalistic residential landscaping.
- Outside of extreme storm events, Weston does not experience significant amounts of flooding.
- Weston has many significant historic resources and areas that span a wide range of resource types and periods.
- Weston has three hazardous waste sites with Activity and Use Limitations (AULS) registered with DEP.

### Infrastructure Capacity

- Weston does not have public sewer and is dependent on private septic systems, limiting the intensity of development. Weston is serviced by the MWRA public water supply.
- Traffic has become one of the major “quality of life” issues for residents and commuters.
- The Fitchburg commuter train line of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has three stops in Weston and the Town is not served by buses.

### Regulatory Barriers

- Weston’s zoning provisions are very restrictive. Most of the town is zoned for single-family development on minimum lot sizes ranging from 20,000 square feet (s.f.) to 60,000 s.f.
- The only zoning district included on the zoning map that permits multifamily (Multiple Dwelling District B) encompasses less than ½ of a percent of total zoned land area.
- Weston has made some progress in promoting housing options through the following zoning provisions including Active Adult Residential Development, limited accessory dwelling unit provisions, and flexible development provisions.
- There are no inclusionary zoning provisions.
- Other regulations include the Aquifer Protection Overlay Districts, local Wetlands and Floodplains Protection District, Stormwater and Erosion Control Bylaw, Scenic Roads Bylaw and zoning provisions requiring site plan approval, Demolition Delay Bylaw, and one small Local Historic District.

Chapter 6 describes local and regional capacity and resources for the implementation of affordable housing initiatives, including local and regional housing organizations and funds. The Town of Weston has several organizations with a focus on supporting community housing, including local government entities and non-profit organizations, as well as regional agencies that facilitate housing initiatives. Some key findings are summarized below.

## IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY AND RESOURCES KEY FINDINGS (CHAPTER 6)

- Existing and planned subsidized housing units are supported and managed by the Weston Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee, and local non-profit organizations.
- Older residents can access additional support for housing and other basic needs from the Weston Council on Aging, the Merriam Fund, and other regional organizations such as Springwell.
- The Regional Housing Services Office provides Weston with ongoing professional expertise to monitor progress towards affordable housing objectives and coordinate with nearby communities.
- Local collaboration with other regional organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, is continuing to provide new opportunities for homeownership in Weston.

- Non-profit organizations west of Boston, including Metro West Collaborative Development and Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council provide information and financial resources to support income-eligible residents.

## SUMMARY OF HPP GOALS

As explained in detail in Chapter 2, this plan includes the following five goals:

### 1. Expand the variety of housing options

As it has done historically, the Town will continue to promote a variety of housing options including affordable rental and ownership housing and service-enriched housing for individuals and families with special needs. Weston will work to promote flexible regulatory policies and local initiatives that encourage diverse and affordable housing types, such as accessory apartments, two-family houses, townhouses, multiple units in historic buildings, cohousing, and congregate housing, in addition to well-designed and appropriately scaled new multi-family development particularly through redevelopment of already developed properties.

### 2. Promote a welcoming and diverse community

Weston will promote housing policies and practices that welcome people of diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and characteristics including people who have ties to the community through family, friends, employment, or school as well as newcomers looking to embrace Weston as home.

### 3. Distribute new housing in strategic locations throughout Weston

Strategic areas for accommodating a variety of housing options have convenient access to community services and amenities and are in areas that are already developed. These areas include land that is in, or within, one-half mile of the following: Town center, the commuter rail stations, or the public schools and other municipal facilities. Established areas along the town's major roadways are also preferred.

### 4. Ensure new housing options are compatible in scale, siting, and design

The Town will integrate new housing strategically and carefully to ensure new homes of all types are sensitive and compatible in scale, siting, and design to the physical characteristics of the neighborhood context and create affordable units and other housing options through reuse of existing buildings including through the preservation of historic resources.

### 5. Address local housing needs and meet the state's production goals

To maintain Weston's "safe harbor" status through a certified Housing Production Plan (HPP), the Town will actively strive to create a minimum of 20 homes annually that count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) towards the state's 10 percent goal per MGL c.40B, preferably through reuse of existing buildings and redevelopment of already developed sites, with new construction on previously undeveloped sites only where well designed and sited to harmonize with the characteristics of the neighborhood context and minimize environmental impacts.

## SUMMARY OF HPP STRATEGIES

Achieving the community's five-year goals will require a variety of regulatory, programmatic, and policy strategies. The strategies, described in detail in Chapter 2, are intended to offer multiple ways that the community can work to achieve its goals. Many of these strategies are contingent on factors beyond the municipality's control, including market opportunities and funding availability. All strategies will require local approvals in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. The strategies are organized in three categories and are in no particular order:

- Planning, Policies, and Zoning Strategies
- Local Initiatives and Programmatic Strategies
- Capacity, Education, and Coordination

### PLANNING, POLICIES, AND ZONING STRATEGIES

The Town's authority to update zoning regulations can have powerful effects to encourage private responses to address local housing needs with minimal local expenditure. The following strategies incorporate recommendations for both local planning initiatives and zoning amendments:

1. Join with Neighboring and Similar MBTA Communities to create a Housing Choice Working Group
2. Consider adopting a Historic Reuse Overlay District with Affordability Requirements
3. Consider creating a Historic Heritage Overlay Designation with Affordability Incentives
4. Consider adopting more flexible zoning tools that can provide attractive local options to Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B
5. Consider adopting Inclusionary Zoning provisions
6. Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
7. Consider ways to more explicitly allow congregate housing and co-living
8. Consider a home rule petition to adopt a residential linkage fee for tear-down/rebuild developments
9. Update Weston Policies and Preferences

### LOCAL INITIATIVE AND PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

Local initiative strategies refer to recommendations that the Town can undertake to foster the creation of more housing options, especially affordable housing. These initiatives are not regulatory in nature - they deal with allocation of Town resources including staff time, funding, and property:

10. Work with property owners to encourage friendly 40B/Local Initiative Program (LIP) development on strategic sites
11. Expand the Weston Affordable Housing Trust's Homeownership Opportunities Program
12. Consider the possibility of supporting the Brook School expansion
13. Continue to connect senior homeowners to existing programs that allow practical support to allow seniors to remain in their homes

### CAPACITY, EDUCATION, AND COORDINATION

The following strategies are recommendations for expanding the Town's capacity to implement housing initiatives, promote education, and to coordinate housing initiatives with other local or regional entities:

14. Support the creation of a community organization focused on housing in Weston
15. Increase the RHSO Housing Coordinator position to provide expanded services
16. Increase revenue for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust
17. Continue membership in the RHSO

# CHAPTER 2: HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Weston is not unique in its struggles to provide a diverse housing stock including affordable housing, nor is this struggle new to Weston. For over a hundred years, it has been increasingly difficult for people who grew up in Weston to find a place they can afford. The Town recognized early on, as a Town Report from 1947 states, that “every citizen knows that rental housing is substantially unprocurable and that houses can be bought only at grossly inflated prices.”<sup>5</sup>

This plan is intended to provide a hopeful, yet realistic, direction to continue the community’s diligent and creative efforts to promote housing options in Weston and is consistent in spirit with the 2010 [Town of Weston Policies and Preferences for Affordable Housing](#). Note that the this plan is intended to provide guidance for local housing policies and initiatives, but does not bind future actions or decisions of local officials or Town Meeting.

***How could Weston protect its valued community characteristics while still creating more housing options? How could Weston create balanced strategies to create housing options that recognize economic realities of development and promote equity and inclusion while still preserving community assets?***

These questions are at the heart of this planning effort and the goals and strategies described here are intended to address these questions. They are based on the Regional Housing Services Office’s comprehensive housing needs assessment combined with community input collected through the plan’s public engagement process.

As described in detail in chapters 3 and 4, the comprehensive housing needs assessment identified three primary housing needs:

- Ownership housing is primarily beyond the reach for households whose income is equal or below the Town’s median household income. This indicates a local need for more financially attainable ownership housing options for low/moderate and middle-income households.
- A significant portion of the most vulnerable low-income households, including a growing population of older adults, is cost burdened with limited choices for affordable housing options. This indicates a need for housing that is affordable for low-income households as well as more diverse options including rental units and housing with supportive services.
- Family rental housing is extremely limited in Weston indicating a need for family-sized rental units, both affordable and market-rate.

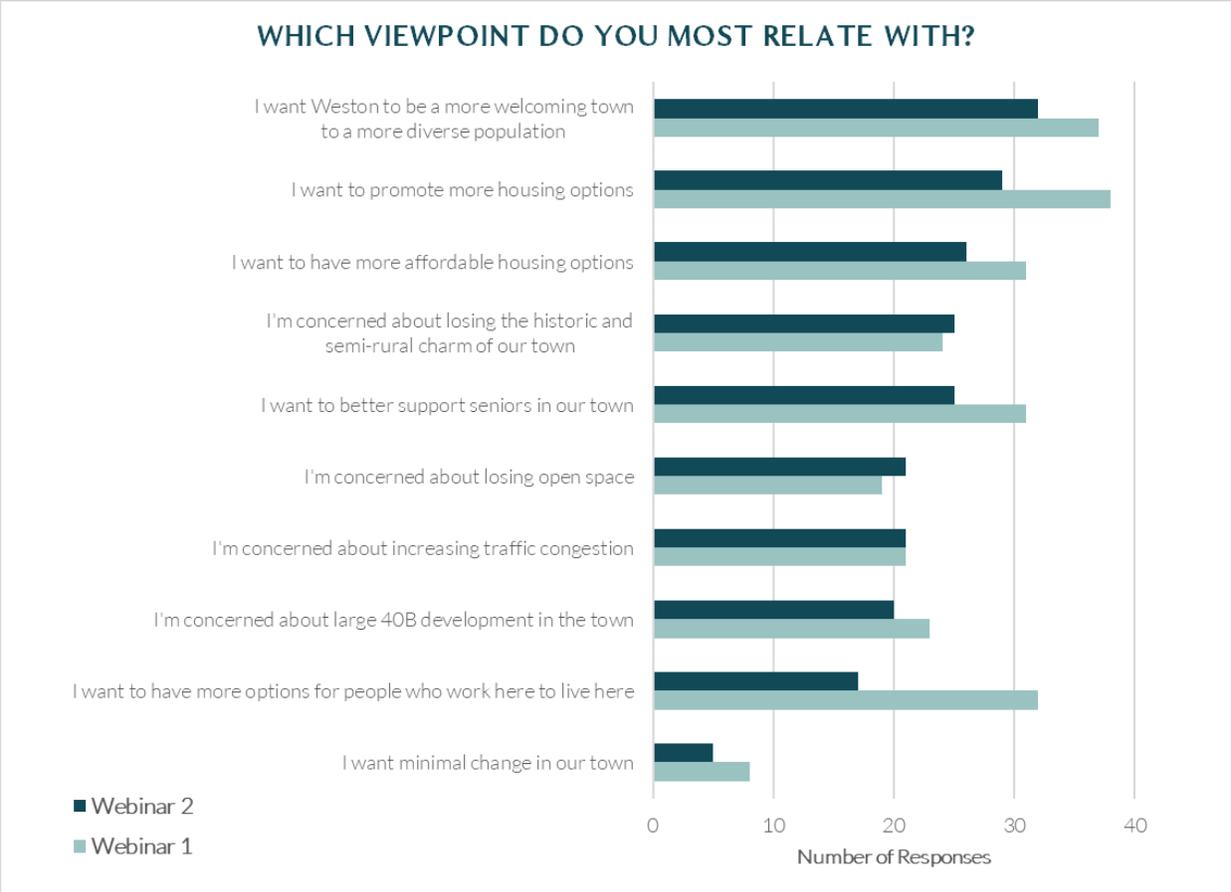
As described in detail in the appendices, the community input from the two webinars, focus groups, and community survey included the following key themes:

- The influx of larger 40B housing development proposals over the past several years has raised concerns about the scale and density of these projects in primarily single-family residential areas and the potential impact on the town’s infrastructure, environmental impacts related to wastewater and stormwater, and traffic.
- There is a desire for future housing development to be highly sustainable – relying more on geothermal not fossil fuels, and located closer to schools, public transit, and the amenities of the Town Center.

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<sup>5</sup> Fox, Pamela W., *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, MA, 1830-1980*, 2002.

- Lack of housing affordability is an issue that affects seniors, families, and the Town’s workforce. A more diverse housing stock is needed to address Weston’s housing needs, particularly smaller homes, senior housing, condos/townhouses, and apartments.
- Some community members expressed support for more diverse population, better walkability, and municipal infrastructure improvements.
- Generally there was a focus on producing housing in a way that would help meet the town’s housing goals incrementally.



## FIVE-YEAR GOALS

The goals of this plan are consistent with the Comprehensive Permit Regulations (760 CMR 56) as required by DHCD for Housing Production Plans:

- a mix of types of housing, consistent with local and regional needs and feasible within the housing market in which they will be situated, including rental, homeownership, and other occupancy arrangements, if any, for families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly.*
- a numerical goal for annual housing production, pursuant to which there is an increase in the municipality’s number of SHI Eligible Housing units by at least 0.50 percent of its total units (as determined in accordance with 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a)) during every calendar year included in the HPP, until the overall percentage exceeds the Statutory Minimum set forth in 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a).*

As explained in detail below, this plan includes the following five goals:

1. Expand the variety of housing options
2. Promote a welcoming and diverse community
3. Distribute new housing in strategic locations throughout Weston
4. Ensure new housing options are compatible in scale, siting, and design
5. Address local housing needs and meet the state’s production goals

### GOAL 1: EXPAND THE VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

In Weston’s evolution from farm town to semi-rural suburb, the Town grew and changed but managed to retain the charm of a small town. With its convenient access to employment and cultural centers of the Boston area and associated growth pressures, the community is protective of its unique charm and has managed growth very carefully. As Pamela W. Fox states in *Farm Town to Suburb*, “New residents who come in with plans for their dream house often fail to see their individual building lot as part of a neighborhood and town with a particular character and sense of place that is different from other places. Not better, or more beautiful – just different, and unique.”

In addition to Weston’s open spaces and scenic beauty, historic buildings contribute significantly to Weston’s valued charm and sense of place. As the Town plans to expand housing options in the community, it can be useful to recognize that the community has a long history of creating a variety of housing options that provide historical precedent.

We can learn from Weston’s past to ensure that new housing options are well integrated into the existing community fabric. These historical housing options included farmers who took in boarders; two hostleries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Glen House and the Drabbington Lodge; caretaker cottages on estates (akin to modern-day “detached accessory dwelling units”); worker housing for immigrants building Weston’s estates and public works projects; a teacher’s lodge across from the Horace Sears estate; housing for firefighters within fire houses; a poor farm; and Hastings’ workers cottages at Kendal Green for the organ factory employees, which included single-family, two-family, and four-unit houses.<sup>6</sup>



**Drabbington Lodge, 135 North Avenue**

Source: Weston Historical Commission



**Worker housing on Viles Street included an existing tenement house with four apartments (left) and two double houses built in 1887.**

As it has done historically, the Town will continue to promote a variety of housing options including affordable rental and ownership housing and service-enriched housing for individuals and families with special needs. Weston will work to promote flexible regulatory policies and local initiatives that encourage diverse and affordable housing types, such as accessory apartments, two-family houses, townhouses, multiple units in historic buildings, cohousing, and congregate housing, in addition to well-designed and appropriately scaled new multi-family development particularly through redevelopment of already developed properties.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## GOAL 2: PROMOTE A WELCOMING AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY

To promote a healthy community that provides for the balance of human experience and human life, Weston will promote housing policies and practices that welcome people of diverse socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and characteristics including people who have ties to the community through family, friends, employment, or school as well as newcomers looking to embrace Weston as home.

For example, promote such housing and programs that would support older adults looking to stay in their home as they age or enable them to downsize within the community, young adults looking for starter homes or apartments with convenient access to job centers, families looking to raise children as part of the community, divorced, separated, or single parents looking for a right-sized apartment, and individuals with special needs looking for accessible and supportive housing.

## GOAL 3: DISTRIBUTE NEW HOUSING IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT WESTON

As stated in the Town's *2010 Policies and Preferences for Affordable Housing*, strategic areas for accommodating a variety of housing options have convenient access to community services and amenities and are in areas that are already developed. These areas include land that is in, or within, one-half mile of the following: Town center, the commuter rail stations, or the public schools and other municipal facilities. Established areas along the town's major roadways are also preferred.

## GOAL 4: ENSURE NEW HOUSING OPTIONS ARE COMPATIBLE IN SCALE, SITING, AND DESIGN

Weston's evolution from a farming community to its current semi-rural suburban character is defined by its naturalistic landscape including fields, meadows, and woodland as opposed to manicured lawns; scenic vistas and roads; large estates; many simple and unpretentious vernacular historic homes and outbuildings, including modest farmhouses; and the historic Town Center.

Integrate new housing strategically and carefully to ensure new homes of all types are sensitive and compatible in scale, siting, and design to the physical characteristics of the neighborhood context and create affordable units and other housing options through reuse of existing buildings including through the preservation of historic resources. This should include a combination of the following three types of approaches:

- **Type 1:** Smaller infill-type development and reuse of existing buildings allowed and encouraged through zoning amendments
- **Type 2:** Mid-sized development through zoning amendments that allow a variety of housing options and creative site planning to better protect natural resources
- **Type 3:** Larger multifamily development on previously developed institutional or commercial properties with good access to highways and buffered from direct residential abutters through 40B Comprehensive Permit applications



Allow reuse of existing buildings to create multiple units including affordable units

Left: Campion Center; Right: Drabbington Lodge

## **GOAL 5: ADDRESS LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS AND MEET THE STATE'S PRODUCTION GOALS**

To maintain Weston's "safe harbor" status through a certified Housing Production Plan (HPP), the Town will actively strive to create a minimum of 20 homes annually that count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) towards the state's 10 percent goal per MGL c.40B, preferably through reuse of existing buildings and redevelopment of already developed sites, with new construction on previously undeveloped sites only where well designed and sited to harmonize with the characteristics of the neighborhood context and minimize environmental impacts. This rate of production would ensure the Town achieves the 10 percent goal in under four years by creating at least 64 units that are eligible for listing on the SHI.<sup>7</sup>

The Town will strive to ensure that all affordable housing produced shall be in accordance with DHCD's Comprehensive Permit Guidelines and regulations including with long-term affordability restrictions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Note the Town needs 64 more SHI units to achieve the state's 10 percent affordability goal.

<sup>8</sup> As described in Section 9 on page VI-10 of the MGL c.40B Comprehensive Permit Guidelines, December 2014.

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES MATRIX

The strategies, which are described in greater detail on the following pages, are summarized in the matrix below that indicates which goal or goals each strategy could help Weston to achieve.

| Type                                | #  | Strategy  | Expand Variety | Promote Welcoming & Diverse | Strategic locations | Compatible Scale | Production & Local Needs |
|-------------------------------------|----|---|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
|                                     |    |   | G1             | G2                          | G3                  | G4               | G5                       |
| Planning, Policies, & Zoning        | 1  | Join with Neighboring and Similar MBTA Communities to create a Housing Choice Working Group                                       | X              |                             | X                   |                  | X                        |
|                                     | 2  | Consider adopting a Historic Reuse Overlay District with Affordability Requirements   | X              | X                           | X                   | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 3  | Consider creating a Historic Heritage Overlay Designation with Affordability Incentives   | X              | X                           |                     | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 4  | Consider adopting more flexible zoning tools that can provide attractive local options to Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B | X              | X                           |                     | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 5  | Consider adopting Inclusionary Zoning provisions  | X              | X                           |                     | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 6  | Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)  | X              | X                           |                     | X                |                          |
|                                     | 7  | Consider ways to more explicitly allow congregate housing and co-living   | X              | X                           |                     | X                |                          |
|                                     | 8  | Consider a home rule petition to adopt a residential linkage fee for tear-down/rebuild developments                               |                | X                           |                     | X                |                          |
|                                     | 9  | Update Weston Policies and Preferences  |                |                             | X                   | X                |                          |
| Local Initiatives & Programmatic    | 10 | Work with property owners to encourage friendly 40B/Local Initiative Program (LIP) development on strategic sites                 | X              | X                           | X                   |                  | X                        |
|                                     | 11 | Expand the Weston Affordable Housing Trust's Homeownership Opportunities Program  | X              | X                           | X                   | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 12 | Consider the possibility of supporting the Brook School expansion   | X              | X                           | X                   | X                | X                        |
|                                     | 13 | Continue to connect senior homeowners to existing programs that allow practical support to allow seniors to remain in their homes |                | X                           |                     |                  |                          |
| Capacity, Education, & Coordination | 14 | Support the creation of a community organization focused on housing in Weston   |                | X                           |                     |                  |                          |
|                                     | 15 | Increase the RHSO Housing Coordinator position to provide expanded services   |                | X                           |                     |                  |                          |
|                                     | 16 | Increase revenue for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust  |                | X                           |                     |                  |                          |
|                                     | 17 | Continue membership in the RHSO   |                | X                           |                     |                  |                          |

## FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIES

Achieving the community's five-year goals will require a variety of regulatory, programmatic, and policy strategies. This section includes descriptions of local regulatory strategies, local initiatives, and strategies that deal with implementation capacity, education, and outreach. The intent of these strategies is not to suggest that Weston will implement all these strategies over five years, but to offer multiple ways that the community can work to achieve its goals. Many of these strategies are contingent on factors beyond the municipalities control, including market opportunities and funding availability. All strategies will require local approvals in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

This plan's strategies comply with the requirements of the Comprehensive Permit Regulations (760 CMR 56), which are summarized as follows:

*The HPP shall address the matters set out in the Department's guidelines, including an explanation of the specific strategies by which the municipality will achieve its housing production goal, and a schedule for implementation of the goals and strategies for production of units, including all of the following strategies, to the extent applicable:*

- a) *the identification of zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations for the purposes of creating SHI Eligible Housing developments to meet its housing production goal.*
- b) *the identification of specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of Comprehensive Permit applications.*
- c) *characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality (examples might include cluster developments, adaptive re-use, transit-oriented housing, mixed-use development, inclusionary housing, etc.).*
- d) *municipally owned parcels for which the municipality commits to issue requests for proposals to develop SHI Eligible Housing; and/or*
- e) *participation in regional collaborations addressing housing development.*

The strategies are organized in three categories and are in no particular order:

- A. Planning, Policies, and Zoning Strategies
- B. Local Initiatives and Programmatic Strategies
- C. Capacity, Education, and Coordination

## PLANNING, POLICIES, AND ZONING STRATEGIES

The Town's authority to update zoning regulations can have powerful effects to encourage private responses to address local housing needs with minimal local expenditure. The following strategies incorporate recommendations for both local planning initiatives and zoning amendments.

### 1. Join with neighboring and similar MBTA Communities to create a Housing Choice Working Group

In early 2021, the state adopted a series of substantive changes to the state's Zoning Act, which will affect Weston. The purpose of the changes is to promote housing production in eligible locations.<sup>9</sup> Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020 included a series of revisions to MGL C.40A, the state's Zoning Act.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 1A of the Zoning Act defines "eligible locations" as areas that by virtue of their infrastructure, transportation access, existing underutilized facilities or location make highly suitable locations for residential or mixed use smart growth zoning districts or starter home zoning districts, including without limitation: (i) areas near transit stations, including rapid transit, commuter rail and bus and ferry terminals; or (ii) areas of concentrated development, including town and city centers, other existing commercial districts in cities and towns and existing rural village districts.

Among the revisions are changes to reduce the number of local votes required to enact certain kinds of zoning ordinances and bylaws to a simple majority and the addition of section 3A that requires MBTA communities to have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria (listed further below). Weston is included as an MBTA community and must meet this requirement in accordance with the legislation.

Communities that do not comply with the requirements will no longer be eligible for a variety of state funding programs. However, according to the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD's) preliminary guidance for MBTA Communities, all communities are deemed to comply until DHCD develops more specific guidance.

The purpose of a Housing Choice Working Group would be to study options for Weston and comparable communities to comply with the Housing Choice requirements for MBTA communities. Such a Working Group would be temporary to serve and solely focused on developing strategies to comply with the new legislation. The legislation requires that Weston, as an MBTA community, shall have a zoning by-law that provides at least one district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and that such district:

- May not impose age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children
- Shall have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, subject to any further limitations imposed by the Wetlands Protection Act and Title 5 of the state environmental code
- Be located not more than 0.5 miles from an MBTA station

**More information:**

- For more information about the legislation, go to DHCD's *Housing Choice and MBTA Communities Legislation* website: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/housing-choice-and-mbta-communities-legislation>

## 2. Consider adopting a Historic Reuse Overlay District with Affordability Requirements

As a potential way to comply with the recently adopted Housing Choice Legislation and promote more housing options through reuse of existing buildings in strategic locations, consider adopting a historic reuse overlay district that includes affordable housing units.

Such an overlay district could allow adaptive reuse of larger existing historic buildings to multi-family housing by right with site plan and design review for properties that meet the following additional criteria:

- Property is located within 0.5 miles of public transit
- Existing building has a minimum of 10,000 s.f. of gross living area
- Property is listed on the State Register of Historic Places

One such property that could potentially meet these requirements is the c.1896 Drabbington Inn property: the gross living area is about 15,000 s.f.; it is listed on the State Register; and it is located within 0.5 miles of the Kendal Green and Hastings MBTA Commuter Rail stations.

To ensure that such conversions of historic buildings follow best preservation practices, such an overlay district could require that the project meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic

**Strategy 2 supports Type 1 strategic locations**

The reuse of an historic building, such as the Drabbington Inn would align with the Goal 4 for Type 1 housing options that include the reuse of existing buildings.

Properties<sup>10</sup> and result in a permanent Preservation Restriction held by the Weston Historical Commission.

To promote the creation of affordable units that count on the SHI, consider requiring that a certain percent of the total units be restricted as affordable for households up to 80 percent AMI. A payment in lieu option could also be considered including for fractional units. The Town could further consider requiring portion of units affordable for up to 150 percent AMI for ownership units to help address a need for middle-income housing options.

To comply with the Housing Choice Legislation, permit up to 15 units per acre. In addition, consider allowing reduced parking from two-spaces per unit to one space per unit. Such an overlay could also allow new construction on same lot or an expansion of the existing building, perhaps as special permit rather than by right.

Such an overlay district would appear to meet the requirement for Housing Choice Legislation if it complies with all regulations and guidance issued by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

### 3. Consider creating a Historic Heritage Overlay Designation with Affordability Incentives

The Planning Board is considering proposing a new overlay designation to preserve and protect especially important historic structures and properties that define the essence of Weston's particular character. While still in the early stages, the bylaw could apply to multiple specific properties. Such designation could allow property owners to transfer flexible subdivision density to reuse historic buildings on the property as multi-family as an alternative to tearing down the historic buildings and subdividing the property to construct new single-family houses.

This strategy recommends that the Town also consider integrating an appropriate density bonus to the provisions of this proposed bylaw that would encourage the inclusion of affordable units for households at 80 percent AMI (that will count on the SHI) and community housing units up to 150 percent AMI to help address middle-income housing need. Based on case studies of a few of the proposed properties, determine the appropriate incentive. For example, the Town could consider a bonus of two market rate units for each affordable unit created through the bylaw. This strategy would help to create smaller housing options, including affordable options, with existing historic buildings scattered throughout the community.

#### Strategy 3 supports Type 1 strategic locations

The reuse of historic buildings through the Historic Heritage Overlay Designation would align with the Goal 4 for Type 1 housing options that include the reuse of existing buildings.

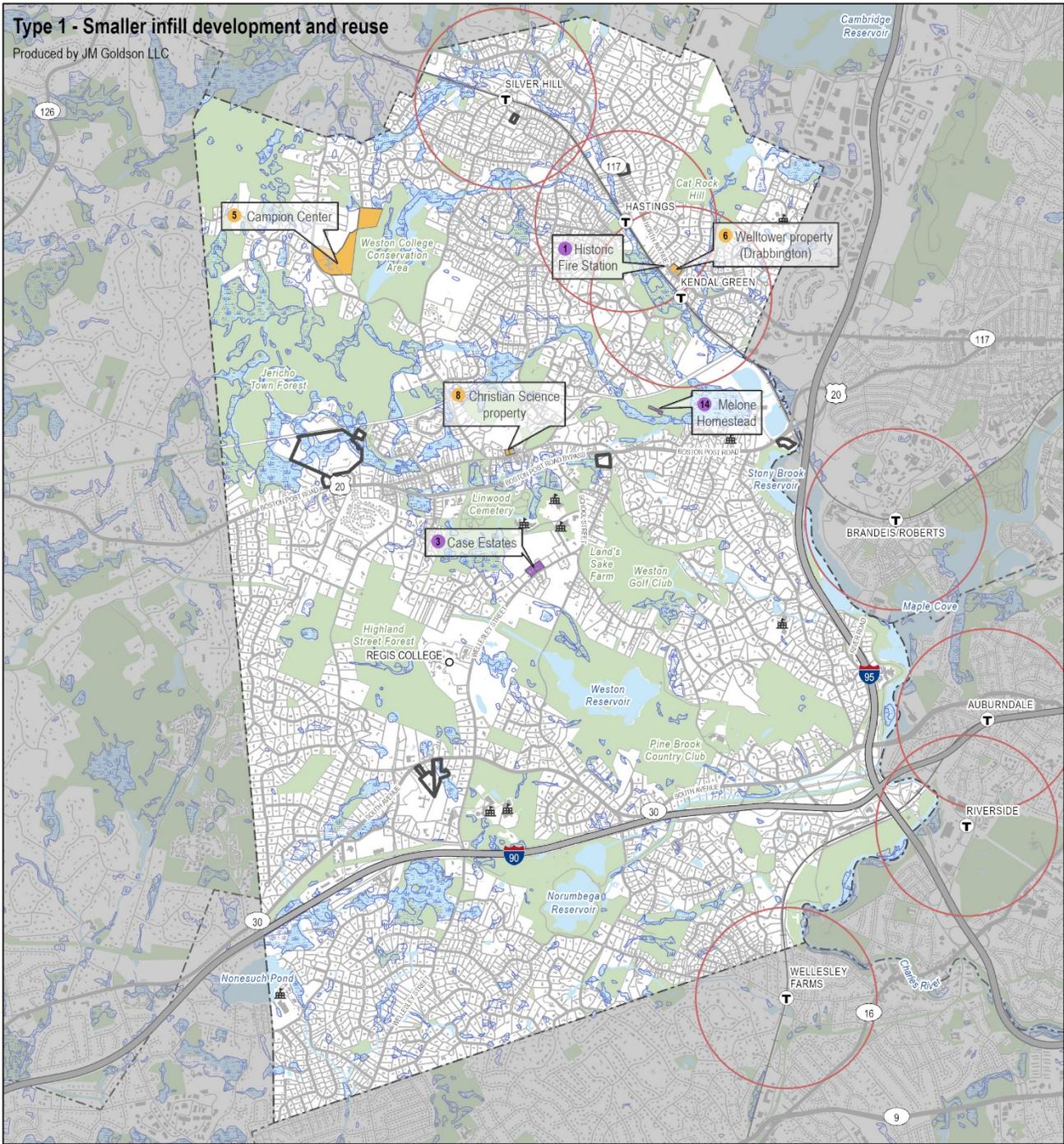
The map on the following page illustrates potential locations for **Type 1** strategies for smaller infill-type development and reuse of existing buildings allowed and encourage through zoning amendments.

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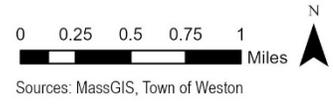
<sup>10</sup> National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

# Type 1 - Smaller infill development and reuse

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites
- MBTA stations (1/2 mile)
- Privately-Owned Land
- Town-Owned Land
- Wetlands



#### 4. Consider adopting more flexible zoning tools that can provide attractive local options to Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B.

Consider flexible zoning approaches to allow multiple housing types as alternatives to conventional single-family houses on larger properties as an attractive alternative to a 40B regulatory approach. For example, the Town may want to consider allowing cottages,<sup>11</sup> townhouses, two-family houses, and/or cohousing. See examples of these housing types in the Appendix.

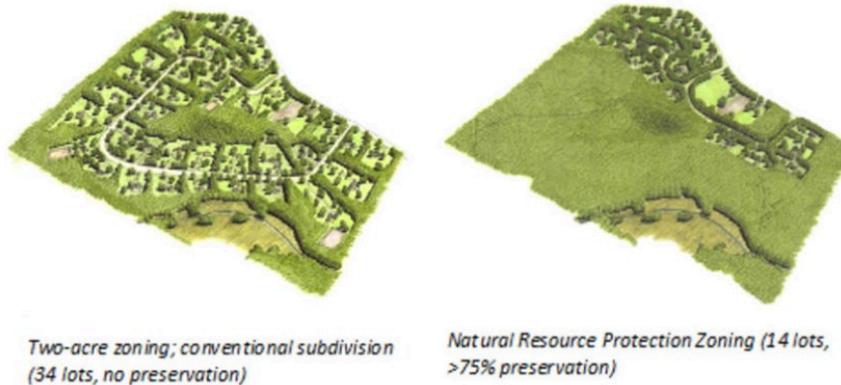
As part of this effort, work with an architect to create local, Weston-specific design standards and a design review process in coordination with Weston’s existing site plan review process to ensure architectural compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

**Strategy 4 supports Type 2 strategic locations**

Flexible zoning that allows multiple alternative housing types would align with the Goal 4 for Type 2 housing options for mid-sized development.

Many Massachusetts communities have flexible development standards to promote the creation of diverse housing options. For example, the Town of Wenham has Flexible Development Standards (Section 11.1) that also incorporate aspects of open space conservation, like Open Space Design/Natural Resource Protection zoning (OSD/NRPZ).

OSD/NRPZ is a tool to protect currently unprotected natural resources and open space. It includes elements of conservation subdivision regulations and cluster development bylaws and is used to regulate new subdivisions of land in a manner that maximizes the protection of natural resources (wetlands, forests, agriculture lands, open space) while providing for new construction and adequately compensating landowners. Such a bylaw could also incorporate [Low Impact Development standards](#) to better protect natural resources. Consider density bonus for including affordable units that count on the SHI and/or up to 150 percent AMI.



Source: Massachusetts Smart Growth Tool Kit

Consider targeting such flexible zoning for properties that meet specific criteria. Here are six larger properties in the Town that could be appropriate candidates for such flexible zoning tools, as shown on the Map for Type 2 Strategic Locations:

<sup>11</sup> As described in Daniel Parolek’s *Missing Middle Housing*, cottage-style housing is typically individual houses with a small footprint that are typically detached and oriented around a shared courtyard. Cottage communities sometimes have shared facilities such as a laundry room and storage space. There is not a set size for cottage-style housing, but they are typically smaller than an average single-family home. As an example, the cottages at Riverwalk in Concord, MA range from 1,340 to 1,760s.f. As another example, the cottages at Heritage Sands in Dennisport, MA range from 900 to 1,350 s.f.

- **#2. Adjacent to Merriam Village, 0 Merriam Street:** A smaller portion of this larger Town-owned property (about 3.68 total acres) that is located closest to the adjacent age-restricted affordable housing at Merriam Village could be designed as an extension of Merriam Village. There is an existing lease on this property. Preserving the open space, community gardens, and community farm uses on the larger property will be critical.
- **#4. Case Estates Parcels 2 and 9, 200 Ash Street:** This Town-owned property, the larger, southern portion of the Case Estates, is about 21.7 acres. The property, with flexible development, could serve as both open space with passive recreation uses (trails, and the like) and as a sensitively designed development that emphasizes open space and natural resource conservation.
- **#5. Campion Center Nursing Home (new development and historic reuse), 319 Concord Road:** The striking c. 1925 Campion Center, historically known as the Weston College Seminary, is a monumental Beaux Arts seminary that sits on a large property of about 29.65 acres along with the c.1906 Grant Walker Estate House. The property could have potential for a sensitively designed development that emphasizes open space and natural resource conservation through flexible zoning. If the current use of the property as a retirement home for priests is no longer viable in the future, this property could also provide an opportunity to create affordable/mixed-income housing through the reuse of the historic building.
- **#8. Christian Science Property (new development and historic reuse), 439 Boston Post Road:** This site, which is in Weston Town Center in the commercial areas, consists of two parcels totaling just under an acre. The eastern parcel includes an historic building that was built c. 1917 as Saint Peters Episcopal Church. The property could potentially support a combination of approaches – reusing the historic church building and constructing new housing on the adjacent parcel. Both lots are owned by the Christian Science Society. The property has ledge, posing wastewater and development challenges.
- **#9. Regis College property, 235 Wellesley Street:** This undeveloped property is approximately 59 acres and is on the eastern side of Wellesley Street, across from the Regis College campus. A portion of the property has wetlands and is within the 100-year flood area. This large property could provide an opportunity for a sensitively designed development that emphasizes open space and natural resource conservation through flexible development. The property is owned by Regis College.
- **#11. Pope St. John XXIII Property, 558 South Avenue:** This property is comprised of two parcels with a total area of about 36.22 acres and includes a seminary campus including residence areas, classrooms, offices, and a learning center. The campus appears to be primarily located in the central area of the property. There could be opportunity for sensitively designed development through flexible zoning on other portions of the property that would not interfere with the operations of the seminary and would be buffered from surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- **#14. Melone Homestead, 27 Crescent Street:** This historic property is Town-owned and the existing house is currently leased to Land's Sake for use as office space. The surrounding Sears Conservation Land is a mix of farmland and forest, and has been used to cultivate blight-resistant chestnut trees. If the offices relocate in the future, the existing structure could be returned to use as a single-family home and there could be an opportunity to build an additional single-family or duplex in other disturbed areas of the site.

**More information:**

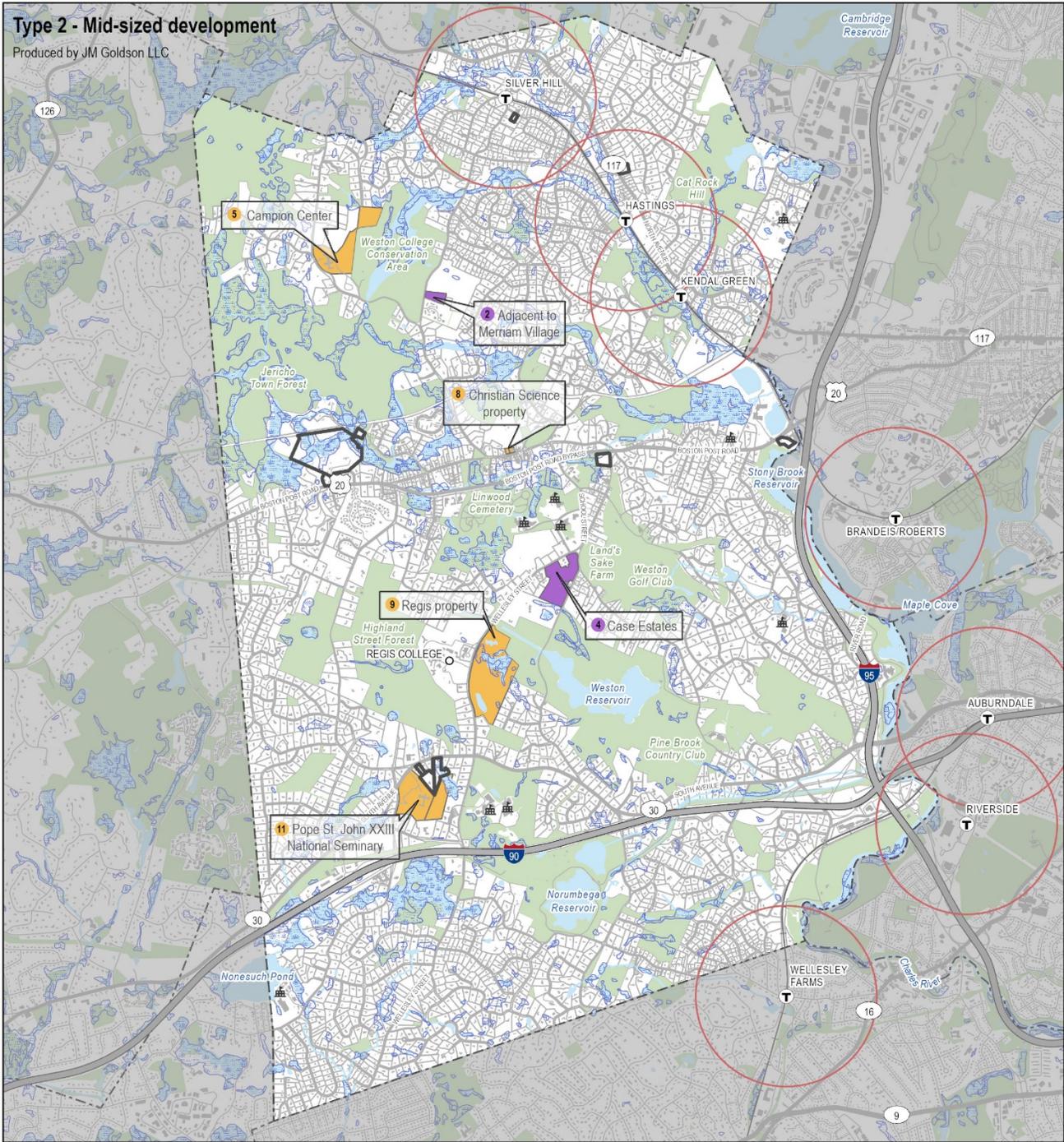
- Smart Growth Tool Kit: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit-modules-open-space-design-osdnatural-resource>

- CPTC Presentation: <https://masscptc.org/docs/conference-docs/2019/cptc-conf19-5-NRPZ2.PDF>
- Examples:
  - Wenham Zoning Bylaw Section 11.1: Flexible Development: <https://ecode360.com/31433378>
  - Concord Zoning Bylaw Section 10: Planned Residential Development: <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1389/Section-10-PDF?bidId=>
  - Lexington Zoning Bylaw Section 7.3: Planned Development Districts: <https://ecode360.com/27630422>

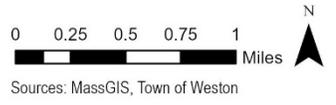
The map on the following page illustrates potential locations for **Type 2** strategies for mid-sized development through zoning amendments that allow a variety of housing options and creative site planning to better protect natural resources.

# Type 2 - Mid-sized development

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites
- MBTA stations (1/2 mile)
- Privately-Owned Land
- Town-Owned Land
- Wetlands



## 5. Consider adopting Inclusionary Zoning provisions

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) ties the development of market-rate housing with affordable housing units to help increase a community's supply of affordable units. This type of zoning policy can help a community maintain or increase its percentage of housing units that are eligible for the SHI. According to the MAPC Inclusionary Zoning and Payment in Lieu of Units Analysis, there are over 300 communities in the state that have enacted IZ provisions. As stated in the MAPC Analysis:

**Effective IZ is tailored to local market conditions and can set standards that do not overburden new development or negatively impact the pace of development, while also resulting in meaningful increases in affordable units.**

Consider options for Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) for Weston that would require that residential developments above a certain number of units or size include a minimum percentage of affordable units or an in-lieu payment to the Housing Trust. In addition, consider requiring an in-lieu payment for new houses over a certain size threshold, perhaps 5,999 s.f. to align with Weston's existing large homes provision.

As an example, the Town of Lincoln's IZ provisions require affordable housing units for any development or division of land that results in the creation of six or more dwelling units per the following schedule.

**14.5.2.1 This section shall be applied based on the following schedule for the number of units or lots in a proposed development:**

| <b># of dwelling units proposed</b> | <b># of affordable units to be constructed</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6 – 10 units                        | one affordable unit  |
| 11 – 18 units                       | two affordable units   |
| 19 – 24 units                       | three affordable units   |
| 25 – 30 units                       | four affordable units  |
| over 30 units                       | fifteen percent (15%) of the proposed project units rounded up to the nearest whole number |

### More information:

- MAPC, *Inclusionary Zoning and Payment in Lieu of Units Analysis*, prepared for the RHSO member towns of Acton, Bedford, Concord, and Lexington: [https://www.rhsohousing.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf421/f/uploads/final\\_report\\_-\\_rhs0\\_07.18.18.pdf](https://www.rhsohousing.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf421/f/uploads/final_report_-_rhs0_07.18.18.pdf)
- Grounded Solutions Network, *Advancing Racial Equity in Inclusionary Housing Programs: A Guide for Policy and Practice*, February 2021: <https://groundedsolutions.org/tools-for-success/resource-library/racial-equity-inclusionary-housing>
- Examples: MA Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit Case Studies: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/case-studies-inclusionary-zoning>

## 6. Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

An ADU is an apartment within or on the property with a single-family house. The property appears from the street to be a single-family, not a two-family house. As of the 2018 Pioneer Institute report, included as more information below, about 37 of 100 cities and towns surrounding Boston allow ADUs and an additional 31 allow ADUs only under temporary circumstances. As stated by AARP at its *All About Accessory Dwelling Units* website included as more information below:

***As small houses or apartments that exist on the same property lot as a single-family residence, ADUs play a major role in serving a national housing need. This traditional home type is re-emerging as an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike.***

Accessory apartments, either as an alteration to a single-family dwelling or conversion of a detached accessory building (garage, barn, or gate house) can help diversify a community's housing stock by providing smaller rental units for increasing numbers of smaller households. They are also typically more affordable and can provide income to cost burdened owners.

Although Weston's zoning under Section VI.G. allows both ADUs within a single-family dwelling and conversion of a detached accessory building to an ADU in any residence district, the bylaw is restrictive. It allows ADUs only by Special Permit and has numerous conditions further limiting the creation of ADUs.

Consider allowing more flexibility for property owners to create ADUs in Weston with the following zoning amendments:

- Allow ADUs as of right within the principal dwelling or an existing detached structure on the same and remove the requirement that the ADU approval lapses with the transfer of property
- Reduce the minimum size for of living area for the single-family dwelling to be eligible for creation of an ADUs from its current minimum of 3,000 s.f. (base proposed reduction on an analysis that considers the size of existing single-family dwellings)
- Allow new construction to include ADUs rather than limiting eligibility to houses in existence for 10 years
- Remove the requirement for ADUs to have no more than two bedrooms - these types of bedroom limitation raise fair housing concerns because such restrictions may have a discriminatory impact based on the presence of children in a household<sup>12</sup>

### More information:

- Pioneer Institute and Dain, Amy, *The State of Zoning for Accessory Dwelling Units*, White Paper No. 184, July 2018: <https://masmartgrowth.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ADU-MSGA-Pioneer-paper-2018.pdf>
- AARP, *All About Accessory Dwelling Units*: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2019/accessory-dwelling-units-adus.html>
- Examples:

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<sup>12</sup> As the Massachusetts Attorney General has pointed out in various letters to municipalities regarding zoning provisions that limit the number of bedrooms in housing units, both federal and state law prohibit discrimination in providing housing based on familial status. The Fair Housing Act phrase 'otherwise make unavailable or deny' encompasses a wide array of housing practices . . . and specifically targets the discriminatory use of zoning laws and restrictive covenants. Similarly, the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination law forbids discrimination in housing based on familial status.

- o MA Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit Modules: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit-modules-accessory-dwelling-units-adu>
- o Brewster Zoning Bylaw, Section 179-42.2 Accessory Single-Family Dwelling Units: <https://ecode360.com/34242666>

## 7. Consider ways to more explicitly allow congregate housing and co-living

Shared living arrangements are not a new idea but have clearly made a resurgence in today's society to help respond to the need for more affordable housing options. From millennials to seniors, shared living arrangements are in demand. However, local zoning regulations can provide barriers, sometimes just by not explicitly and clearly allowing for this type of use.

Note that Weston's Zoning Bylaw, Section B.1.e, currently limits co-living arrangements to not more than four persons not member of the family residing on the premises.

One example of shared living are contemporary co-living spaces that provide group living opportunities where residents share common areas and amenities. Congregate housing is another shared living environment designed to integrate the housing and services needs of elders and disabled individuals. Congregate housing will often house up to 16 people. Congregate housing can be a housing choice which accommodates later life-stages for an older population and provides supportive housing for individuals with disabilities.

It is important to note that despite the lack of zoning provisions for congregate housing or group homes, the Dover Amendment exempts educational uses from local zoning and programs and services that provide support, training, and skill building for persons with disabilities have been found to be educational in nature. Many congregate housing and group home facilities provide these kinds of services to residents, qualifying under the Dover Amendment.

In addition, federal laws prohibit municipalities from discriminating against persons with disabilities through their land use and zoning policies. The zoning bylaw could be amended to ensure consistency with these laws and to explicitly permit congregate housing in all districts that allow residential use and could also include provisions for co-living.

### More information:

- Example of zoning for congregate housing: Lexington Zoning Bylaw Section 6.6: <https://ecode360.com/27630209>
- Example of zoning for shared elderly housing: Barnstable Zoning Bylaw Section 240-47: <https://ecode360.com/6559606>

## 8. Consider a home rule petition to adopt a residential linkage fee for tear-down/rebuild developments

Modelled after Lexington's requested special legislation for a development surcharge for community housing, consider requesting special legislation to adopt a residential linkage fee for all new single residential construction building permits where an existing dwelling has been demolished to create a single building lot or multiple building lots.

Lexington's pending special legislation would set a such a linkage fee at a rate that is set by the Select Board on a dollars-per-square-foot basis. Lexington's surcharge could be added to the property taxes as 0 percent interest for in lieu of immediate payment. Property owners who redevelop parcels for

their own occupancy do not owe the surcharge after five years (so that the surcharge targets speculative development).

The purpose of such a linkage fee would primarily be as a revenue stream, likely for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust. As stated in the Lexington Town Meeting motion, the Town may want to enact this legislation for the purpose of funding the creation of community housing to mitigate the loss of moderate-income housing.

**More information:**

- Town of Lexington Motion for Special Town Meeting 2020-2, *Article 6, Authorize Special Legislation-Development Surcharge for Community Housing*:  
[https://www.lexingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3351/f/uploads/2020-2\\_art\\_6\\_reduce\\_surcharge\\_revised\\_10.29.20\\_posted.pdf](https://www.lexingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3351/f/uploads/2020-2_art_6_reduce_surcharge_revised_10.29.20_posted.pdf)

## 9. Update Weston Policies and Preferences

The Town created a working paper in 2010 with a set of policies that are intended to serve as guidance for affordable housing developers and Town boards that have a role in development review.

The Weston Affordable Housing Trust (WAHT) should update the *Weston Policies and Preferences for Affordable Housing* white paper to align with market feasibility and the recommendations in this HPP including evaluating the maximum density policy on page three of the white paper, which states a preference for up to four units per one acre. This low density is likely unfeasible in many cases for affordable housing in Weston, given market conditions.

Consider creating design guidelines, as mentioned in the previous strategy, to emphasize and illustrate the policy/preference for well-considered and executed architectural design.

**More information:**

- *Weston Policies and Preferences for Affordable Housing*:  
<https://www.weston.org/DocumentCenter/View/524/Policies-and-Preferences-for-Affordable-Housing-PDF>

## LOCAL INITIATIVE AND PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

Local initiative strategies refer to recommendations that the Town can undertake to foster the creation of more housing options, especially affordable housing. These initiatives are not regulatory in nature - they deal with allocation of Town resources including staff time, funding, and property.

### 10. Work with property owners to encourage friendly 40B/Local Initiative Program (LIP) development on strategic sites

Identify larger previously developed institutional or commercial properties with good highway access and limited residential abutters for potential higher density 40B development. Reach out to property owners of identified properties to determine interest in such development. These types of developments could be eligible for the Local Initiative Program (LIP), which is a state housing initiative administered by the state Department of Housing and Community Development to encourage communities to produce affordable housing. The program provides technical or other non-financial assistance to municipalities seeking to increase the supply of affordable housing. LIP-approved units are eligible for SHI inclusion.

The map on the following page identifies four privately-owned properties that could be strategic sites for such development:

- **#7. Boston Properties (Biogen), 133 Boston Post Road:** A roughly 74-acre property which was the subject of a prior development proposal that withdrew. The property is owned by BP Weston Quarry LLC. The MA Department of Environmental Protection indicates that this site is registered with an Activity and Use Limitation due to former quarry and asphalt operations. This property is within the Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA).<sup>13</sup>
- **#10. Wingate Property, 75 Norumbega Road:** About five-acres adjacent with a vacant nursing home complex. This property is partially within the IWPA.
- **#12. Liberty Mutual/Greatland Development Property, the "East Parcel":** This is a roughly 16-acre property near the Route 30 interchange on Interstate 95 that is within the IWPA. This property was the subject of a favorable Town Meeting vote in May 2021 to rezone the property as a new Office and Research and Development District. As part of an owner proposal to rezone the property the Town agreed to a land swap with the owner to consolidate two small parcels of Town owned land into one 1.38-acre parcel on which housing can be developed. The property owner also committed \$2 million to the Town which can be used for housing, \$5 million to improve pedestrian connectivity to the site, and \$100,000 for housing design development.
- **#13. Turnpike Property, 0 Riverside Road:** About 116 acres owned by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority that includes the highway right-of-way. This property is within the IWPA.

**Strategy 10 supports Type 3 strategic locations**

Potential friendly 40B Comprehensive Permit development on previously developed institutional or commercial properties with good highway access and limited residential abutters.

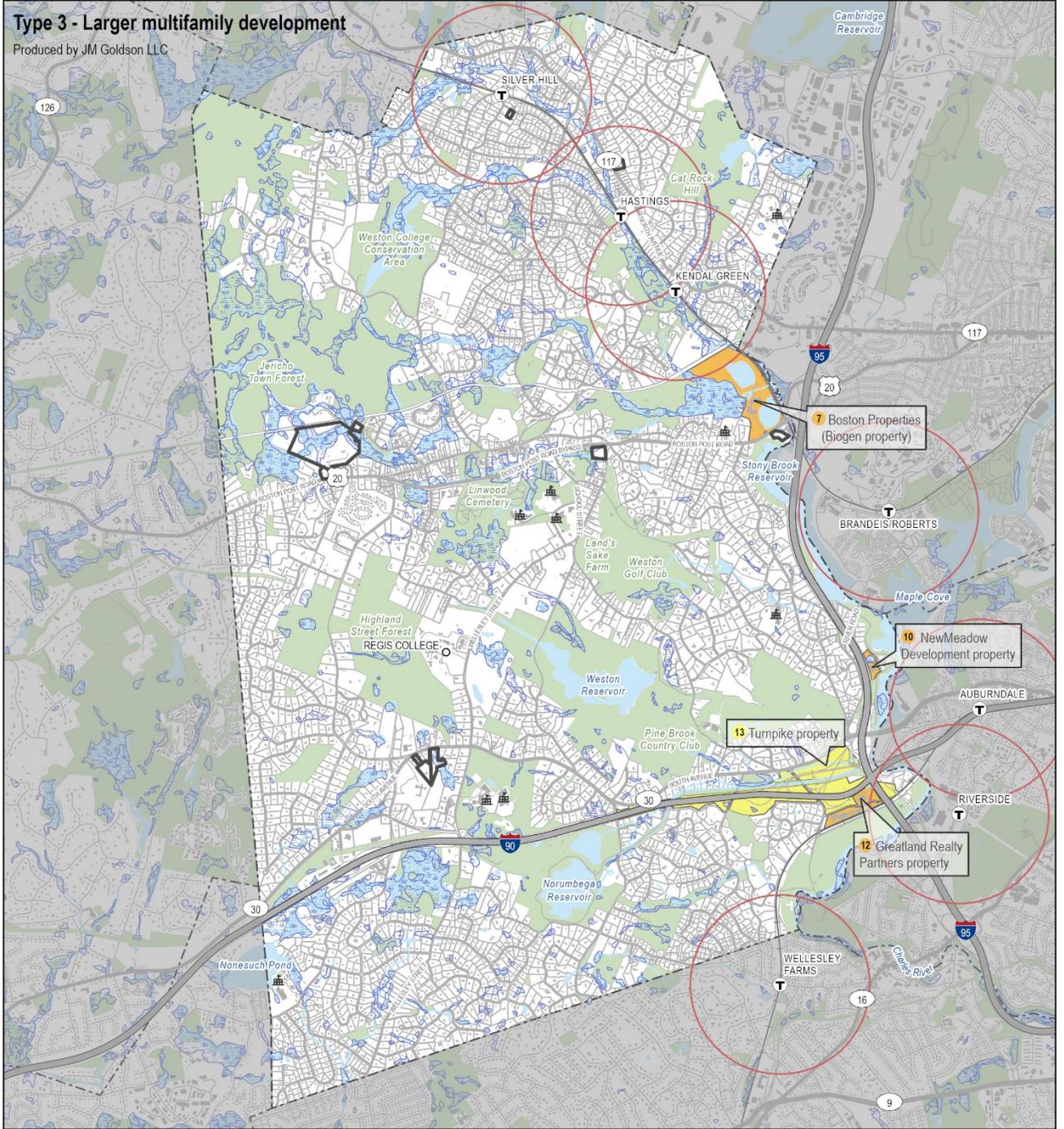
The map on the following page illustrates **Type 3** strategies for larger multifamily development on previously developed institutional or commercial properties with good access to highways and buffered from direct residential abutters through 40B Comprehensive Permit applications.

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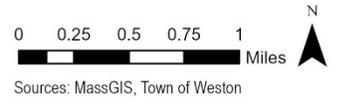
<sup>13</sup> Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA): The area of an aquifer that contributes water to a well under the most severe pumping and recharge conditions is known as the Zone II. For public supply wells that lack a MassDEP-approved Zone II, MassDEP applies an Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA). This is the area within a one-half-mile radius for sources whose approved pumping rate is 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) or greater. For smaller sources, the IWPA radius is proportional to the well's approved daily volume.

# Type 3 - Larger multifamily development

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- |                       |                    |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Interstate            | Schools            | MBTA stations (1/2 mile) |
| US or State Route     | Buildings          | Privately-Owned Land     |
| Local Road            | Water Bodies       | State-Owned Land         |
| Municipal Boundary    | Rivers             | Wetlands                 |
| Commuter Rail Line    | Open Space         |                          |
| Commuter Rail Station | Proposed 40B Sites |                          |



### 11. Expand Weston Affordable Housing Trust's Homeownership Opportunities Program

The Weston Affordable Housing Trust (WAHT) was established by Weston Town Meeting in 2011 and was formed as a municipal entity capable of seizing market opportunities and taking other initiatives to preserve and increase affordable housing.

Among the WAHT initiatives is the Homeownership Opportunities Program. The intention of the program is to seek opportunities to create affordable homeownership units through new construction or purchase/resale. The Town awarded \$950,000 of Community Preservation Act funds in 2018 to fund the program, a portion of which has supported the Trust's project at 0 Wellesley Street to develop six new homes with the selected developer – Habitat for Humanity of Greater Boston.



In addition to fostering small-scale new development, the Trust can also purchase existing market-rate units, convert to affordable units through permanent deed restrictions, and resell to income qualified households. The Trust should continue to work with a local realtor to seek properties including condominiums and vacant lots for this homeownership program.

### 12. Consider the possibility of supporting the Brook School expansion

The Brook School Apartments are located on School Street, within walking distance of Weston Center, the Council on Aging, the library, the Recreation Center, and the town pool. The property includes four buildings with 75 apartments, 55 of which are subsidized (51 are included on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)) and 20 market rate units. There are 73 one-bedroom units and two two-bedroom units. The property is overseen by the Elderly Housing Committee.

The expansion of Brook School was included in the prior HPP and is currently going through the process of feasibility and design review. The project, if approved, will create an additional 14

bedrooms in affordable housing units on the site that are anticipated to be eligible for including on the SHI.

The Town shall continue to evaluate the merits of the expansion and consider supporting this project with local CPA funds contingent the findings of the pending feasibility study, ability to secure other funding, and impacts to existing public benefits including public recreation space.

### **13. Continue to connect senior homeowners to existing programs that allow practical support to allow seniors to remain in their homes**

Continue to support the Council on Aging’s (COA) work to connect senior homeowners to existing home repair and improvement programs. To help low-income seniors afford to stay in their home as they age, it can be helpful to fund small repairs and safety improvements, including handicap accessibility improvements, and reduce property taxes—particularly through Home Modification Programs. It is important for seniors to have access to a network of qualified and reliable contractors and help with negotiating costs and scope of work.

There are a variety of programs in Massachusetts for qualifying homeowners to make needed repairs and improvements to their property—known as home modification programs. These programs can assist low/moderate-income homeowners and can help seniors remain independent in their homes with accessibility improvements.

Some programs and resources include: MassHousing Homeowner Improvement Loan Program, Get the Lead Out program, and Septic System Repair Loans; Habitat for Humanity ReStores; Rebuilding Together; MA Rehabilitation Commission; Veterans Affairs Regional Loan Center; USDA Rural Development Office; Department of Public Health Lead Poisoning Prevention Program; and a variety of Energy Efficiency programs

#### **More information:**

- US Housing and Urban Development Department Home Repairs by State: <https://www.hud.gov/states/massachusetts/homeownership/homerepairs>

## **CAPACITY, EDUCATION, AND COORDINATION**

The following strategies are recommendations for expanding the Town’s capacity to implement housing initiatives, promote education, and to coordinate housing initiatives with other local or regional entities.

### **14. Support the creation of a community organization focused on housing in Weston**

The Housing Trust, Regional Housing Services Office, and WAHFI should collaborate with the Select Board to establish a community organization based on the [CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative](#) (possibly work with the support of CHAPA, if able); This organization could be called “Housing Weston” and could collaborate with similar organization in nearby communities. This organization, although partially initiated through town actions, would be a separate independent community advocacy organization and would not be a town committee.

The primary intention of such a community group is to expand community education and outreach as well as for local housing advocacy. As CHAPA website explains: The Municipal Engagement Initiative (MEI) works with residents on the ground to change the conversation and support existing local efforts in favor of more affordable housing. Each city or town has its unique housing challenges, so the CHAPA program focuses on bringing together local businesses, civic groups, houses of worship,

and other groups and individuals that are active in their community to build coalitions of support for affordable housing production.

### **15. Increase the RHSO Housing Coordinator position to provide expanded services**

The equivalent of a full-time RHSO housing coordinator could help Weston in a variety of ways. Here are some ideas in addition to the current work of supporting the Trust and its ongoing and new initiatives:

- The coordinator could assist the Town Planner with reviews of 40B proposals or other proposals with affordable housing components including attending and voicing the Trust’s recommendations as part of the town review process.
- The coordinator could promote regular community outreach and engagement regarding housing needs and issues with public forums or other events as well as informational materials.
- The coordinator could continue to work to coordinate and support the work of other entities in Town working to promote housing, such as the Council on Aging or relevant subcommittees.
- The RHSO Coordinator would be a focal point for different organizations, residents and entities interested in assessing housing needs, options, and potential development. The RHSO would pull together the necessary entities to assess such options.

### **16. Increase revenue for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust**

Consider ways to increase regular, predictable revenue streams to the housing trust. One idea is to work with the CPC to reconsider the relationship between CPC/CPA and the housing trust. One consideration is for the housing trust to become the “housing arm” of the CPC. In this model, all CPA funds that are allocated for housing would be included in annual budget to the Housing Trust. No annual application would be necessary. CPC and Trust membership would, ideally, overlap, which increases regular communication and collaboration. This model has an expectation of standard designated percent allocation of CPA funds to the Trust annually, which would consist of all intended CPA housing funds. Housing applicants would apply solely to the Trust in this model rather than going to both boards to request funding.

In addition, to increase revenue streams, the Town could establish a policy that a portion of sales of tax title property could be allocated for the trust (or properties could also be transferred to the trust for future development). The Trust can also accept private donations of funds and/or land to increase its resources.

### **17. Continue membership in the RHSO**

Weston is a member of the Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO). The RHSO includes the towns of Acton, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Maynard, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. The RHSO provides affordable housing support and information to member communities and citizens looking to live in the region.

The RHSO provides four core housing services: 1) monitoring affordable developments; 2) administering the HOME Program; 3) provide local support including consultation on affordable housing projects; and 4) regional activities such as providing programs to residents, assisting communities with regional linkages, and maintaining the RHSO website.

# ACTION PLAN

The Town Manager’s office intends to assemble a committee to coordinate and oversee implementation of the HPP. It is anticipated that the committee would consist of the WAHT chair, Planning Board chair, Town Planner, and Town Manager. The matrix below provides detailed information on responsible and supporting entities and a suggested timeframe to implement the housing strategies.

**Abbreviations Used the in Matrix Below:**

BI = Building Inspector  
 COA = Council on Aging  
 CPC = Community Preservation Committee  
 EHC = Elderly Housing Committee  
 HC = Historic Commission

PB= Planning Board  
 RHSO = Regional Housing Services Office  
 SB= Select Board  
 TP = Town Planner  
 WAHT = Weston Affordable Housing Trust

| Type                                  | #  | Housing Strategy   | FY2022 | FY2023 | FY2024 | FY2025 | FY2026 | Responsible Entity | Supporting Entities |
|---------------------------------------|----|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Planning, Policies, & Zoning          | 1  | Join with neighboring and similar MBTA communities to create a Housing Choice Working Group  |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | SB<br>TP            |
|                                       | 2  | Consider adopting a Historic Reuse Overlay District with Affordability Requirements  |        |        |        |        |        | HC                 | BI<br>PB<br>TP      |
|                                       | 3  | Consider creating a Historic Heritage Overlay Designation with Affordability Incentives  |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | TP                  |
|                                       | 4  | Consider adopting more flexible zoning tools that can provide attractive local options to Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B. |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | TP                  |
|                                       | 5  | Consider adopting Inclusionary Zoning provisions   |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | TP                  |
|                                       | 6  | Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)   |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | TP                  |
|                                       | 7  | Consider ways to more explicitly allow congregate housing and co-living  |        |        |        |        |        | PB                 | TP                  |
|                                       | 8  | Consider a home rule petition to adopt a residential linkage fee for tear-down/rebuild developments                                |        |        |        |        |        | SB                 | BI                  |
|                                       | 9  | Update Weston Policies and Preferences   |        |        |        |        |        | WAHT               | TP                  |
| Local Initiatives & Programmatic      | 10 | Work with property owners to encourage friendly 40B development/LIP on strategic sites   |        |        |        |        |        | SB                 | TP<br>PB            |
|                                       | 11 | Expand Weston Affordable Housing Trust’s Homeownership Opportunities Program   |        |        |        |        |        | WAHT               | CPC<br>RHSO         |
|                                       | 12 | Consider the possibility of supporting the Brook School expansion  |        |        |        |        |        | EHC                | CPC                 |
|                                       | 13 | Continue to connect senior homeowners to existing programs that allow practical support to allow seniors to remain in their homes  |        |        |        |        |        | COA                | RHSO                |
| Capacity, Education, and Coordination | 14 | Support the creation of a community organization focused on housing in Weston  |        |        |        |        |        | SB                 | WAHT                |
|                                       | 15 | Increase the RHSO Housing Coordinator position to provide expanded services  |        |        |        |        |        | SB                 | CPC<br>WAHT<br>RHSO |
|                                       | 16 | Increase revenue for the Weston Affordable Housing Trust   |        |        |        |        |        | WAHT               | CPC<br>SB           |
|                                       | 17 | Continue membership in the RHSO  |        |        |        |        |        | SB                 | RHSO                |

# CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

An analysis of local demographic data and housing stock reveals key characteristics and trends in Weston that help explain housing needs and demand. To understand how the town compares to similar communities, Weston data is compared to the following municipalities: Acton, Bedford, Concord, Dover, Framingham, Lexington, Lincoln, Natick, Sherborn, Sudbury, Wayland, and Wellesley. Weston data will also be compared at times to Middlesex County and to Massachusetts to provide a broader regional context for Weston. Ultimately, this section will provide the framework for housing production goals and strategies to address local housing concerns included later in this document.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Growth is outpacing projections - Weston's population has grown faster in recent years than projections from both the Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC) and UMass Donohue Institute.
- Growing number of older residents - The over-65 population grew 23 percent since the 2010 Census.
  - Over half (52 percent) of those over 65 earn \$74,999 or less per year
  - 21 percent report a disability
- Population continues to be majority white - with some modest increases in racial and ethnic diversity.
- Weston households are predominately comprised of families - About 79.4 percent of current households are families (meaning two or more related individuals living together). This is consistent with adjacent communities of Wellesley, Wayland, and Lexington. However, only 38 percent of total households have children under 18.
- Household size increased - Between 2010 and 2018 the general population grew by 5.8 percent, but the number of households only increased by 2.2 percent.
- School Enrollment Declining - Slowly, but steadily declining since 2013.
- Weston is home to households earning a wide range of income levels - Family households' median income is \$232,500, but much lower for non-family households at \$32,037.

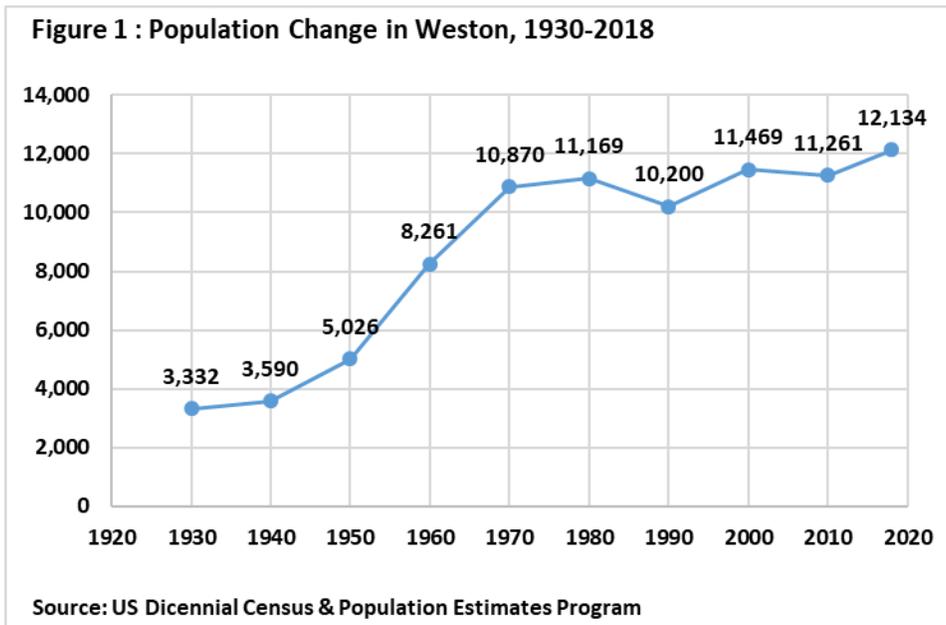
## DEMOGRAPHICS

This Housing Production Plan is grounded in a thorough examination of Weston’s demographic makeup. An analysis of the current population, household composition, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment provides insight into the existing housing needs and demand. Projections of Weston’s future residential composition help inform housing planning efforts.

### POPULATION

Weston’s population grew from 3,332 in 1930 to 12,134 as of 2018, most of that growth occurring in the years following World War II, between 1950 and 1970, when Weston’s population more than doubled from 5,026 to 10,870. Growth has been more modest since 1970, with both periods of increasing and decreasing population. Population decreased between 1980 and 1990, and again between 2000 and 2010. Population grew by 8 percent between 2010 and 2018, and population in 2018 exceeded the previous population peak in 2000 by 665 people. Figure 1 below provides a graphic representation of the population changes over time. Although Weston has experienced dips in population during some past decades, Census data reports that the population has been growing consistently since 2010, and it is now outpacing projections.

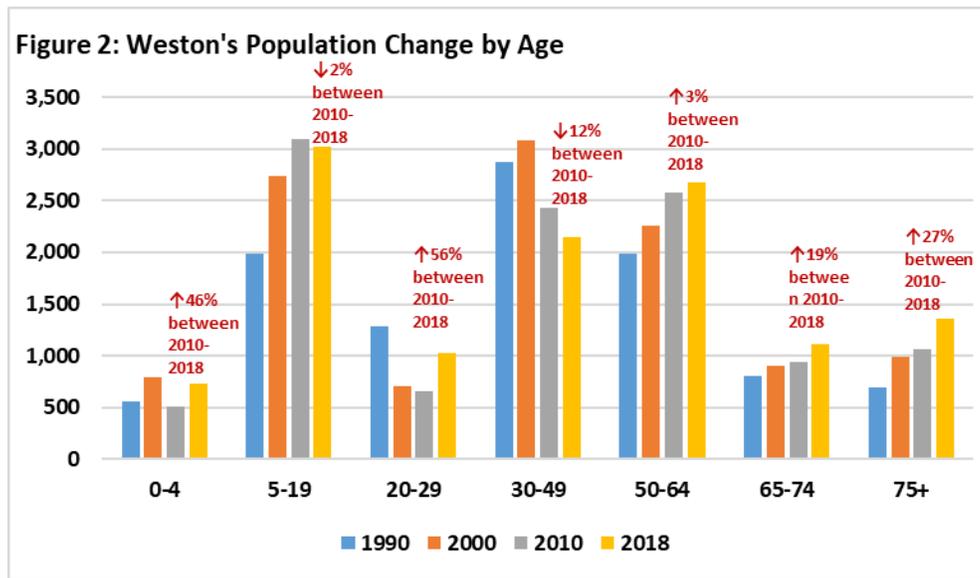
The most recent projections available come from the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI). UMDI produces population projections for all Massachusetts municipalities, and their data and model were updated in 2018. However, as of 2018, the Census Bureau reports that Weston’s official population was 12,134, higher than UMDI’s population projections for 2020 (10,634), 2030 (9,865), and 2040 (9,820) Since the official population of Weston is already greater than these commonly used sources for projections, they are not accurate in the case of Weston, and they will not be used in this plan.



### Distribution of Population by Age

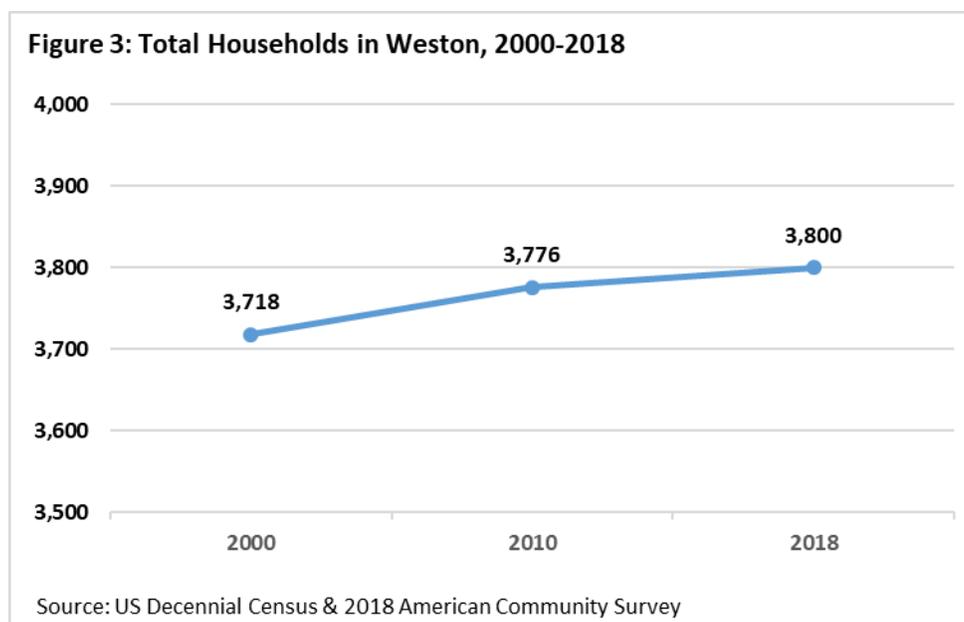
The increase in Weston’s population is not spread equally across age groups. The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) provides the best information about age groups and is shown in Figure 2 below. Almost all age categories grew, except for ages 5-19 and ages 30-49, which experienced modest declines. As is characteristic of many municipalities in the region, Weston’s population is aging. However, the increases in the older population are not as stark as in other municipalities. The 65-74 age group has grown by 19 percent since 2010, and the 75+ age group has grown by 27 percent. However, the biggest increases in

population since 2010 have taken place in younger age groups. The 0-4 age group has grown by 46 percent since 2010, and the 20-29 age group has grown by 56 percent during that time.



### HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The number and types of households in a community could be considered even more important than population since the number and type of households within a community, along with household spending power correlate to housing unit demand. Each household resides in one dwelling unit, regardless of the number of household members. According to the U.S. Census, Weston was home to 3,718 households in 2000. By 2010, the number of households grew slightly to 3,776 – this constitutes only a 1.6 percent increase. The number of households has grown even less since 2010, rising by only 82 households to 3,800 according to the 2018 ACS. Interestingly, population over that period outpaced the number of households with an increase of 665 or 5.8 percent.



## Family & Non-Family Households

Different household types often have different housing needs or preferences. For example, a single senior will prefer a smaller dwelling unit than a family with children. A municipality's composition of household types can indicate how well suited the existing housing inventory is to current and future residents.

The Town of Weston's 3,800 households can be divided between families and non-families per Census categories. The Census defines families as any household with two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together (including multi-generational families), regardless of whether there are children living in the household. Non-families include one-person households and households comprised of two or more non-related persons living together. Weston's households are primarily families (79 percent).

Of Weston's family households, most are married (87 percent) and a little under half have children under the age of 18 (48 percent). Of the non-family households, 90 percent are single-person households and 68 percent of nonfamily householders are 65 years of age or older.

**Table 1: Weston Households by Type**

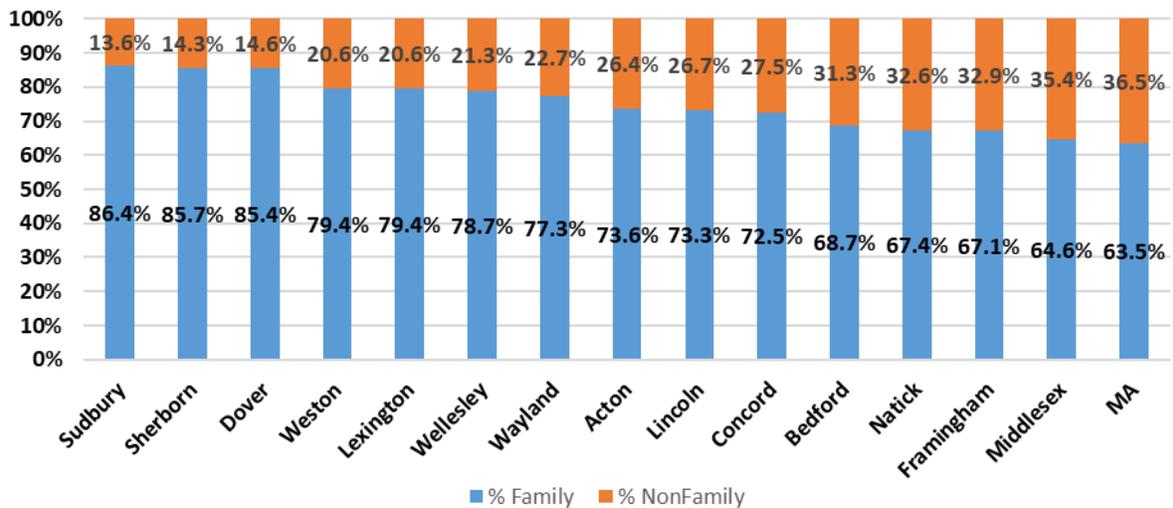
|                              | # of Households | % of Total   |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Family Households</b>     | <b>3018</b>     | <b>79.4%</b> |
| With children under 18 years | 1,462 (48.4%)   |              |
| Without children under 18    | 1,556 (51.6%)   |              |
| <b>Nonfamily Households</b>  | <b>782</b>      | <b>20.6%</b> |
| Householder living alone     | 703 (90%)       |              |
| <b>Total Households</b>      | <b>3800</b>     |              |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey

It is useful to evaluate Weston against similar towns in the region to see how the town compares to certain data points. For the purposes of this HPP, Weston will be compared to Acton, Bedford, Concord, Dover, Framingham, Lexington, Lincoln, Natick, Sherborn, Sudbury, Wayland, and Wellesley. Though no town has identical characteristics to Weston, these towns are all geographically close to Weston and represent a diversity in terms of density, population, median income, and town size.

Looking at housing type, Weston is similar in percentage of family households to the neighboring communities of Lexington, Wellesley, and Wayland. However, when compared to other towns as well as Middlesex County and Massachusetts, Weston has a smaller percentage of non-family households.

**Figure 4: Regional Households by Type**



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

### Head of Household by Age

In addition to household type, the age of heads of households can indicate demand for particular unit types and sizes. The most recent census information shows that the largest group of Weston householders is age 65+ (35 percent). The next largest populations are householders aged 55-64 (24 percent) and householders aged 45-54 (24 percent). This means that the head of household in 59 percent of households is 55 or older. The two younger householder groups are the smallest, making up only 17 percent of all householders. The older household groups have been increasing consistently since 2000, while the younger householder groups have been decreasing.

**Table 2: Weston Head of Household by Age**

| Age of Householder | 2000         | % of Total Households, 2000 | 2010         | % of Total Households, 2010 | 2018         | % of Total Households, 2018 | Change 2000-2018 | Change 2010-2018 |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Under 35           | 166          | 4%                          | 109          | 3%                          | 41           | 1%                          | (125)            | -75.3%           |
| 35-44              | 829          | 22%                         | 541          | 14%                         | 605          | 16%                         | (224)            | -27.0%           |
| 45-54              | 981          | 26%                         | 1,100        | 29%                         | 921          | 24%                         | (60)             | -6.1%            |
| 55-64              | 699          | 19%                         | 820          | 22%                         | 918          | 24%                         | 219              | 31.3%            |
| 65+                | 1,043        | 28%                         | 1,206        | 32%                         | 1,315        | 35%                         | 272              | 26.1%            |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>3,718</b> |                             | <b>3,776</b> |                             | <b>3,800</b> |                             |                  |                  |

Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census & 2018 American Community Survey

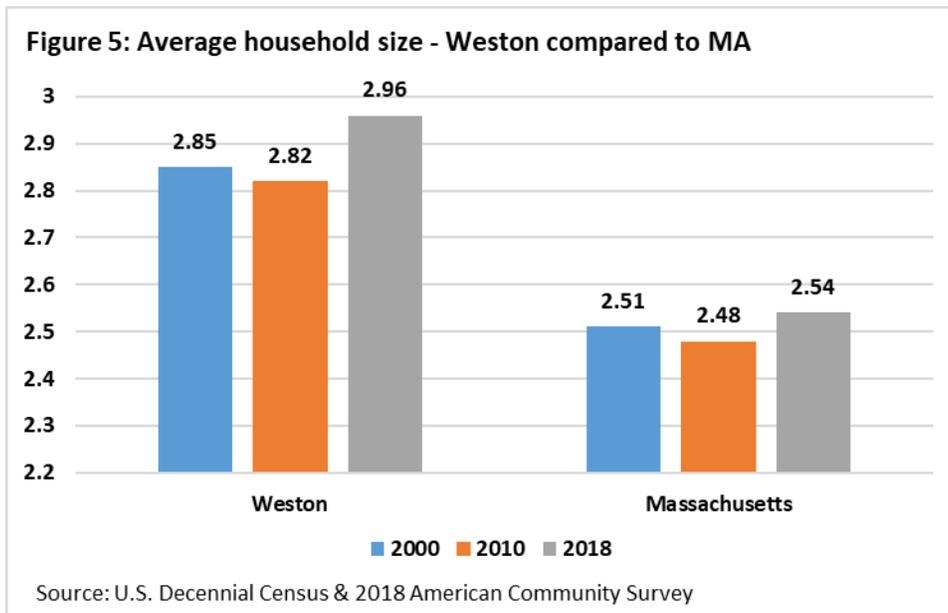
### Household Size

According to the decennial census, average household size decreased from 2.85 people in 2000 to 2.82 in 2010, but then increased to 2.96 as of the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. Owner-occupied household size decreased from 2000 to 2010, from 3.01 to 2.97, but then increased to 3.03 according to the 2018 ACS. The size of renter-occupied households increased, from 1.87 to 1.91, between 2000 and 2010, and then increased quite a bit to 2.48 as of 2018 ACS data.

|                           | 2000 | 2010 | 2018 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|
| Overall Households        | 2.85 | 2.82 | 2.96 |
| Owner-Occupied Households | 3.01 | 2.97 | 3.03 |
| Renter-Occupied Household | 1.87 | 1.91 | 2.48 |

Source: US Decennial Census & 2018 American Community Survey

Weston household size is consistently larger than Massachusetts overall – see Figure 5 below.



## RACE & ETHNICITY

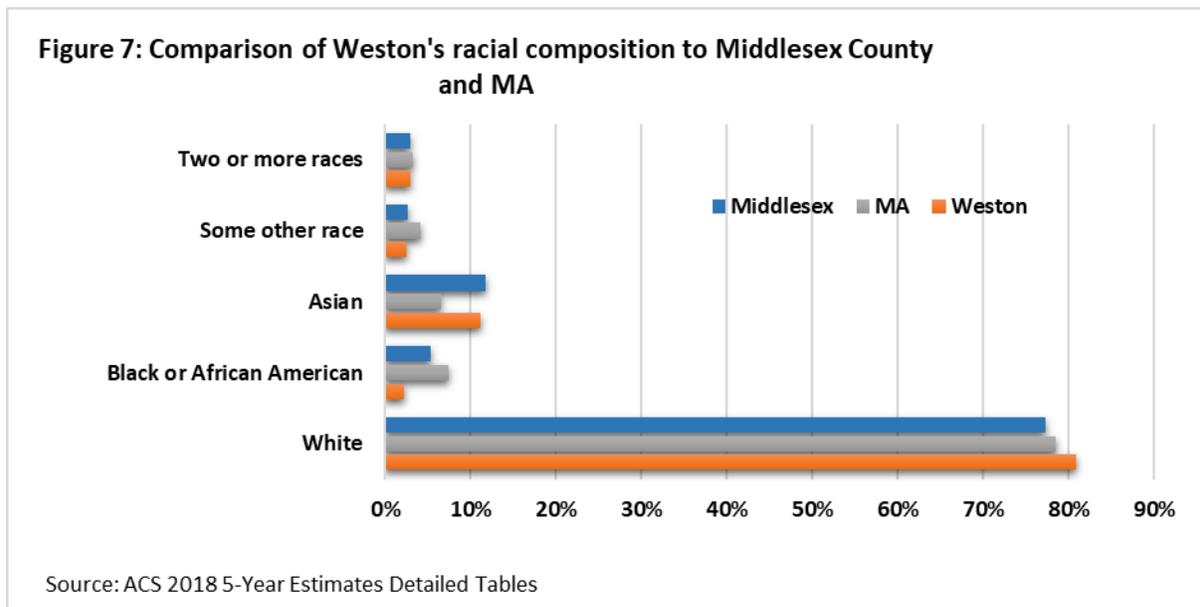
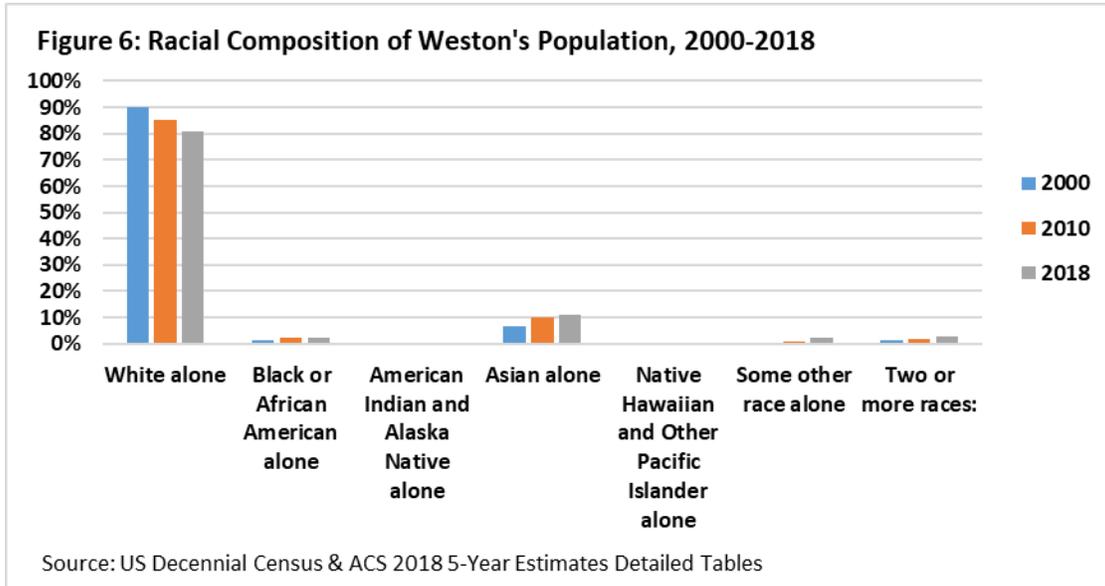
The racial composition of Weston has experienced changes since 2000. Looking at U.S. Census data from 2000 and 2010, and the most recent 2018 ACS data, the percentage of white people who comprise Weston’s population dropped from over 90 percent in 2000 to 85 percent in 2010, to 81 percent in the 2018 ACS. In actual numbers, there were 10,352 white residents in 2000, 9,611 in 2010, and 9,768 per the recent ACS.

During this time, the greatest increase in the non-white population was in residents of Asian descent. There has been a 72 percent increase in the number of Asian residents – from 7 percent of the population in 2000 to 11 percent of the population per 2018 ACS statistics, or an additional 606 people of Asian descent. It is important to note that Asian is a broad category that includes the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent including, for example, China, Taiwan, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The other non-white populations in Weston have experienced less change during this period and remain between 1 percent and 3 percent of the total population. The number of Hispanic or Latino<sup>14</sup> residents in Weston, who include people from all races, has shown a bit of a higher rate of growth. Hispanic/Latino residents represented 1.9 percent of Weston’s population in 2000, 2.6 percent in 2010, and are 4.5 percent

<sup>14</sup> Hispanic or Latino is the term used by the U.S. Census Bureau to refer to persons of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Although the term Latinx is a gender-neutral term that is now often preferred, the Census still uses Hispanic or Latino, so those terms will be used here.

of the population per 2018 ACS statistics. Comparatively, 2018 ACS data about Massachusetts overall shows that the African American population comprises 8 percent, and the Hispanic population comprises 12 percent of MA's total population. To summarize, the white population still comprises a large majority of Weston's residents at 81 percent, but non-white residents have been slowly and steadily increasing. The charts below show the changes in Weston's racial composition and how Weston's current racial composition compares to that of Middlesex County and Massachusetts as a whole.



## DISABILITY

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a disability as a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. Residents with one or more disabilities can face housing challenges if there is a shortage of housing in a community that is affordable, physically accessible, and/or provides the supportive services that people with disabilities may need. According to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), 6 percent of Weston's civilian, non-institutionalized population report having one or more disabilities. This includes 1 percent of

children under 18 years of age, and 3 percent of the population aged 18 to 64 years of age. Notably, 21 percent of Weston’s 65 and older population reported having one or more disabilities.

Weston’s disability rate of 3 percent among its younger adult population (18-64 years of age) is lower than the rates for the younger adult populations in Middlesex County and Massachusetts, 7 percent, and 9 percent respectively. Weston’s rates of disability among children and among adults over 65 are also lower than the rates in Middlesex County and Massachusetts. The table below provides more details.

**Table 3: Population by Disability Status 2018**

|  | Weston   |         | Middlesex County |         | Massachusetts |         |
|--|----------|---------|------------------|---------|---------------|---------|
|  | Estimate | Percent | Estimate         | Percent | Estimate      | Percent |
| Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population | 11,950   |         | 1,600,272        |         | 6,830,796     |         |
| With a Disability                              | 747      | 6%      | 152,049          | 10%     | 791,132       | 12%     |
| Under 18 years                                 | 3,245    |         | 318,278          |         | 1,364,881     |         |
| With a Disability                              | 40       | 1%      | 12,808           | 4%      | 62,885        | 5%      |
| 18 to 64 years                                 | 6,330    |         | 1,042,373        |         | 4,362,578     |         |
| With a Disability                              | 201      | 3%      | 69,344           | 7%      | 384,133       | 9%      |
| 65 years and over                              | 2,375    |         | 239,621          |         | 1,103,337     |         |
| With a Disability                              | 506      | 21%     | 69,897           | 29%     | 344,114       | 31%     |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

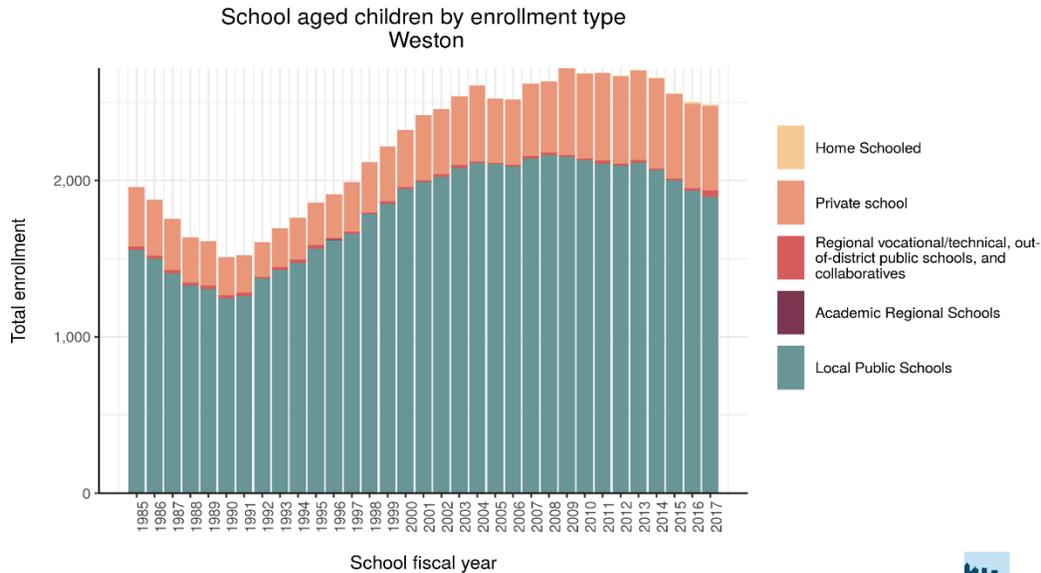
According to RHSO & DHCD records, Weston does not have any housing units on its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that are managed by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for people with developmental disabilities, or by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for people with mental health disabilities. There are also no privately owned developments that offer housing for people with disabilities. There are two developments, Brook School and Merriam Village, that offer housing to the 65+ population, but not specifically to people with disabilities.

## EDUCATION

### Enrollment

Enrollment in the Weston Public Schools provides additional insight into recent population and economic trends within town. The chart below shows that Weston’s school enrollment rose steeply through the 1990’s but began experiencing small ups and downs starting in the mid-2000’s. Enrollment has been slowly, but steadily declining since 2013.

**Figure 7: School Aged Children by Enrollment Type**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Weston Public Schools makes annual enrollment projections based on a commonly used projection method that calculates the ratio of births to kindergarten enrollments and grade-to-grade ratios over a period. A report on their most recent projections shows that enrollment is expected to decrease every year through 2029. The report also provides several useful facts and information, including the following:

- Weston Public School students are comprised of the following: 89.4 percent Weston residents, 8 percent METCO students, and 2.6 percent children of faculty and staff.
- Town Census figures report that the overall population of pre-Kindergarten aged children generally declined since 2000, but January 2018 saw a 4.62 percent increase, and January 2019 saw an additional 7.4 percent increase in pre-K aged children.
- In 2019-2020, Weston Public Schools experienced an overall decrease of 64 students from the previous year.
- Another decrease of 34 students was projected for the current 2020-21 school year. <sup>15</sup>

The chart above also demonstrates that a significant portion of Weston’s children attend private school instead of Weston Public Schools, and that the portion has been increasing in recent decades. According to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the percentage of Weston’s children who attended private schools in the past few decades is as follows:

- 2000 – 16 percent of Weston’s 2,323 school children
- 2010 – 20 percent of Weston’s 2,683 school children
- 2017 – 22 percent of Weston’s 2,485 school children

There was a total of 198 fewer school children in Weston in 2017 than in 2010, but there were 235 fewer children in the Weston Public Schools – 2,132 in 2010 versus 1,897 in 2017. This was because the number of Weston children attending private schools remained basically unchanged, and there was also an increase in the number of children attending regional vocational/technical schools. The significant decrease in the number of children attending Weston Public Schools indicates that the schools have excess capacity.

<sup>15</sup> Weston Public Schools enrollment report, accessed 10/14/20 at <https://www.westonschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-2020-Enrollment-Report.pdf>

**Figure 8: Weston Public Schools - Enrollment History (2015-2016 to 2019-2020) and Projection (2020-2021 to 2028-2029)**

| Year                 |              | 2010          | 2011         | 2012         | 2013         | 2014         | 2015         | 2016         | 2017         | 2018         | 2019         | 2020         | 2021         | 2022         | 2023         |  |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Weston Birth Data    | Multiplier   | 66            | 59           | 60           | 55           | 55           | 53           | 70           | 71           | 68           |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| School Year          | 3 year ratio | 2015/16       | 2016/17      | 2017/18      | 2018/19      | 2019/20      | 2020/21      | 2021/22      | 2022/23      | 2023/24      | 2024/25      | 2025/26      | 2026/27      | 2027/28      | 2028/29      |  |
| Grades               |              | <b>ACTUAL</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| Grade preK           |              | 42            | 42           | 47           | 45           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           | 44           |  |
| Grade K              | 2.21         | 127           | 129          | 118          | 139          | 128          | 126          | 126          | 126          | 126          | 125          | 126          | 126          | 126          | 126          |  |
| Grade 1              | 1.04         | 138           | 133          | 138          | 122          | 140          | 133          | 131          | 131          | 131          | 131          | 131          | 131          | 131          | 131          |  |
| Grade 2              | 1.04         | 131           | 153          | 141          | 141          | 126          | 145          | 139          | 136          | 136          | 135          | 136          | 136          | 136          | 135          |  |
| Grade 3              | 1.05         | 175           | 134          | 158          | 152          | 146          | 132          | 152          | 144          | 142          | 142          | 142          | 142          | 142          | 142          |  |
| Grade 4              | 0.99         | 156           | 190          | 135          | 152          | 154          | 145          | 131          | 151          | 143          | 141          | 141          | 141          | 141          | 141          |  |
| Grade 5              | 1.03         | 160           | 157          | 190          | 148          | 151          | 158          | 149          | 134          | 155          | 147          | 145          | 145          | 146          | 145          |  |
| Grade 6              | 0.99         | 174           | 165          | 160          | 181          | 149          | 149          | 156          | 147          | 133          | 154          | 145          | 143          | 143          | 143          |  |
| Grade 7              | 0.99         | 178           | 168          | 159          | 160          | 180          | 147          | 147          | 154          | 145          | 131          | 151          | 143          | 141          | 141          |  |
| Grade 8              | 0.98         | 173           | 181          | 165          | 156          | 158          | 177          | 145          | 145          | 152          | 143          | 129          | 149          | 141          | 139          |  |
| Grade 9              | 0.99         | 206           | 171          | 173          | 164          | 159          | 156          | 175          | 143          | 143          | 150          | 141          | 128          | 147          | 139          |  |
| Grade 10             | 1.00         | 149           | 201          | 171          | 169          | 166          | 158          | 155          | 174          | 142          | 143          | 149          | 140          | 127          | 147          |  |
| Grade 11             | 1.00         | 181           | 147          | 199          | 173          | 168          | 166          | 158          | 155          | 174          | 142          | 142          | 149          | 140          | 127          |  |
| Grade 12             | 1.00         | 191           | 186          | 150          | 201          | 170          | 169          | 166          | 159          | 156          | 175          | 143          | 143          | 149          | 141          |  |
| <b>Total</b>         |              | <b>2,181</b>  | <b>2,157</b> | <b>2,104</b> | <b>2,103</b> | <b>2,039</b> | <b>2,005</b> | <b>1,974</b> | <b>1,943</b> | <b>1,922</b> | <b>1,903</b> | <b>1,865</b> | <b>1,860</b> | <b>1,854</b> | <b>1,841</b> |  |
| Country School       |              | 316           | 300          | 303          | 311          | 298          | 296          | 301          | 296          | 295          | 295          | 295          | 295          | 295          | 295          |  |
| Woodland School      |              | 297           | 291          | 299          | 288          | 286          | 284          | 290          | 284          | 283          | 283          | 283          | 283          | 283          | 283          |  |
| Field School         |              | 316           | 347          | 325          | 300          | 305          | 303          | 280          | 286          | 299          | 288          | 286          | 286          | 286          | 286          |  |
| Weston Middle School |              | 525           | 514          | 484          | 497          | 487          | 473          | 448          | 446          | 430          | 428          | 426          | 436          | 426          | 423          |  |
| Weston High School   |              | 727           | 705          | 693          | 707          | 663          | 649          | 655          | 631          | 615          | 609          | 575          | 560          | 564          | 554          |  |

### Educational Attainment

According to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), 82 percent of Weston residents 25 years or older have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher educational attainment. On the other end of the spectrum, the rate of incomplete high school education is an extremely low 1 percent. The percentage of people who completed high school, but nothing higher, is 9 percent, and the percentage of people with some college or an associate degree is 7 percent.

**Table 4: Educational Attainment, Age 25+**

|                                 | Weston   |         | Middlesex County |         | Massachusetts |         |
|---------------------------------|----------|---------|------------------|---------|---------------|---------|
|                                 | Estimate | Percent | Estimate         | Percent | Estimate      | Percent |
| Less than high school diploma   | 77       | 1%      | 76,765           | 7%      | 454,360       | 10%     |
| High school graduate            | 717      | 9%      | 218,287          | 20%     | 1,150,846     | 24%     |
| Some college/Associate's degree | 554      | 7%      | 205,211          | 18%     | 1,105,887     | 23%     |
| Bachelor's degree or higher     | 6,242    | 82%     | 616,179          | 55%     | 2,037,702     | 43%     |

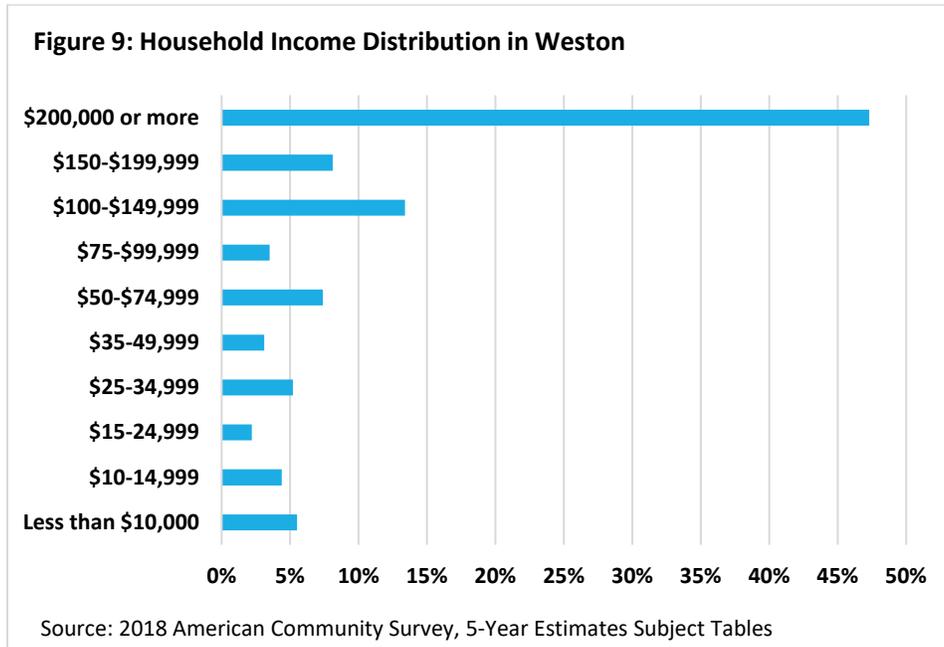
Source: US Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables & Subject Tables

Weston’s rate of residents with a college degree or higher educational attainment is significantly higher than that of Middlesex County and Massachusetts overall. Correspondingly, Weston’s rates of lower educational attainment are lower than in these comparison areas.

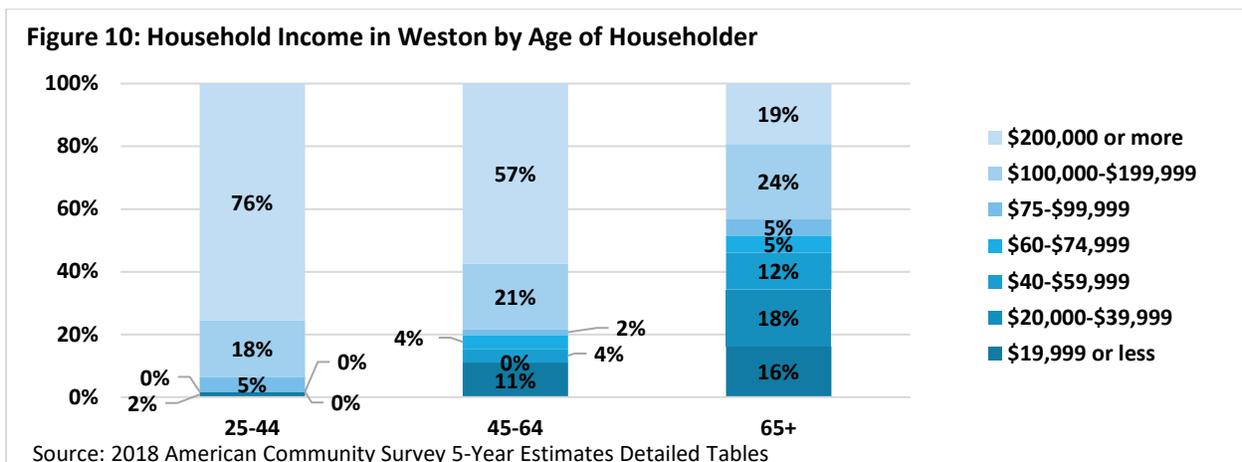
2018 ACS data shows that incomes among those with higher educational attainment are greater than incomes among those with lower educational attainment. The median income for Weston residents who have a high school diploma, but no further education, is \$30,500. The median income for Weston residents who have a graduate or professional degree is \$149,306. A further exploration of income among Weston residents is below.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Household income is an important determinant of how much a household can afford to pay for their dwelling unit, either to rent or own, and whether that household is eligible for housing assistance. Even though most residents have higher incomes, Weston is home to households earning a wide range of income levels. According to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), median household income in Weston is estimated at \$181,667. It is higher for family households at \$232,500, but much lower for non-family households at \$32,037. The percent of total households in a variety of income ranges is shown below.



Weston’s income spread is quite different among older householders than those under the age of 65. The vast majority, 94 percent of householders aged 25-44, and 78 percent of householders aged 45-64 earn \$100,000 or more per year, and over half in each category earn over \$200,000. However, only 43 percent of householders over age 65 earn \$100,000 or more per year. Over half (52 percent) of those over 65 earn \$74,999 or less per year. Since Weston’s older population is more likely to have less income, they are more likely to have difficulty with housing costs than the younger population. Even if older homeowners have paid off their mortgages, they are often on fixed incomes and must still pay property taxes as well as the cost of ongoing maintenance (which commonly increases as homes age).



## SUMMARY

This overview of Weston’s demographics indicates that the bulk of Weston’s population growth took place from the 1950’s through the 1970’s. Weston’s population has ebbed and flowed since then, but has been growing slowly, but steadily since 2010. Weston is still a majority white community, but there has been a modest increase in racial and ethnic diversity. Weston residents are overwhelmingly well-educated and have high incomes. However, income statistics show that older householders generally have much lower incomes than younger householders. Throughout the preceding is a summary of who has lived in Weston historically and who lives in Weston now, this HPP will examine Weston’s housing needs based both on the needs of current residents and on the needs of those who have been excluded from the Weston community.

# CHAPTER 4: HOUSING CONDITIONS

The following section examines Weston’s current housing supply and how it has changed over time. Understanding housing type, age, tenure, vacancy, and recent development will contribute to an understanding of current needs and demand in Weston and thereby help inform future housing production planning.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Eighty-nine percent of Weston’s housing units are single-family homes, indicating little housing diversity.
- Most of the comparison communities have significantly more housing type diversity than Weston.
- About 86.5 percent of Weston’s housing stock is owner-occupied. Younger age groups and the oldest senior residents are most likely to rent.
- Weston home prices have been consistently high since the early 2000’s but have risen even higher since 2017.
- U.S Census Building Permit Survey shows that Weston’s housing development has been exclusively limited to single-family homes since 2000. Weston lags behind most of the comparison communities in the development of multi-family housing.

## TYPE & AGE

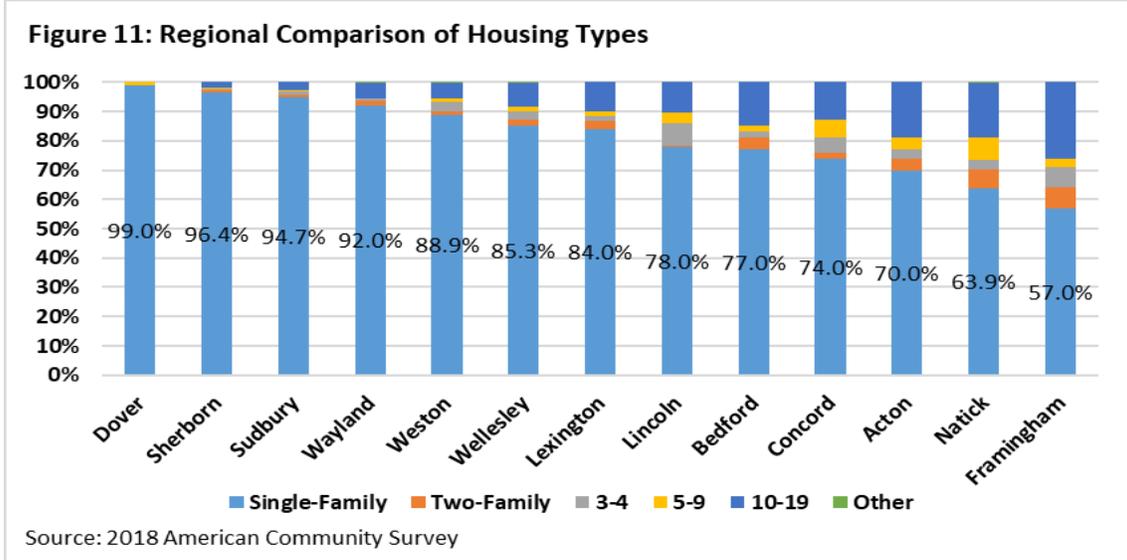
Eighty-nine percent of Weston’s occupied housing units are single-family homes. Multifamily housing refers to residential structures containing two or more units. Of this housing type, buildings with more than 10 units are most prevalent, but they still only comprise 5 percent of the total housing stock. Two of the largest multi-family developments are Brook School and Merriam Village. Both properties are age-restricted and affordable rental units.

**Table 5: Estimated Occupied Housing Units in Weston by Type**

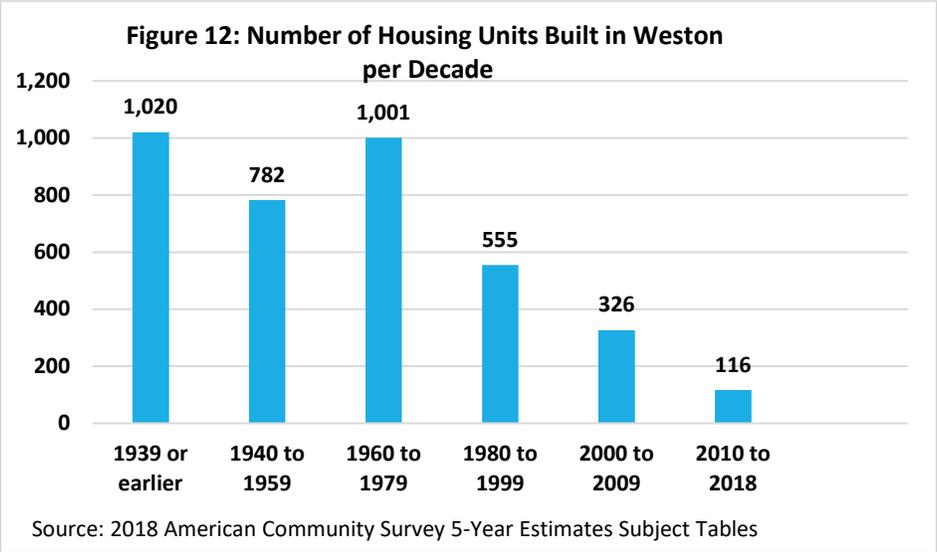
|                         | # of Units | Percent |
|-------------------------|------------|---------|
| Single-Family, detached | 3297       | 87%     |
| Single-Family, attached | 83         | 2%      |
| Two-Family              | 46         | 1%      |
| 3 or 4 units            | 114        | 3%      |
| 5-9 units               | 45         | 1%      |
| 10 or more units        | 206        | 5%      |
| Mobile Homes            | 9          | 0.2%    |

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

A regional comparison shows that some municipalities have substantially more diversity within their housing stocks than others. While all communities have mostly single-family homes, some also have significant percentages of multi-family housing. Weston has 89 percent single-family housing, making it one of the towns with a low level of housing type diversity.

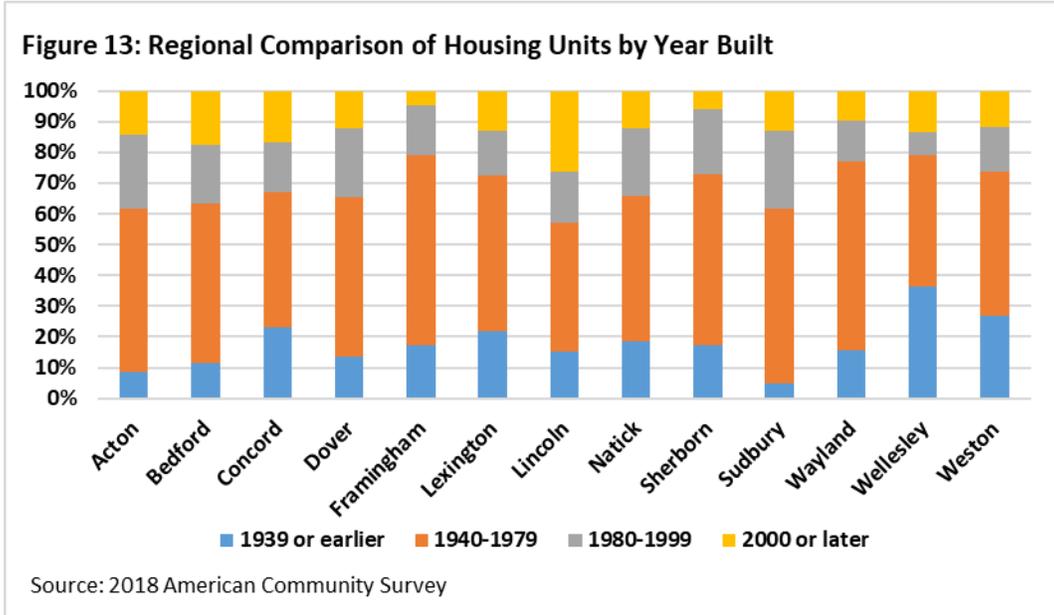


Almost three-quarters (74 percent) of Weston’s occupied housing units were constructed in before 1980. Older structures may lack heating and energy efficiencies and may not be code compliant, which adds to the monthly utility and maintenance costs. Older units built prior to 1978 may also have lead paint<sup>16</sup>, which is not safe for children, but can be costly to remediate. These additional costs have an impact on the affordability of older units for both owners and renters. Starting in 1980, building in each subsequent decade has been less than the one before it, with only 3 percent of occupied units constructed in 2010 or later. All of this points to the fact that there has been very little development in Weston in decades. Note that this data from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates are estimates and indicates significantly fewer new housing units compared to the number of building permits issued for residential units during the same period (see Figure 21).



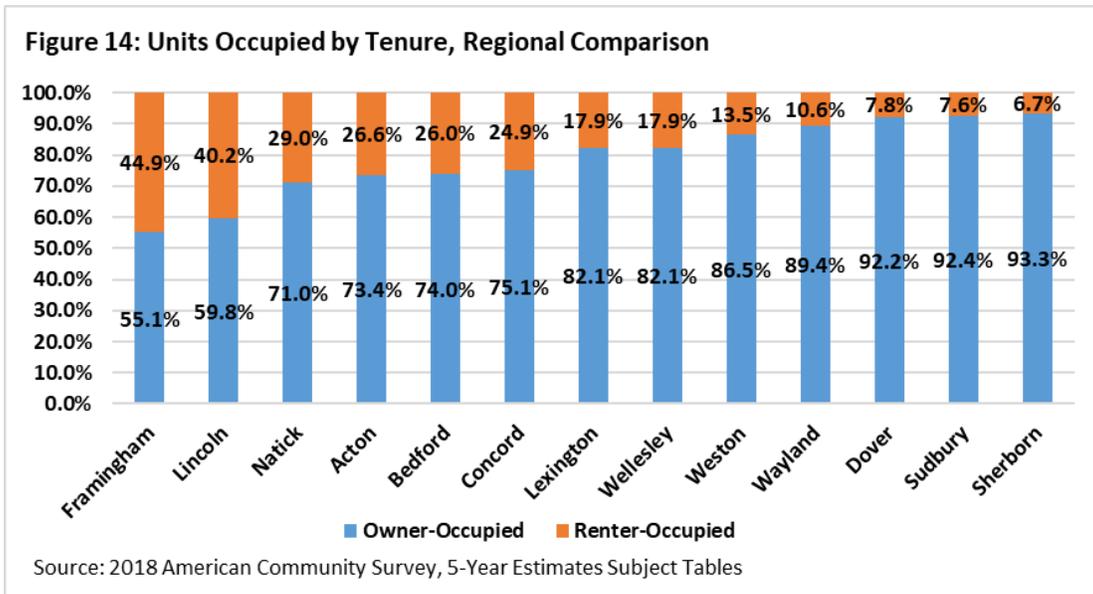
<sup>16</sup> Massachusetts’ Lead Law was passed in 1978 and requires the removal or control of lead paint in houses with children under 6. If houses built before 1978 are being sold or rented, sellers, real estate agents, and owners who rent their homes are required to notify their buyers and tenants of lead risks. (<https://www.mass.gov/the-massachusetts-lead-law>)

Weston is like the comparison communities regarding the age of its housing stock in some ways. All communities had the most growth in housing units in the 1940-1979 period. However, Weston has the second largest percentage of its units that were built before 1939, indicating that it started developing earlier than most comparison towns. Although all towns have relatively smaller percentages of units built since 2000, Weston has a lower percentage of its units built during the past 20 years than most.

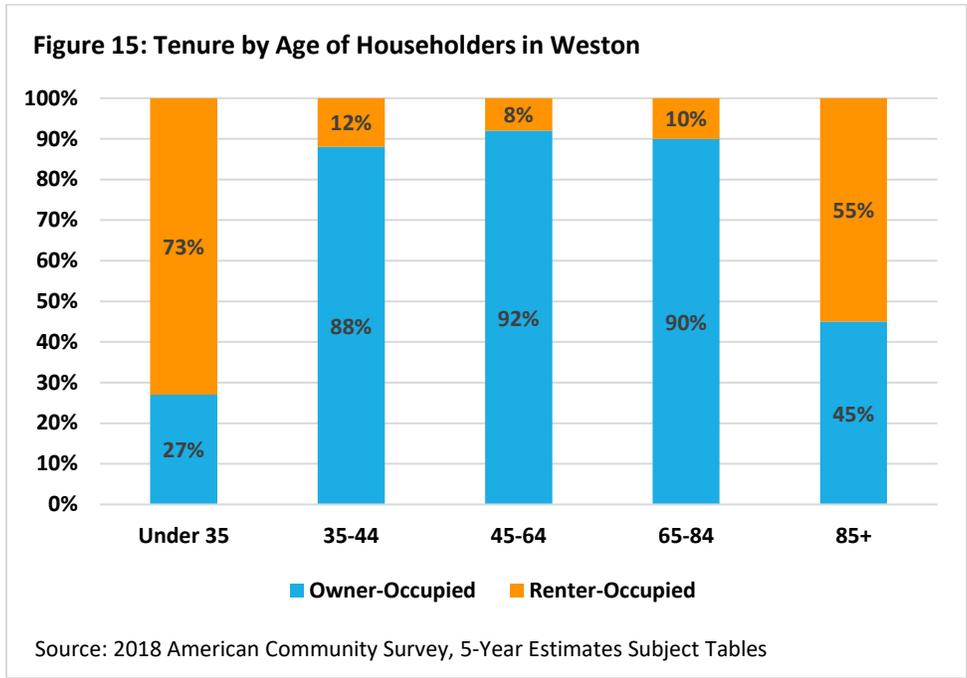


## TENURE

The 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) reports that Weston has a total of 3,800 occupied housing units. Of those units, 3,288 (87 percent) are owner-occupied. Weston has one of the lower percentage of renters among the comparison communities.



Nearly three quarters of households in the youngest age category in Weston are renters – 73 percent of people under age 35 are renters. In addition, most households at the other end of the age spectrum, in the oldest category (85+), are renters. However, homeowners make up most households in the middle three age categories.



## VACANCY

The 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) reported 4,012 housing units in Weston, with 3,800 occupied housing units (95 percent) and 212 vacant housing units (5 percent). As discussed above, about 87 percent of occupied units were owner-occupied and 13 percent renter occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate is 0.8 percent, and the rental vacancy rate is 7.9 percent. A healthy rental vacancy rate is 7 percent-8 percent, and a healthy homeowner vacancy rate is 2 percent.<sup>17</sup> This means that there is a tight homeownership market in Weston. It is difficult to determine the significance of the rental vacancy rate because there is a comparatively small number of rental properties in Weston.

## HOUSING MARKET

Housing costs within a community reflect numerous factors, including demand and supply. If the former exceeds the latter, then prices and rents tend to rise. Depending on the income levels of the population, these factors can significantly reduce affordability for both existing residents and those seeking to move in.

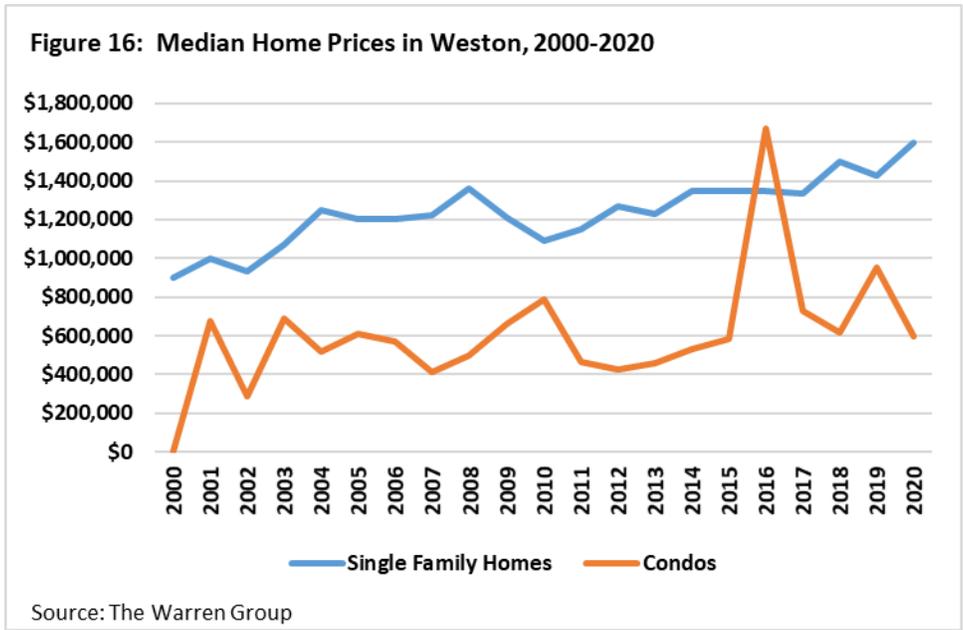
## Sale Prices & Volume

According to data from The Warren Group, median single family home prices in Weston have been consistently high since 2000 – over \$1 million for 18 of those 20 years. Prices have moderately increased or decreased in those years but have been consistently on the rise since 2017.<sup>18</sup> The median price of

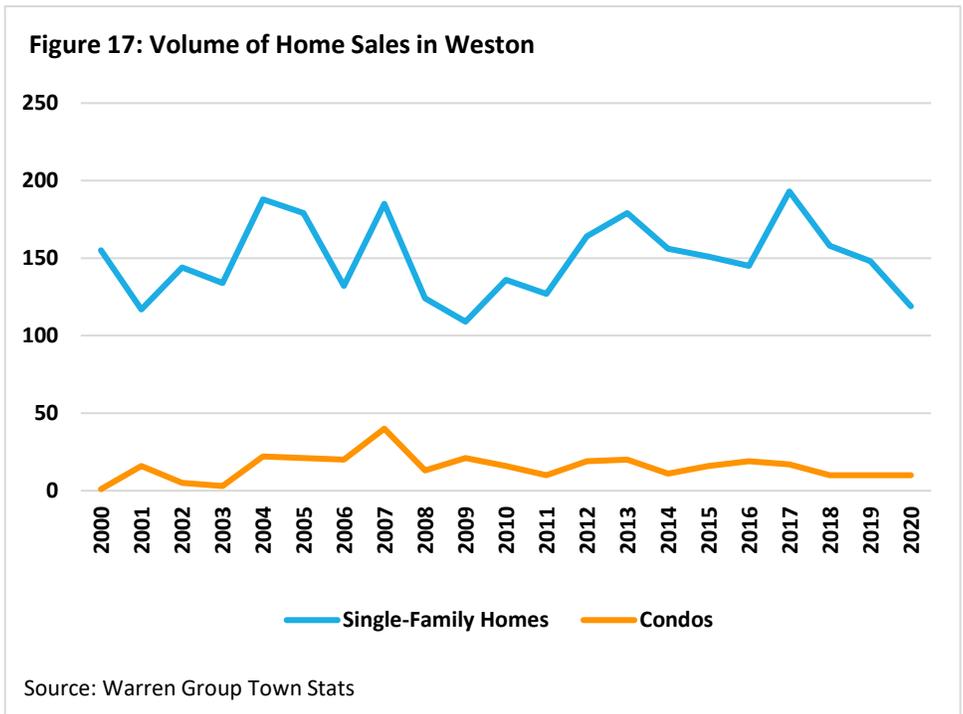
<sup>17</sup> CityLab article, “Vacancy: America’s Other Housing Crisis,” by Richard Florida, July 27, 2018

<sup>18</sup> Author began writing this section in 2020 before a full year of 2020 data was available. Median price for 2020 only includes data for January through August of 2020.

condominiums in Weston has been a bit more erratic, including an anomalous year in 2016. It is important to note that the number of condo sales each year in Weston is quite low – generally under 20 sales – so the median price is reflective of a comparatively small sample size.



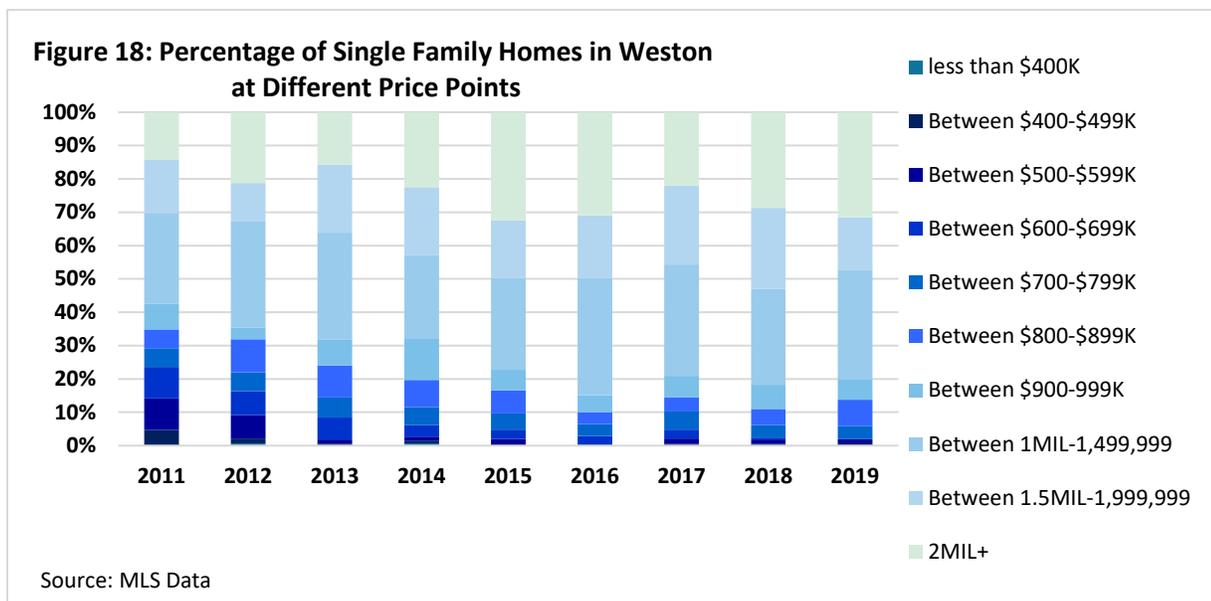
During this same 20-year period, the volume of single-family homes has had several peaks and valleys but has been declining since 2017 at the same time that prices have been rising. The volume of condo sales is quite different and is consistently low (fewer than 20 condos per year sold since 2010) which is evidence of a small total number of condos in Weston.



A closer look at the number of single-family homes that have been sold in the past ten years at different price point provides additional insight into the Weston housing market. Most single-family homes in Weston are out of reach for most homebuyers. The number of more moderately priced homes has been limited for all the past ten years, but has become even more limited in recent years, while homes at the highest price points have become more common. According to Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data:

- Twenty-five homes sold for less than \$700,000 in 2011, but only 3 homes sold for less than \$700,000 in 2019
- Homes that sold for less than \$700,000 made up 24 percent of sales in 2011 but decreased to only 2 percent of sales in 2019.
- Sixty-one homes in Weston sold for \$1 million or more in 2011; 122 homes sold for \$1 million or more in 2019.
- Homes that sold for \$1 million or more made-up 58 percent of sales in 2011 but increased to 80 percent of sales in 2019.
- Fifteen homes in Weston sold for \$2 million or more in 2011; 48 homes sold for \$2 million or more in 2019.
- Homes that sold for \$2 million or more made-up 14 percent of sales in 2011 but increased to 32 percent of sales in 2019.

The chart below demonstrates these trends in the cost of homes over the last 10 years.

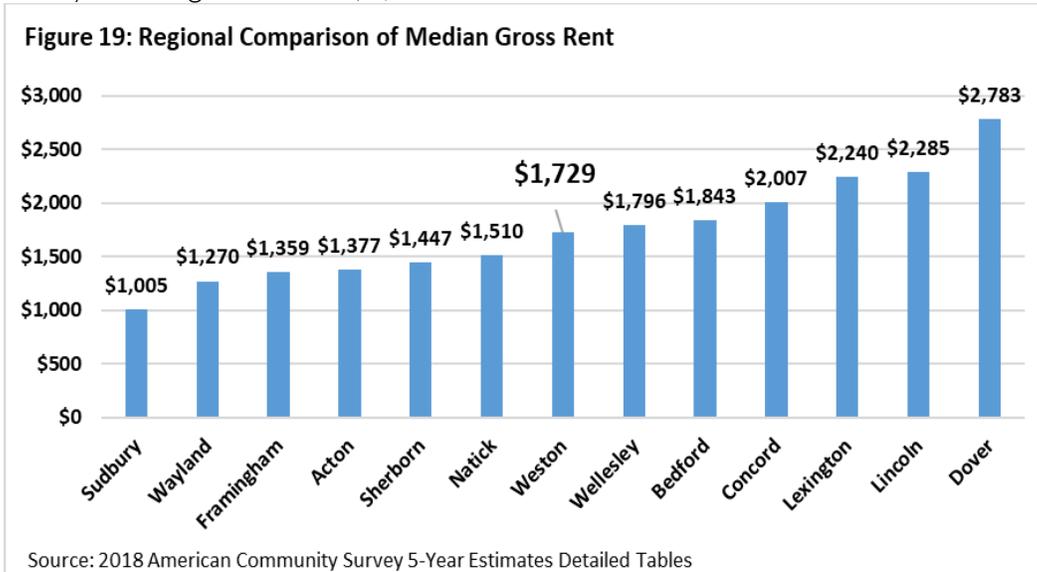


The median sales price of single-family homes in Weston in 2019 was over \$1.4 million according to the Warren Group. Therefore, households with low or moderate incomes clearly cannot afford to purchase a single-family home in Weston. Condos may provide a more affordable option, but there is a low inventory (20 or fewer units) of condos available each year.

The gap between the housing that is available for purchase in Weston and the prices that many households living in Weston can afford is discussed in more detail in the Housing Affordability section later in this document.

## Rent

Median gross rent varies widely throughout the region. According to the US Census data, at \$1,729, Weston’s median rent is in the middle of the group of comparison communities. It is higher than the Middlesex County median gross rent of \$1,541.



Unfortunately, Census data regarding rents is not the most reliable. First, rents are self-reported via the American Community Survey. Second, they represent units that were leased at any time prior to survey response, so they do not paint an accurate picture of the current market. Third, as the information below will explain, the census data is based on a small sample considering the small number of rental units in Weston – census data on the median only included 2-bedroom units and 4+ bedroom units.

Two websites that list apartments were consulted to gain a better picture of Weston’s rental market. A search for apartments listed for rent in Weston on Trulia.com on October 16, 2020, generated the listings in Table 6 below. The total number, as well as the size of units was quite limited with a total of only 13 listings. About half were large single-family homes that rented at a median price of over \$7,000 per month. The small number of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom listings both have a median monthly rent of over \$3,000. No studio or 1-bedroom units were listed.

| <b>Table 6: Weston Units listed for rent on Trulia.com, 10/16/20</b> |         |
|--|---------|
| Median Price of a 2-bedroom based on 4 listings                      | \$3,050 |
| Median Price of a 3-bedroom based on 3 listings                      | \$3,350 |
| Median Price of a 4+ bedroom based on 6 listings                     | \$7,750 |

Source: Trulia.com, October 16, 2020

A search for rentals in Weston was also conducted on Apartments.com on October 16, 2020. The results of that search are displayed in Table 7 below. The median price of the units is like what was found on Trulia, but there were even fewer listings – 10 total listings, including one studio, four 2-bedrooms, one 3-bedroom, and four units with 4+ bedrooms. Overall, the rental housing stock in Weston offers very limited options. The Housing Affordability section of this document will describe whether the available rental housing can meet the needs of Weston’s population.

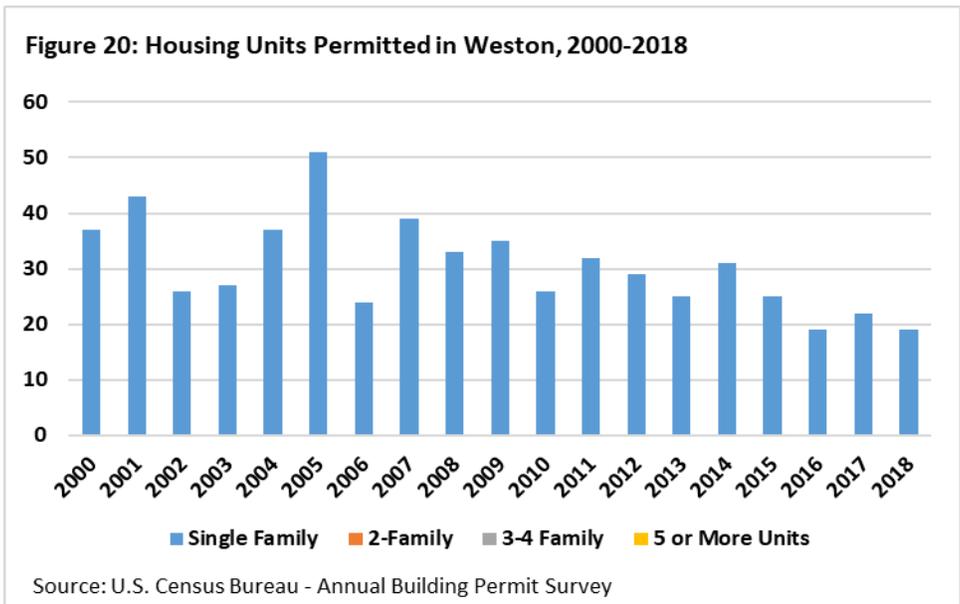
**Table 7: Weston Units listed for rent on Apartments.com, 10/16/20**

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Median Price of a studio based on 1 listing      | \$1,675 |
| Median Price of a 2-bedroom based on 4 listings  | \$3,050 |
| Median Price of a 3-bedroom based on 1 listing   | \$3,100 |
| Median Price of a 4+ bedroom based on 4 listings | \$6,125 |

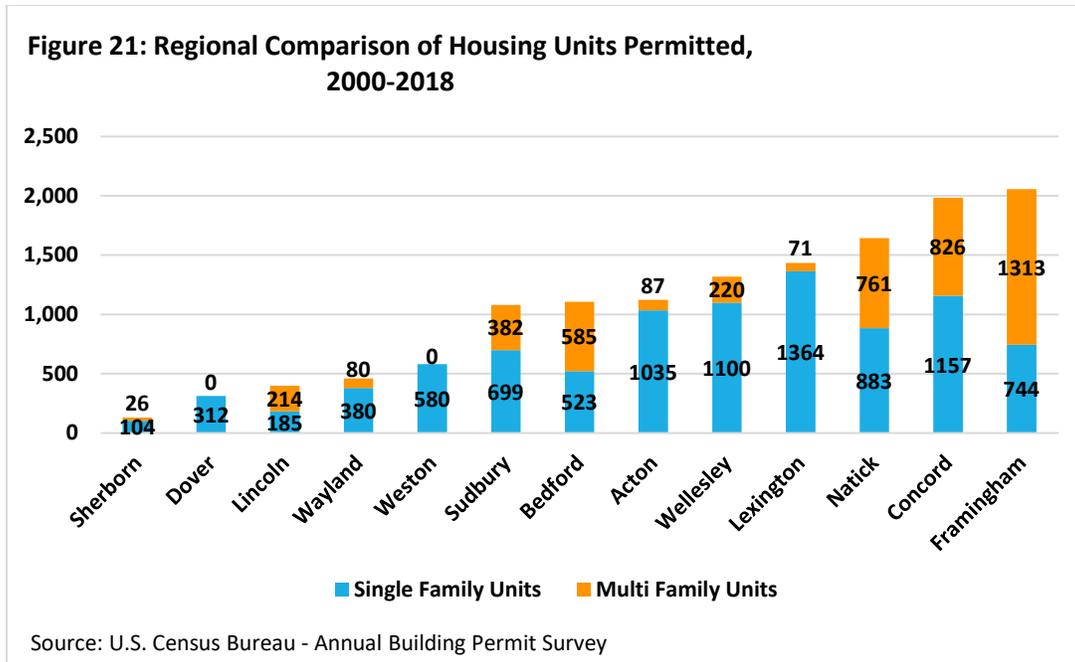
Source: Apartments.com, October 16, 2020

### Housing Units Permitted

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Annual Building Permit survey, between 2000 and 2018, Weston issued permits for 580 housing units. All 580 permits were for single family housing, so the U.S. Census has no record of any multi-family housing permits being issued during that time.



Looking at the comparison communities, Weston is one of the towns that has produced the fewest total units, and one of two towns that has permitted zero multi-family units, according to the U.S. Census Building Permit Survey.



## RECENT & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

### Development Pipeline

Weston has multiple developments in the pipeline to create additional affordable restricted housing and record them to the SHI:

#### Comprehensive Permits Issued:

- Kendal Village – 269 North Avenue: 16 rental units; stalled development
- Village at Silver Hill – 255 Merriam: 8 ownership units of which one is affordable<sup>19</sup>
- 751-761 Boston Post Road: 180 rental units; under appeal

#### Comprehensive Permits Denied / In Appeals:

- 104 Boston Post Road: 150 rental units; under appeal

#### Current Proposals:

- 518 South Avenue: 200 rental units; the Housing Appeals Court ruled against the town’s Safe Harbor claim

#### Potential Pipeline Projects

- Brook School: Potential future project of affordable units with up to 14 new bedrooms total
- Weston Affordable Housing Foundation (WAHFI): Birch Lane -2 rental units in development
- Weston Affordable Housing Trust (rental units): 0 Wellesley St. - 6 ownership units

The table on the following page provides a summary of how many units each of these developments will add to Weston’s housing inventory, including the number of units that will get added to the SHI. If all these

<sup>19</sup> Note: the project called Village at Silverhill has been delayed as of the time of this writing in August 2021.

projects come to fruition, greater than 10 percent of Weston’s housing units will be included on its SHI, based on the total housing units calculated in the 2010 U.S. Census. The number of housing units in Weston will be re-calculated in the upcoming 2020 census, and the percentage of SHI units will decrease.

**Table 8: Weston's Development Pipeline**

| Project  | Status                           | SHI Units     |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------|
| 680 South  | Existing                         | 4             |
| Brook School   | Existing                         | 51            |
| Dickson Meadow                                       | Existing                         | 6             |
| Highland Meadows                                     | Existing                         | 7             |
| Merriam Village                                      | Existing                         | 62            |
| Post Road Green                                      | Existing                         | 2             |
| Viles Street   | Existing                         | 2             |
| Warren Ave.  | Existing                         | 7             |
| Weston Affordable Housing Foundation - Rental Units  | Existing                         | 4             |
| Winter Gardens                                       | Existing                         | 6             |
| <b>Current Total Built</b>                           |                                  | <b>151</b>    |
|  | <b>% of Subsidized Housing</b>   | <b>3.82%</b>  |
|  | <b>% w/ est. 2020 Census</b>     | <b>3.69%</b>  |
| Modera Weston (751 Boston Post Road)                 | Permitted (safe harbor)          | 180           |
| <b>Total units eligible for SHI (Built + 180)</b>    |                                  | <b>331</b>    |
|  | <b>% of Subsidized Housing</b>   | <b>8.38%</b>  |
|  | <b>% w/ est. 2020 Census</b>     | <b>8.08%</b>  |
| <b>Pipeline Projects</b>                             |                                  |               |
| Hanover (518 South Ave)                              | Public Hearing in process 6/2021 | 200           |
| Stony Brook (104 Boston Post Road)                   | Denied - Applicant Appeal        | 150           |
| Merriam St. (Village at Silver Hill)                 | Permitted (no const. permit)     | 1             |
| North Avenue   | Permitted (no const. permit)     | 16            |
| Birch Lane / WHAFI                                   | Design Development               | 2             |
| 0 Wellesley  | Design Development               | 6             |
| Brooks School Expansion                              | Design Development               | 14            |
| <b>Total units eligible for SHI (331 + Pipeline)</b> |                                  | <b>720</b>    |
|  | <b>% of Subsidized Housing</b>   | <b>17.57%</b> |

# HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

## KEY FINDINGS

- Data from Trulia.com and Apartments.com indicate that Weston has very limited rental housing, and the pricing of these market units is not affordable to low-income households.
- Twenty-three percent of Weston households are low income, earning less than 80 percent of AMI and therefore may be eligible for housing assistance through most federal and state programs.
- Thirty-two percent of Weston households are cost burdened, paying 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs; the rate (47 percent) is particularly high among renter households.
- About 3.82 percent of Weston’s housing, or 151 units, are recorded on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory. Nearly all these units are affordable as few are part of a larger traditional type 40B market rate housing development.
- The median sales price of single-family homes in Weston in 2019 was \$1,425,000. However, households at Weston’s median income of \$181,667 could afford to purchase a home that costs no more than \$950,000, and a 4-person low-income household at 80 percent of the AMI could afford to purchase a home that costs no more than \$400,000.
- The absence of both rental and ownership housing that is affordable to households who earn below the area median income (AMI), 100 percent of the AMI, or even 150 percent of the AMI effectively excludes anyone in those income groups from living in Weston.

In the previous sections, Weston’s population and housing stock were examined. The intersection of these previously examined areas—demand (people) and supply (housing units)—as well as policy, planning, and funding, ultimately determines housing affordability in each community. In this section, the affordability of Weston’s housing stock to Town residents is assessed.

## HOUSEHOLDS ELIGIBLE FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

One measure of affordable housing needs is the number of households that may be eligible for housing assistance based on estimated household income. Federal and state programs use Area Median Income (AMI), along with household size, to identify these households. Table 9 below shows U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits for extremely low (below 30 percent of AMI), very-low (30-50 percent of AMI), and low-income (50-80 percent of AMI) households by household size for the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Weston<sup>20</sup>. Typically, households at 80 percent of AMI and below may qualify for housing assistance, though there are some exceptions based on household size and assets.

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<sup>20</sup> The Boston-Cambridge-Quincy MSA includes 112 cities and towns spread throughout parts of Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, and Suffolk counties in Massachusetts. The MSA also includes three towns in Rockingham County, New Hampshire.

**Table 9: FY 2020 Affordable Housing Income Limits  
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH HUD Metro FMR Area**

| Household Size | Extremely            | Very                 |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                | Low Income (30% AMI) | Low Income (50% AMI) | Low Income (80% AMI) |
| 1 Person       | \$26,850             | \$44,800             | \$67,400             |
| 2 Person       | \$30,700             | \$51,200             | \$77,000             |
| 3 Person       | \$34,550             | \$57,600             | \$86,650             |
| 4 Person       | \$38,350             | \$63,950             | \$96,250             |
| 5 Person       | \$41,450             | \$69,100             | \$103,950            |
| 6 Person       | \$44,500             | \$74,200             | \$111,650            |
| 7 Person       | \$47,600             | \$79,300             | \$119,350            |
| 8 Person       | \$50,650             | \$84,450             | \$127,050            |

Source: HUD

Data from HUD’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) reports that 9 percent, 6 percent, and 8 percent of households in Weston are extremely low income, very low income, and low income respectively. This means that a total of 23 percent of all households, or approximately 880 households, may qualify for affordable housing programs based on income.

### CURRENT M.G.L. CHAPTER 40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

Under M.G.L. Chapter 40B, affordable housing units are defined as housing that is developed or operated by a public or private entity and reserved by deed restriction for income-eligible households earning at or below 80 percent of the AMI. In addition, all marketing and placement efforts follow Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing guidelines per the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These units are also deed restricted units.

Housing that meets these requirements, if approved by DHCD, is added to the subsidized housing inventory (SHI). Chapter 40B allows developers of low/moderate-income housing to obtain a comprehensive permit from the Weston Zoning Board of Appeals to override local zoning and other restrictions if less than 10 percent of a community’s housing is included on the SHI.

A municipality’s SHI fluctuates with new development of both affordable and market-rate housing. The percentage is determined by dividing the number of affordable units by the total number of year-round housing units according to the most recent decennial Census. As the denominator increases, or if affordable units are lost, more affordable units must be produced to reach, maintain, or exceed the 10 percent threshold.

Weston has 8.38 percent affordable housing. Of the 3,952 total year-round housing units in the town (from the 2010 Census), there are 331, or 8.38 percent that are counted as ‘affordable’ on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory. This includes 180 Modera Weston units that became eligible inclusion on the SHI when the Comprehensive Permit was issued in 2020. However, for the units to continue to be counted, they must meet certain milestone deadlines (i.e., building permit and occupancy permit) to continue to be counted towards Weston’s 10 percent housing goal.

A look at the history of Weston’s SHI during the past ten years shows that there were almost no units added to the SHI until 2020 when the Modera Weston development was permitted. Prior to 2020, the number of total SHI eligible housing units went above 4 percent of housing units on the SHI briefly in 2017 but dropped below 4 percent when the 16 units at Kendall Village were removed from the SHI after not obtaining building permits after the issuance of the Comprehensive Permit for the project. Weston is now up to 8.38 percent; however, this could go back down to below 4 percent if Modera does not receive their building permit by November 2021. However, with other developments in the pipeline there is potential for further increase in the number of units on Weston’s SHI, and even the possibility of reaching 10 percent, if some of the larger rental projects described earlier in this report come to fruition.

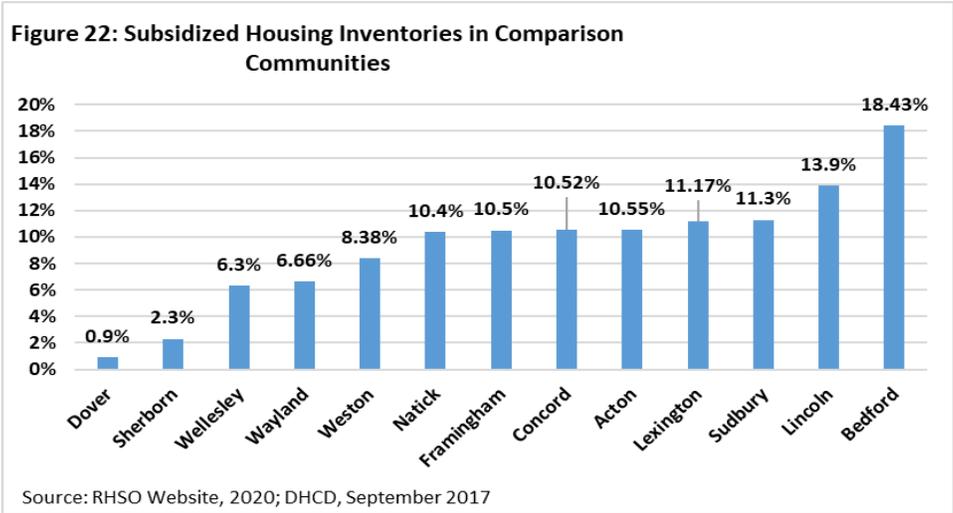
**Table 10: History of Weston's SHI**

| Year | # of Units on |       |
|------|---------------|-------|
|      | SHI           | SHI % |
| 2011 | 140           | 3.54% |
| 2012 | 141           | 3.57% |
| 2013 | 142           | 3.59% |
| 2015 | 149           | 3.77% |
| 2017 | 167           | 4.23% |
| 2020 | 331           | 8.38% |

Source: DHCD

It is important to note that the total number of units in Weston, which is used as the denominator when calculating Weston’s SHI percentage, will change following the 2020 census. When the denominator changes, the percentage of housing units on the SHI will drop unless more units are added. Currently, the projection for Weston’s 2020 census denominator is 4,097. If Weston’s SHI units remain at 331, the SHI percentage will drop to 8.08 percent. However, if all the potential units in the development pipeline are permitted, Weston’s SHI percentage will increase to 17.57 percent as shown in Table 8 above.

Weston’s SHI percentage is the fifth lowest of the municipalities being used for comparison in this report. Two-thirds of the comparison communities have met the State’s goal of 10 percent affordable housing. Weston is part of the one-third of these communities that are below the 10 percent goal.



It is important to note that due to state eligibility policies under M.G.L. 40B, the actual number of affordable units in any community is likely lower than the inventory indicates. In ownership developments that have an affordable component, only the affordable ownership units are included on the SHI. However, in rental developments, 100 percent of the units (regardless of the cost of rent) are counted if a minimum of 20 percent of units are affordable to households at 50 percent or below AMI, or 25 percent of units are affordable to households at 80 percent or below AMI.

The breakdown below provides more information about what types of units are available in Weston, both the units that are on the SHI and those that are not. Additionally, it is important to note that of the 331 SHI units, 180 units are rental units at Modera Weston. The project has received a comprehensive permit but has not been constructed as of the publication of this plan.

Of the 331 units on the SHI, 134 units are market rate, but still on the SHI due to the SHI eligibility policies described above (i.e., all rental units are counted on the SHI). On the other hand, there are an additional 6 units restricted as affordable that are not on the SHI because of other eligibility policies.

Out of the total 331 units on Weston’s SHI, the vast majority (311 units) are rental units. Of those, a little more than half are restricted (176 affordable) rentals, 66 percent of those are age restricted. This means most of the restricted rental housing is only available to seniors.

**Figure 23: Breakdown of Units on Weston’s SHI**



Source: RHSO Inventory

\* Includes 2 moderate income units at Dickson Meadow, and non-SHI restricted units at Brook School & Viles St.

The 203 total restricted units are not nearly enough for the 880 Weston households who would be eligible for restricted units. These numbers exhibit that there must be a significant number of low-income households in Weston who are paying more towards housing costs than they can afford.

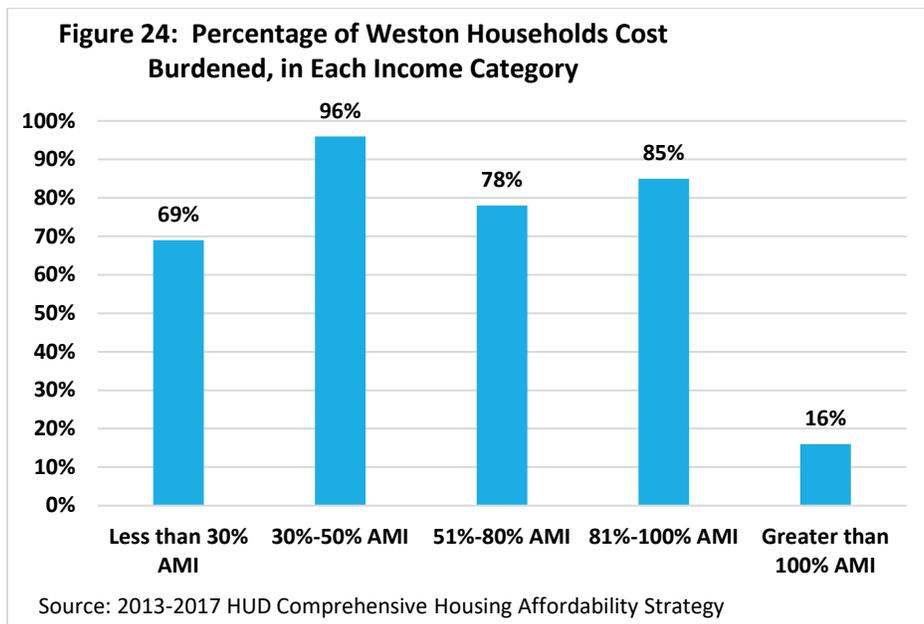
## HOUSING COST BURDEN

One method to determine whether housing is affordable to a community's population is to evaluate households' ability to pay their housing costs based on their reported gross household income. HUD considers households who spend more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing to be 'housing cost burdened', and those that spend more than 50 percent to be severely housing cost burdened. Landlords and banks enforce these standards and will generally not sign a lease or qualify someone for a mortgage if they will be paying more than 30 percent of gross income towards housing costs.

According to HUD's most recent Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 32 percent of households, or approximately 1,213 households in Weston are cost burdened, and 745 of those households (20 percent of total households), are severely cost-burdened. Notably, the rate of cost burden is significantly higher among renters than owners: 47 percent versus 30 percent. To pay monthly housing costs, it is assumed that cost-burdened households must make difficult decisions about where to cut costs in other areas, such as health care, education, or nutrition.

### Cost Burden by Income

Cost burden does not impact all Weston households equally. CHAS data reports that all low- and moderate-income categories have a high rate of cost burden. The only income category that does not have a high rate of cost burden is households who earn greater than the median. 79 percent of low-income Weston households – those who earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI) – are housing cost-burdened. As shown below, the 30-50 percent AMI sub-category has the highest rate of cost burden. Notably, the category of moderate-income households, who earn 81-100 percent of AMI, have the second highest rate of cost burden. However, only 16 percent of households who earn more than 100 percent of AMI are housing cost burdened.

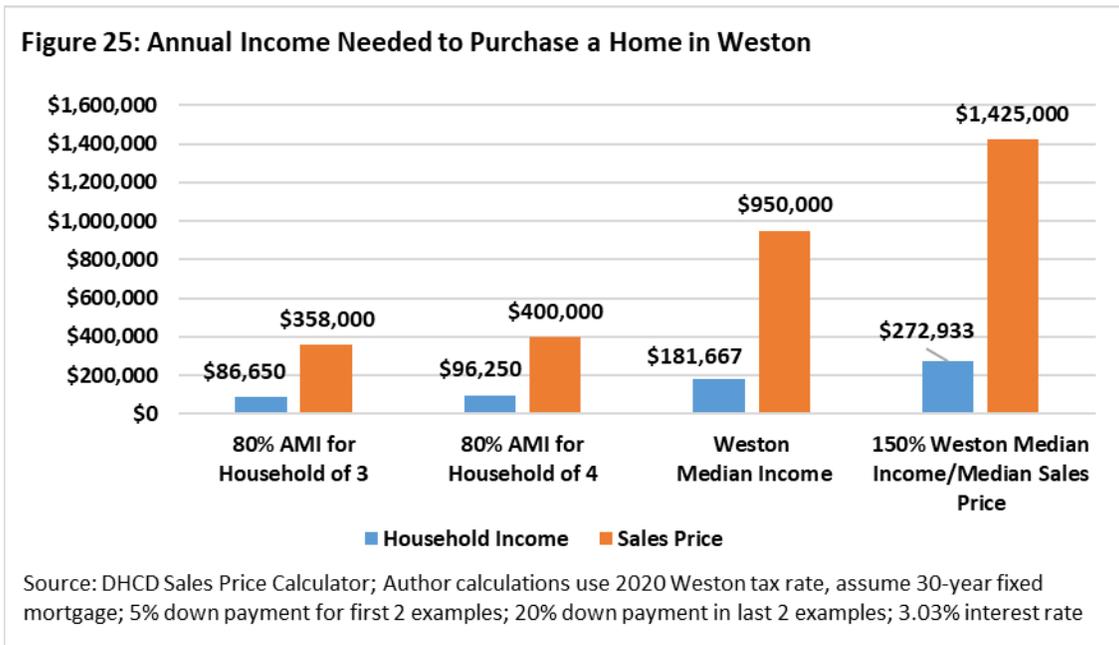


## AFFORDABILITY GAP

The 880 low-income households in Weston who are cost-burdened indicates that there is a gap between the number of households at or below 80 percent of AMI and the number of housing units affordable to households at this income level.

### Ownership

A four-person household earning at or below 80 percent AMI (\$96,250) could afford to purchase a home that costs \$400,000 or less, using the DHCD affordability calculator and assuming a 5 percent down payment and an interest rate of 3.03 percent (per DHCD guidelines). Trulia.com shows that there are currently (as of 11/11/20) no properties on the market in Weston that are under \$400,000. In fact, there are no units on the market for less than \$550,000. There are only two properties listed for less than \$600,000 – one small house (under 1,000 square feet) and one condo. Two-thirds of the properties currently listed are on the market for more than \$2 million. However, Weston’s median income of \$181,667 could afford a home that costs \$950,000. Furthermore, the DHCD affordability calculator shows that Weston’s 2019 single-family median sale price of \$1,425,000<sup>21</sup> requires an annual income of \$272,933, over \$90,000 higher than Weston’s median household income.



### Rental

For rentals, a four-person household earning 80 percent of AMI (\$96,250) could afford approximately \$2,400 per month in rent if all the utility costs for the apartment were included, or approximately \$2,215 per month in rent if utilities were not included.<sup>22</sup> However, the point-in-time rental listings in Apartments.com and Trulia.com shown in Tables 6 and 7 earlier in this document show that there are not affordable market rental options available in Weston. The 2020 rent for a restricted 2-bedroom rental unit is \$2,166 with all utilities included, or \$1,991 if no utilities are included. The 2020 rent for a restricted 3-bedroom rental unit

<sup>21</sup> The Warren Group

<sup>22</sup> Author’s calculations assume rent is affordable when no more than 30 percent of gross income is spent on rental costs. The Concord Housing Authority Utility Allowance chart was used to calculate the affordable rent with no utilities included.

is \$2,406 with all utilities included, or \$2,233 if no utilities are included. More affordable units in this price range would fill a gap that currently exists for low-income renters since affordable market units are unavailable.

The gap between the actual cost of housing units in Weston that are available to buy and the housing cost that would be affordable to low-income families is substantial. The affordability gap indicates a clear need for more rental and homeownership units that would be affordable for households earning 80 percent or less of AMI.

## HOUSING NEEDS BY WESTON RESIDENTS

If Weston can demonstrate the associated needs and the absence of any disparate impacts in an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan, DHCD allows up to 70 percent of affordable units in a development to be set aside as 'local' or community preference units. This Local Preference Justification reviews the needs of Weston low-income households compared to the availability of housing affordable to those households. Weston has provided adequate local preference justification in past developments and has utilized local preference in initial sales and lease-ups.

Every new housing development creates an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP) in accordance with the AFHMP guidelines issued by DHCD, most recently in May 2013. Under no circumstance would the local selection preferences disproportionately delay or otherwise deny admission of non-local residents that are protected under state and federal civil rights laws. Each AFHMP demonstrates what efforts will be taken to prevent a disparate impact or discriminatory effect and must be approved by the Subsidizing Agency.

The affordability gap analysis above and the information below are intended to demonstrate the need for housing by Weston residents, defined in accordance with AFHMP requirements as:

1. Current residents: a household in which one or more members is living in the city or town at the time of application.
2. Municipal Employees: Employees of the municipality, such as teachers, custodians, firefighters, police officers, librarians, or town hall employees.
3. Employees of Local Businesses: Employees of businesses located in the municipality.
4. Households with children attending the local public schools.

The Town of Weston, as well as many private businesses in Weston, would like to have employees live closer to Town (or in Town) so that they can know the community better and provide consistent service levels and better responses to emergency situations. The further Town employees are required to travel due to housing costs, the greater the problem in providing a high level of service to residents, particularly during inclement weather conditions or emergency situations. Additional benefits to the community and employees include reductions in travel time, congestion, and potential improvement in air quality.

There are potentially many people who work for Weston businesses who would qualify for low-income housing. According to 2019 data from the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce data, there are 483 establishments, covering all industries, listed in Weston, MA reporting an average monthly employment of 5,247 employees. The average weekly wage of these employees is \$1,542, yielding an annual income of \$80,184, which is less than the current HUD 80 percent AMI for a family of four at \$96,250.<sup>23</sup> Although it is unlikely that most people who work in Weston are supporting a family of four on one salary, these statistics are still an important reference point.

Further insight into the needs for affordable housing for those who live and/or work in Weston is provided by waitlist data from the Merriam Village and from the Brook School development. The Weston Affordable Housing Trust and the Weston Housing Foundation Inc, utilize the regional Ready Renter program administered by the MetroWest Collaborative Development. Re-leasing of these units is done by lottery and

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<sup>23</sup> Mass.gov Labor Market information, <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/lmi/EmploymentAndWages#>, accessed 11/12/20.

no waitlists exist. All properties have very low turn-over, and for the properties with waitlists applicants may be on those lists for many years before a unit becomes available.

Many factors provide justification for Weston to request a community preference for its residents and for people who work in the town whenever new affordable housing units are built:

- the exceptionally high cost of housing in Weston
- the significant number of people who live and work in Weston who earn less than 80 percent of AMI
- the high rate of housing cost burden among low-income households in Weston
- the extremely long wait times for local applicants for affordable rental housing

# CHAPTER 5: DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

There are many factors that influence the feasibility of housing production, from physical limitations to regulations that shape development and land use. This chapter reviews environmental constraints, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory barriers. This chapter also includes a mapping analysis of lot size, improvement to land value ratio, and land value, factors that may indicate potential opportunities for development or redevelopment.

As explained in the 2016 Weston Housing Production Plan (HPP), in addition to environmental, infrastructure, and regulatory barriers, Weston's high property values were and continue to be a significant barrier to meeting Weston's housing goals.

Note, this analysis relied heavily on the Weston 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), particularly Section 4: Environmental Inventory and Analysis. The description of development constraints to follow include direct excerpts from the 2017 OSRP. Citations are included for other sources. The analysis also relied heavily on the 2016 HPP and includes direct excerpts in the Infrastructure Capacity and Regulatory Barriers sections of this chapter.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

- The semi-rural nature of Weston is highly valued by the community. Contributing elements include topography, scenic roads, contrast between forested and open areas, last remaining working farms, streams and ponds, parks, historic structures, and naturalistic residential landscaping.
- Outside of extreme storm events, Weston does not experience significant amounts of flooding. However, the effects of climate change have increased the frequency of severe storm events.
- Weston has many significant historic resources and areas that span a wide range of resource types and periods.
- Weston has three hazardous waste sites with Activity and Use Limitations (AULS) registered with DEP.

### INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

- Weston does not have public sewer and is dependent on private septic systems, limiting the density of development. Weston is serviced by the MWRA public water supply.
- Traffic has become one of the major quality of life and safety issues for residents and commuters.
- The Fitchburg commuter train line of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has three stops in Weston and the Town is not served by buses. However, the MBTA is proposing to close two of the commuter rail stations (Silver Hill and Hastings).

### REGULATORY BARRIERS

- The only zoning district included on the zoning map that permits multifamily (Multiple Dwelling District B) encompasses less than ½ of a percent of total zoned land area.
- Weston has made progress in promoting housing options through the following zoning provisions including Active Adult Residential Development, Active Adult Residential Cluster, limited accessory dwelling unit provisions, and flexible development provisions.
- There are no inclusionary zoning provisions.
- Other regulations include the local Wetlands and Floodplains Protection District, Stormwater and Erosion Control Bylaw, Scenic Roads Bylaw and zoning provisions requiring site plan approval, Demolition Delay Bylaw, and one small Local Historic District for significant historic buildings.

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

As described in the 2017 OSRP, “semi-rural” was used to describe the low-density residential suburban landscape of Weston. It is this quality that residents would like to preserve, and which is endangered with the development or potential development of the last remaining farms, open meadows, and forests, often accompanied by the destruction of historic houses or barns. In addition to preserving select remaining parcels of open space in Weston, the community also seeks to connect existing tracts to create wildlife corridors and enhance recreational values.

The OSRP describes the elements that contribute to Weston’s semi-rural landscape as follows:

- Topography: gentle rolling hill giving way to large expanses of low-lying wetlands and former farm field
- Scenic Roads: Weston’s winding, scenic roads with mature trees and canopy
- Forested and Open Areas: such as meadows, farm fields, and recreation areas
- Last Remaining Working Farms: properties where the land has continued in agricultural use to produce hay, pasturing of animals, and active market gardening
- Streams and Ponds: many small streams winding through Weston and connect open space, neighborhoods, ponds, and provide wildlife corridors
- Parks: located at important town focal points and include flowering trees and shrubs
- Historic Structures: houses, barns, outbuildings that dot the landscape throughout town, many of which are unpretentious in style
- Residential Landscaping: subtle landscape elements where houses are built along town roads set within a wooded or pastoral setting with small laws, few ancillary structures, and informal, naturalistic landscaping

***Despite its location within the densely developed metropolitan Boston area, Weston retains some of the aspects of a rural New England town. However, within the past few decades many modest sized homes have been replaced with large homes exceeding 6000 sf with expansive lawns which are changing the character of many neighborhoods.***

## GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Weston consists of hilly terrain due primarily to the bedrock geology of the area, as well as the topography formed by the last remnants of glaciation processes. The highest points in Weston are the western summit of Doublet Hill, which is 360 feet above sea level, and the summit of Cat Rock, which is 365 feet above sea level. There are also three other sites that lie above 355 feet: the eastern summit of Doublet Hill, Mount Lemuel in the Pine Street town forest, and part of Sanderson Hill just south of the water tank in Highland Forest. These geological conditions influence outdoor recreation opportunities in Weston. In many areas with abundant outcrop and shallow bedrock, land has been protected as open space over the years, due in part to its being less desirable land for development. Low, wet areas were also historically less desirable for development, and, starting in the 1960’s, have been protected from extensive development by the Wetlands Protection Act. Therefore, a significant amount of open space includes wetland.

***The topography of Weston is typical of New England, with gently rolling forested hills that give way to large expanses of low-lying wetlands and former farm fields. The***

*variations in topography provide for distant views from higher elevations. These distant views are valued for their contrast to the otherwise closed landscape.*

## WATERSHED

Most of Weston is situated within the Charles River watershed, but a small area on the northwestern edge of town is part of the SuAsCo (Sudbury-Assabet-Concord) River watershed. The Charles River watershed is the most densely populated watershed in New England, and great restoration strides were made during the federal EPA's Clean Charles 2005 Initiative to make the Charles fishable and swimmable by Earth Day 2005. Today, the river is only swimmable and fishable part of the year. The Charles River Watershed Association, of which Weston is an active member, is a nationally renowned organization that uses science, advocacy, and law to restore the Charles River. The SuAsCo watershed benefits from the important efforts of several watershed and conservation organizations, including OARS (Organization for the Assabet, Sudbury, & Concord Rivers), the Sudbury Valley Trustees, and the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council.

## SURFACE WATER BODIES

### Rivers and Streams

Weston is home to over 30 miles of frontage on the Charles River and small streams, much of which serves as vegetated riparian corridors. Weston has eight brooks: Stony, Hobbs, Cherry, Three Mile, Meadow, Seaverns, Hubbard, and Bogle brooks.

The Charles River flows along part of the boundary between Weston and the two towns directly to the east, Waltham and Newton. This portion of the Charles River is known as the "Lake District," named after the bulge in the river created by the Moody Street dam in Waltham.

As part of the Charles River watershed, Weston shares an obligation to protect the health of the river as it flows through town. The Charles River has problems with both water quality and quantity. In general, water quality in the Weston portion of the river has improved and is rated as Class B: safe for swimming. Pollutants are substantially diluted out in the Lake District north of the Route 30 bridge. Since the water here is slow moving, pollutants drop to the bottom, and aquatic weeds take up the nutrients. Within the Weston area, sources of pollution to the Charles River watershed include general stormwater runoff, salt and oil runoff from highways, and fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide runoff from golf courses.

### Ponds and Reservoirs

The surface waters of Weston include scores of small ponds. The larger, named ponds that have scenic and recreational significance include the following: College, Hobbs, Duck, Schenck's, and Nonesuch ponds.

Weston also has three reservoirs: Stony Brook, which supplies water to the City of Cambridge; Weston, which is part of metropolitan Boston's water supply system; and Norumbega, which is also part of the metropolitan Boston's water supply system. Most of the northern portion of Weston, including Stony Brook Reservoir, is in the Cambridge watershed, and water quality here is carefully monitored. Therefore, the protection of water resources in Weston is very important for drinking water quality in Cambridge.

## WETLANDS AND VERNAL POOLS

Wetlands and floodplains are unique natural resources, providing flood storage and helping to filter pollution before it reaches underground water supplies. Wetlands also recharge ground water, which preserves

present and potential water supplies, serve as plant and wildlife habitat, and produce nutrients for aquatic life. In Massachusetts, primary authority for implementation of wetland laws is given by the legislature to local municipalities through their Conservation Commissions.

Because of the glacial origins and impeded drainage of its surface topography, Weston is particularly rich in wetlands. These vary in size and ecology from isolated, seasonally flooded forest pools of a few square meters to impressively large swamps such as the one associated with the Blaney Aquifer. Most of the wetlands in Weston are associated with streams or ponds. As such, they are designated by the State as Bordering Vegetated Wetlands. Any activity within 100 feet of wetlands and/or 200 feet of perennial streams falls under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission under the Wetlands Protection Act.

According to MassGIS data, Weston has 18 certified vernal pools and 95 potential vernal pools. Vernal pools occur across the landscape where small, woodland depressions, swales, or kettle holes collect spring runoff or intercept seasonally high groundwater tables. Some species of wildlife, such as wood frogs, spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp, are totally dependent on vernal pools for their breeding and survival, while other species, such as spring peepers, breed in vernal pools but can breed and survive in other wetland habitats. Vernal pools also support a rich and diverse invertebrate fauna. Beginning in 1987, vernal pools were also given some protection under the State's Wetlands Protection Act (WPA).

## FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

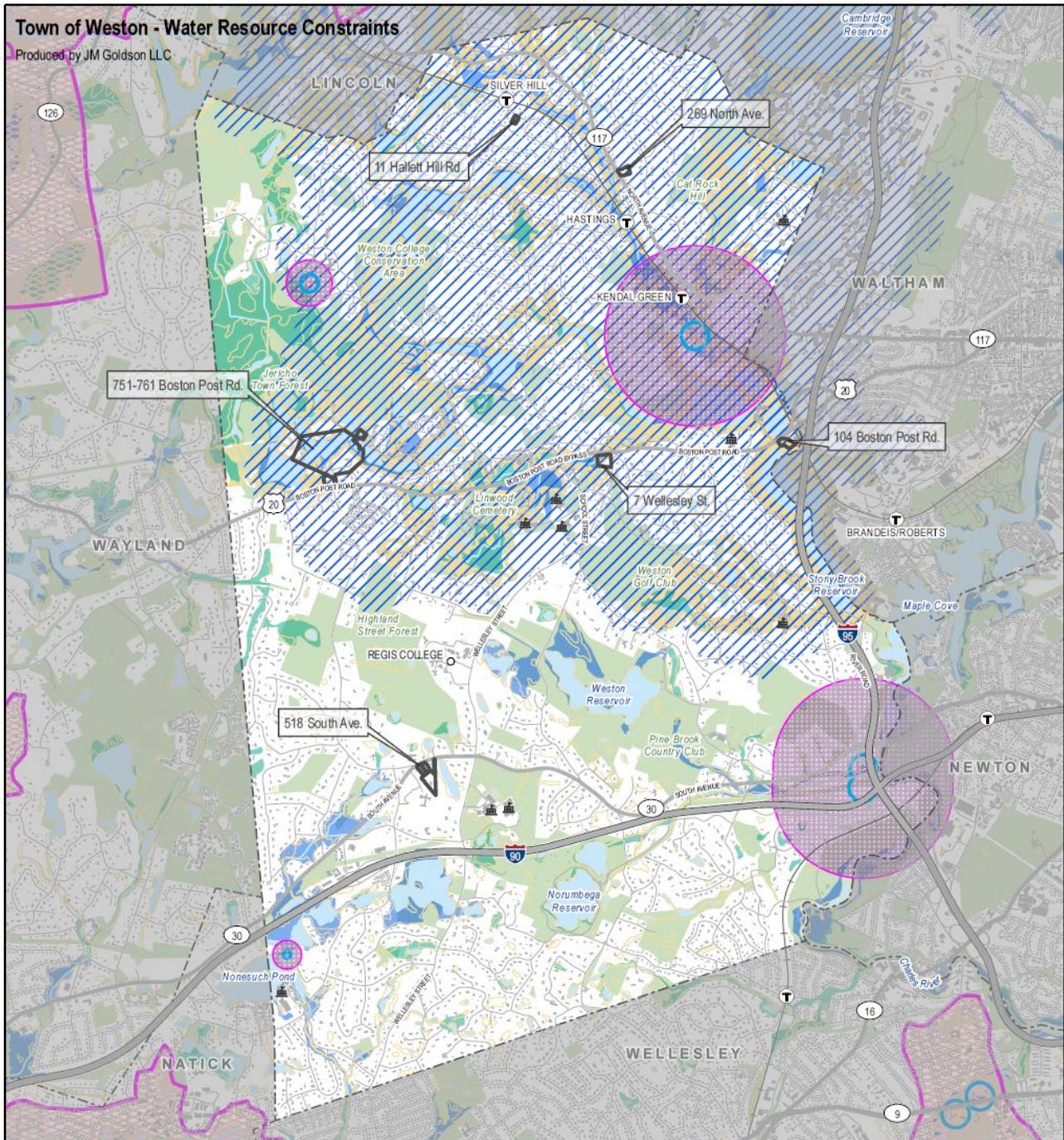
Flood prone areas are delineated in a dataset compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Areas most subject to flooding are mapped as Zones A and AE. In Weston, these flood zones have been incorporated into the Wetlands and Flood Plain Protection District, which was passed at Town Meeting in 1980.

***Outside of extreme storm events, Weston does not experience significant amounts of flooding. However, the effects of climate change have significantly increased the frequency of these storms.***

One perennial flood problem area is the peat bog behind the Town Center, where there is commercial development. This part of town is positioned between ledge outcrop to the north and a deep bog between the Boston Post Road and by-pass. The parking lot behind what is currently the Brothers grocery store, which is located at 41 Center Street, habitually floods.

In addition, the demolition of existing smaller homes with their mature landscaping and treed lots for larger homes with large lawns is affecting established water run-off, soil absorption and adding to localized flooding.

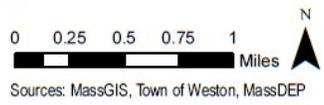
The other significant perennial flooding site in Weston is located near Pond Brook Circle, where chronic flooding problems have plagued the area for many years. The Town engaged Wright-Pierce Environmental Engineering Firm to conduct a comprehensive drainage study of the area including Glen Road, Ledgewood Road, Pond Brook Circle, Shady Hill Road, Wellesley Street, and Woodchester Drive.



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- - - Municipal Boundary
- + Commuter Rail Line
- Ⓣ Commuter Rail Station
- 🏫 Schools
- 🏠 Buildings
- 💧 Water Bodies
- 🌊 Rivers
- 🌳 Open Space
- 🏗️ Proposed 40B Sites

**Water Resource Constraints**

- 🌊 Surface Water Protection Area
- 🟡 Title 5 Setback Areas
- 🟦 Flood Zone Designations
- 🟦 100 yr. flood zone
- 🟩 500 yr. flood zone
- 🟦 DEP Approved Zone I
- 🟪 DEP Approved Zone II
- 🟪 IWPA



Sources: MassGIS, Town of Weston, MassDEP

## VEGETATION

Viewed from above, Weston appears as a large swatch of green, in stark contrast to the grey that dominates neighboring Waltham to the east and development along Route 128 (Interstate 95). Weston is approximately 50 percent forested, and its low-density residential areas and winding scenic roads are heavily treed as well. Additionally, Weston has approximately 1,000 acres of vegetated wetlands, largely red maple swamp.

## RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) list of species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern includes four vertebrate and three invertebrate species that are known to have existed historically in Weston.

Only two of these rare, threatened, or endangered species have been documented in this century but may be present and unobserved because of low levels of recent survey efforts. Eastern Box Turtle was last officially observed in Weston in 2003. Blue Spotted Salamander was last officially observed in 1978, but all towns surrounding Weston have sightings between 1990 and 2015.

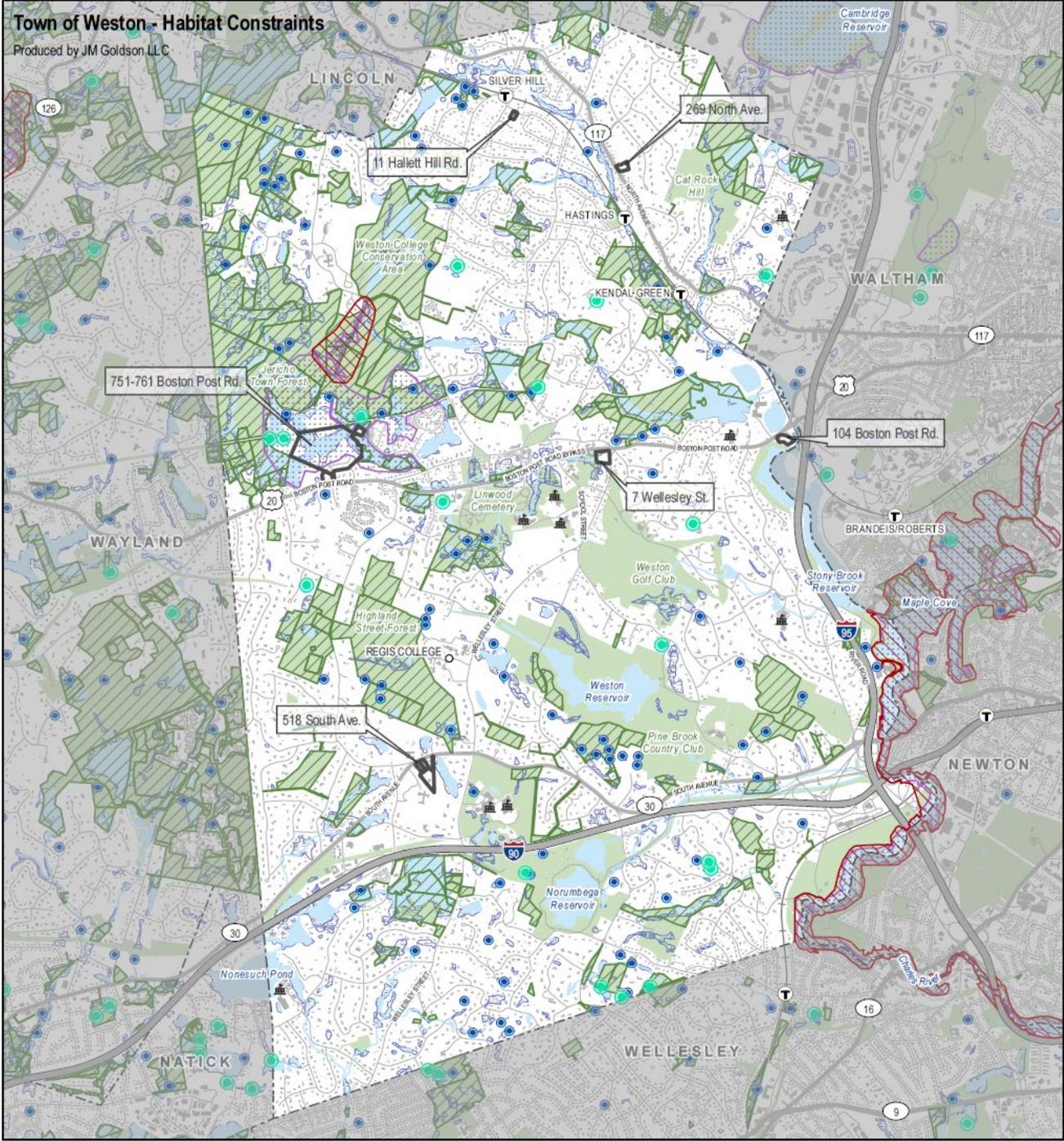
Table 11. Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern Species in Weston

| Scientific Name         | Common Name                 | Status          | Most Recent Observation |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Sharp-shinned hawk      | <i>Accipiter striatus</i>   | Special Concern | 1876                    |
| Brook Floater mussel    | <i>Alasmidonta varicose</i> | Endangered      | Historic                |
| Blue-spotted salamander | <i>Ambystoma laterale</i>   | Special Concern | 1978                    |
| Eastern pond mussel     | <i>Ligumia nasuta</i>       | Special Concern | Historic                |
| Mustard white butterfly | <i>Pieris oleracea</i>      | Threatened      | Historic                |
| Eastern box turtle      | <i>Terrapene carolina</i>   | Special Concern | 2003                    |
| Henslow's sparrow       | <i>Ammodramus henslowii</i> | Endangered      | Historic                |

Weston has two areas of Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, per NHESP's BioMap 2 project: 1) along the Charles River on the southeastern border of town and 2) in Jericho Forest between Route 20 and Concord Road. Total, these areas comprise 350 acres of Core Habitat, of which 177 acres (50.7 percent) are protected, and 155 acres of Critical Natural Landscape, of which 107 acres (68.8 percent) are protected. The Jericho Forest Core Habitat area is particularly important for spotted turtles.

**Town of Weston - Habitat Constraints**

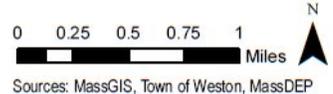
Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites

**Habitat Constraints**

- Certified Vernal Pools
- Potential Vernal Pools
- Wetlands
- BioMap2 Core Habitat
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape
- Permanently Protected Conservation Land



## SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Weston's most valued scenic resources and unique environments include large blocks of forests and wetlands, open agricultural land, viewsapes, trails, and historic resources. In addition, Weston treasures its historic resources, and its active Historical Commission and the Weston Historical Society work to preserve and protect these resources as a way of maintaining Weston's semi-rural character.

### Scenic Landscapes and Roads

*Weston's winding, scenic roads contribute to the town's semi-rural nature.*

Weston's Scenic Roads Bylaw (Article XXIII of the General Town Bylaw) and the Zoning Bylaw (Article VIII of the General Town Bylaw) both help to preserve the beauty of scenic roads, which are often lined with trees and old stone walls. This is discussed further under the Regulatory Barriers section of this report.

### Historic Resources

Weston has one Local Historic District (which is also a National Register District), 10 National Register Districts, 26 Historic Areas, and seven houses individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Although National Register Historic Districts recognize a community's significant historic resources—critical to future planning efforts – the designation provides limited control of demolition or alterations of historic buildings on private property at the federal level<sup>24</sup> and no protections at the state and local level.<sup>25</sup> Properties in historic districts are eligible for federal and state historic tax incentives for rehabilitation projects. Designation of National Register Districts includes review of nominations by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC, which is the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in Massachusetts), submission of MHC's certifying recommendations to the National Park Services, and approval of listing by the Keeper of the National Park Service.<sup>26</sup>

Note that Weston has also established one Local Historic District (Crescent Street), which is a regulatory designation and will be discussed further under the Regulatory Barriers section of this report.

#### National Register Districts include:

1. Crescent Street Historic District (also a Local Historic District)
2. Boston Post Road Historic District
3. Case's Corner Historic District
4. The Charles River Reservation Parkways
5. Glen Road Historic District
6. Kendal Green Historic District
7. Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston including the State-owned Charles River Reservation
8. Silver Hill Historic District
9. Wellington Farm Historic District (a.k.a. Gateways Farm)
10. Water Supply System of Metropolitan Boston: Weston Reservoir and Aqueduct

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<sup>24</sup> Federal oversight is triggered when there is federal involvement in a project affecting the property, such as through funding, permits, or licensing.

<sup>25</sup> *There's a Difference!* brochure, Massachusetts Historical Commission

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm>

There are also seven properties in Weston that are individually listed on the National Register: One Chestnut Street (c.1696, considered the oldest house in Weston); Samuel Train House (c.1738); Henderson House (c.1925); Harrington House (c.1710); Rev. Samuel Woodward House (c.1752); Golden Ball Tavern (c.1768); Isaac Hobbs House (c.1761). All but one of these historic houses date to the colonial era.

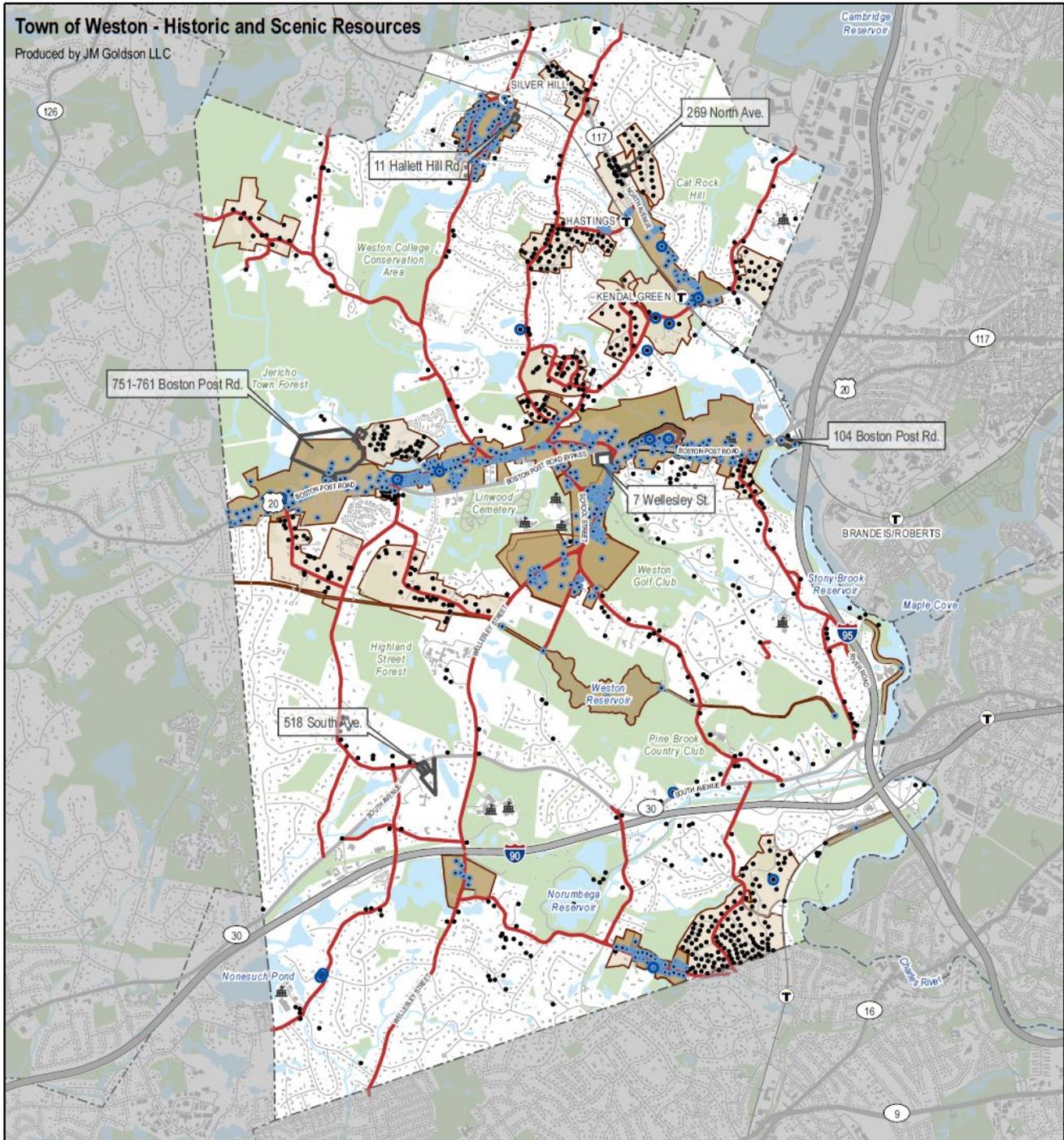
## HISTORIC AREAS

Weston has 26 historic areas. An Historic Area is a neighborhood or street documented with a Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Form A. Historic Areas must be at least 50 years old and are chosen for their historical or architectural interest, visual cohesiveness, and/or because they embody a particular sense of place. In some cases, Historic Areas in Weston were later placed on the National Register as Historic Districts.

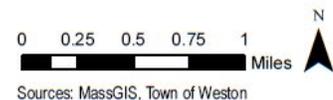
These areas are varied and include neighborhoods of various periods from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Colonial and Federal periods to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They also include rural landscapes, the Huntman Aqueduct, and the Norumbega Reservoir Area. According to a 1993-4 comprehensive survey of Weston historical resources, two of these areas (Church Street/Coburn Area and Kendal Common) may also be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

# Town of Weston - Historic and Scenic Resources

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- |                       |                    |                                 |                            |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Interstate            | Schools            | Preservation Restriction        | <b>Historic Areas</b>      |
| US or State Route     | Buildings          | National Register District Site | Local Historic District    |
| Local Road            | Water Bodies       | Historic Sites                  | National Register District |
| Municipal Boundary    | Rivers             | Scenic Roads                    | Historic Area              |
| Commuter Rail Line    | Open Space         |                                 |                            |
| Commuter Rail Station | Proposed 40B Sites |                                 |                            |



## HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES

Weston has no Federal Superfund sites. As of November 4, 2016, Weston had 89 confirmed hazardous waste sites registered with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Most of these are minor oil releases that have been or will be cleaned up.

Weston has three Activity and Use Limitation sites (AULS) registered with DEP. These are sites where oil and/or hazardous material contamination remains at a location after clean-up activities have been conducted. At these sites, certain activities and uses of the property are prohibited, and the property owner must maintain certain conditions to ensure the safe use of the property. The AUL sites in Weston are as follows:

- **133 Boston Post Road:** At the former Massachusetts Broken Stone quarry, which has been redeveloped as a corporate center, soil and groundwater have been impacted by the former quarry and asphalt operations that included on-site storage and use of waste oil, petroleum fuels, and asphaltic emulsions and tars.
- **235 Wellesley Street:** At Regis College, soils have been impacted by petroleum at the site of a former excavation tank under the Power Plant building.
- **131 Wellesley Street:** At the Case Estates, soils have been impacted by lead, arsenic, chromium, and pesticides. Remediation efforts have been completed, although it was not possible to eliminate all the AULs.

## INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

### WATER AND SEWER

#### Wastewater

A significant constraint for new large-scale development is the lack of public sewer infrastructure in Weston. As explained in the 2017 OSRP, Weston's Town Meeting voted not to join the MWRA's sewer system in the late 1960's, partially due to concerns about the path it would open up for increased development. Around that time, Town Meeting also voted against installing a sewer line along Concord and Merriam Streets to a proposed wastewater treatment facility on municipal purposes land off Merriam Street.

Most commercial, governmental, and residential properties in Weston are served by individual septic systems. Title V regulations have resulted in the replacement of old septic systems for many existing homes, a process that is slowly helping to eliminate pollution of groundwater caused by active cesspools and failing septic systems. There are currently 10 private treatment plants in operation for facilities too large for septic systems: Center Street, Pine Brook Country Club, Weston Golf Club, Winter Gardens, Jericho Village, Merriam Village, Liberty Mutual (a.k.a. Greatland Realty Partner's Riverside Campus), Biogen, Weston High School and Middle School, and 694 South Avenue. Regis College is the only entity in Weston that is legally tied into the MWRA sewer system that runs into Waltham.

Septic problems in the town center continue to be of concern, particularly due to its location in the watershed for Stony Brook Reservoir, Cambridge's water supply. Environmental constraints, including high groundwater, ledge, and proximity to wetlands and Three Mile Brook, present challenges for preventing groundwater contamination from septic systems. Additionally, there are a myriad of historic drainage conveyance systems in the town center area, and not all their locations are known.

## Drinking Water

Today, nearly all of Weston gets its drinking water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) system. According to the 2017 OSRP, Weston had its own water supply system until 1972. The Town had a pumping station at Kendal Green, two pumping stations (Nickerson Field and Fitzgerald) near the entrance to Route 90 at Route 128, and a well field on Warren Avenue. All these facilities except for the one on Warren Avenue have been abandoned due to pollution but have not been officially decommissioned to Department of Environmental Protection standards (the Warren Avenue facility was officially decommissioned in 2015). Today, there are just 100 private drinking water wells remaining active in town.

In the 1980's, the Board of Water Commissioners determined that the potential yield of local water sources was not large enough to warrant the expensive process of building and staffing a pumping station and treatment plant that would satisfy environmental requirements. These requirements are likely to become more rigorous over time and thus would have driven costs even higher. If the cost of MWRA water became expensive enough, or if usage were to increase beyond the capacity of the MWRA system, the Town would need to re-evaluate the feasibility of developing local supplies.

## SCHOOLS

Weston has five public schools: County School (pre-k-grade 3), Woodland School (pre-k-grade 3), Field School (grades 4-5), Weston Middle School (grades 6-8), and Weston High School (grades 9-12).

As discussed in the Demographic chapter, enrollment in the Weston Public Schools provides additional insight into recent population and economic trends within town. Weston's school enrollment rose steeply through the 1990's but began experiencing small ups and downs starting in the mid-2000's. Enrollment has been slowly, but steadily declining since 2013. According to Weston Public Schools annual enrollment records, in 2019-2020, Weston Public Schools experienced an overall decrease of 64 students from the previous year. Weston Public Schools projects another decrease of 34 students for the current 2020-21 school year. The decrease in the number of children attending Weston Public Schools indicates that the schools have excess capacity.

## TRANSPORTATION

### ROADS

Weston's scenic tree lined roads and neighborhoods do not safely support significant commuter traffic. Historically they are feeder paths to the larger, wider commuter routes. Cut through traffic - created by apps such as WAYZ - is dangerous to the neighborhood residents and their children. As a residential community, Weston roads are not designed for speed. There are sidewalks on a number of the larger roads, but they often do not interconnect to provide a uniform path to Weston hubs of activity. The Traffic and Sidewalk Committee is working on constructing more sidewalks as prioritized in the Sidewalk Master Plan.

***Traffic has become one of the major quality of life and safety issues for residents as well as for commuters trying to cross Weston at rush hour.***

Route 128 (Interstate 95), built between 1936 and 1956, dominates the network of roads in the area. In the 1980s, it reached 100percent of its design capacity. According to the 2017 OSRP, it is carrying 150percent. Weston's main east-west roads are used by commuters from throughout the Metrowest area. All of Weston's major east-west roads — Route 117, Route 20, and Route 30 — are also above capacity, and travelers experience significant backups during morning and evening rush hours. Traffic on several side

streets, including Wellesley, Church, and School Streets, has become increasingly congested, especially at but even beyond typical rush hours. Because of the backups, commuters look for alternative routes, but there are few.

Despite heavy commuter traffic and increased residential development, Weston has managed to sustain some of its semi-rural character by retaining the old, narrow, curving, picturesque roads that characterize the New England village. However, commuter traffic has substantially degraded the usefulness of these roads to Weston residents.

The three major east-west regional arteries (Routes 117, 20, and 30) physically divide Weston into four sections, due to the speed and volume of commuter traffic and to the width of the roads and highways. These arteries have become obstacles to residential vehicle passage between sections, since only four stoplights mediate arterial crossings in all of Weston. The most injurious effect has been to render bicycle and pedestrian crossing difficult and unsafe at almost any location.

### Public Transportation

The Fitchburg commuter train line of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has three stops in Weston: Kendal Green, Hastings, and Silver Hill. Hastings and Silver Hill are whistle stops with a severely reduced train schedule - only a few trains stopping daily. In addition, neither of these stops are handicapped accessible. Also, parking is limited to 4-5 cars at Silver Hill and at Hastings. However, the MBTA is proposing to close these two commuter rail stations.

Some Weston residents, especially those on the south side of town, commute into and out of Boston on the Framingham/Worcester line, which has three stops in Wellesley. The town is also within a short drive of Riverside Station in Newton, the last stop on the D branch of the MBTA Green Line, where express bus service is also available. Weston is not served by buses.

### Sidewalks

The picturesque roads of Weston can be treacherous for anyone traveling on bicycle, foot, or wheelchair, especially on major thoroughfares. A small percentage of these roads are bordered by footpaths or sidewalks, but these do not always connect in ways that allow for safe walking or cycling over a long distance. The town currently has about 32 miles of public and school sidewalks. In 2015, Weston's active Traffic and Sidewalk Committee prioritized new sidewalk construction, considering potential usage, ease of construction, road traffic, and connection to schools and transit.

## REGULATORY BARRIERS

In addition to environmental and infrastructure factors that affect development, local policies and regulations directly impact the location and physical attributes of development opportunities. Local zoning and permitting processes are the two primary regulatory tools that can affect housing production. When crafted thoughtfully, these tools can promote appropriate housing solutions within a semi-rural context

### ZONING DISTRICTS

This zoning analysis is almost entirely excerpted from the 2016 HPP and according to the Weston Town Planner, zoning provisions have not changed substantively since that time, with one exception: designation of 11 Hallett Hill Road as an Active Adult Residential Cluster (AARC) district which requires three acres.

Weston’s zoning maintains low residential densities to protect the environment and maintain its semi-rural nature. The Zoning Bylaw divides the town into eight (8) districts with minimum lot requirements ranging from 20,000 to 60,000 square feet in the four (4) single-family residence districts as indicated in Table 6-1. Zoning also requires substantial frontages and setbacks.

Weston’s zoning districts are shown in the table below with the associated area of each. Residence A is the largest district encompassing just over 70 percent of total zoned land area.

**The only district included on the zoning map that permits multifamily (Multiple Dwelling District B) encompasses less than ½ of a percent of total zoned land area.**

Multi-family development is limited to properties with at least approximately 5.5 acres in Multiple Dwelling District A (which is not mapped) or almost 14 acres in Multiple Dwelling District B under the Bylaw as shown in Table 6-2. Multiple District B is in one area of town – Jericho Road (off Concord Road).

Table 12. Land Area of Weston Zoning Districts

Source: MassGIS, JM Goldson calculations, 2020

| District ID | District Name                             | Area (acres)  | % of total zoned land area |
|-------------|---|---------------|----------------------------|
| AARD        | Active Adult Residential District         | 44.00         | 0.40%                      |
| BA          | Business - District A                     | 15.52         | 0.14%                      |
| BB          | Business - District B                     | 117.65        | 1.06%                      |
| CD          | Commercial District                       | 14.91         | 0.13%                      |
| MB          | Multiple Dwelling District B              | 42.85         | 0.39%                      |
| ORDD        | Order and Research & Development District | 23.16         | 0.21%                      |
| RA          | Residence - District A                    | 7,814.38      | 70.35%                     |
| RB          | Residence - District B                    | 2,027.50      | 18.25%                     |
| RC          | Residence - District C                    | 766.91        | 6.90%                      |
| RD          | Residence - District D                    | 241.41        | 2.17%                      |
|             | <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>11,108</b> | <b>100%</b>                |

Table 13. Summary of Dimensional Requirements in Single-family Residence Districts

Source: Town of Weston Zoning Bylaw, Section VI.B.

| District                  | Minimum Lot Area   | Minimum Frontage/Lot Width | Minimum Setback from Lot Line | Minimum setback from street side line | Minimum setback from street center line |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Single-family Residence A | 60,000 square feet | 250 feet                   | 45 feet                       | 60 feet                               | 85 feet                                 |
| Single-family Residence B | 40,000 square feet | 200 feet                   | 35 feet                       | 50 feet                               | 75 feet                                 |
| Single-family Residence C | 30,000 square feet | 175 feet                   | 25 feet                       | 40 feet                               | 65 feet                                 |
| Single-family Residence D | 20,000 square feet | 150 feet                   | 20 feet                       | 30 feet                               | 20 feet                                 |

Table 14. Summary of Dimensional Requirements in Multiple Dwelling Districts

Source: Town of Weston Zoning Bylaw, Section VI.B.

| Minimum Requirements   | District A   | District B |
|--|--------------|------------|
| Minimum lot area in square feet  | 240,000      | 600,000    |
| Minimum street frontage on existing public way                             | 200 feet     | 100 feet   |
| Minimum setback from street side line of existing public way               | 100 feet     | 65 feet    |
| Minimum setback from street centerline of existing public way              | 125 feet     | NA         |
| Minimum setback from lot line  | 100 feet (a) | 65 feet    |
| Square feet of land per unit (b)   | 30,000       | 10,000     |
| Number of units per building   | 2 to 8       | 4 to 8     |
| Buffer maintained in natural state, or landscaped, around perimeter of lot | 50 feet      | 25 feet    |
| Minimum garage distance from lot line                                      | 65 feet      | 45 feet    |
| Minimum setback from side line of road located within the lot              | 20           | feet       |
| Minimum setback from center line of road located within the lot            | 45 feet      | 45 feet    |
| Maximum average number of bedrooms per unit                                | 2            | NA         |
| Minimum floor area of living space in square feet                          | 750          | 750        |
| Minimum lot area in square feet  | 240,000      | 600,000    |

Notes:

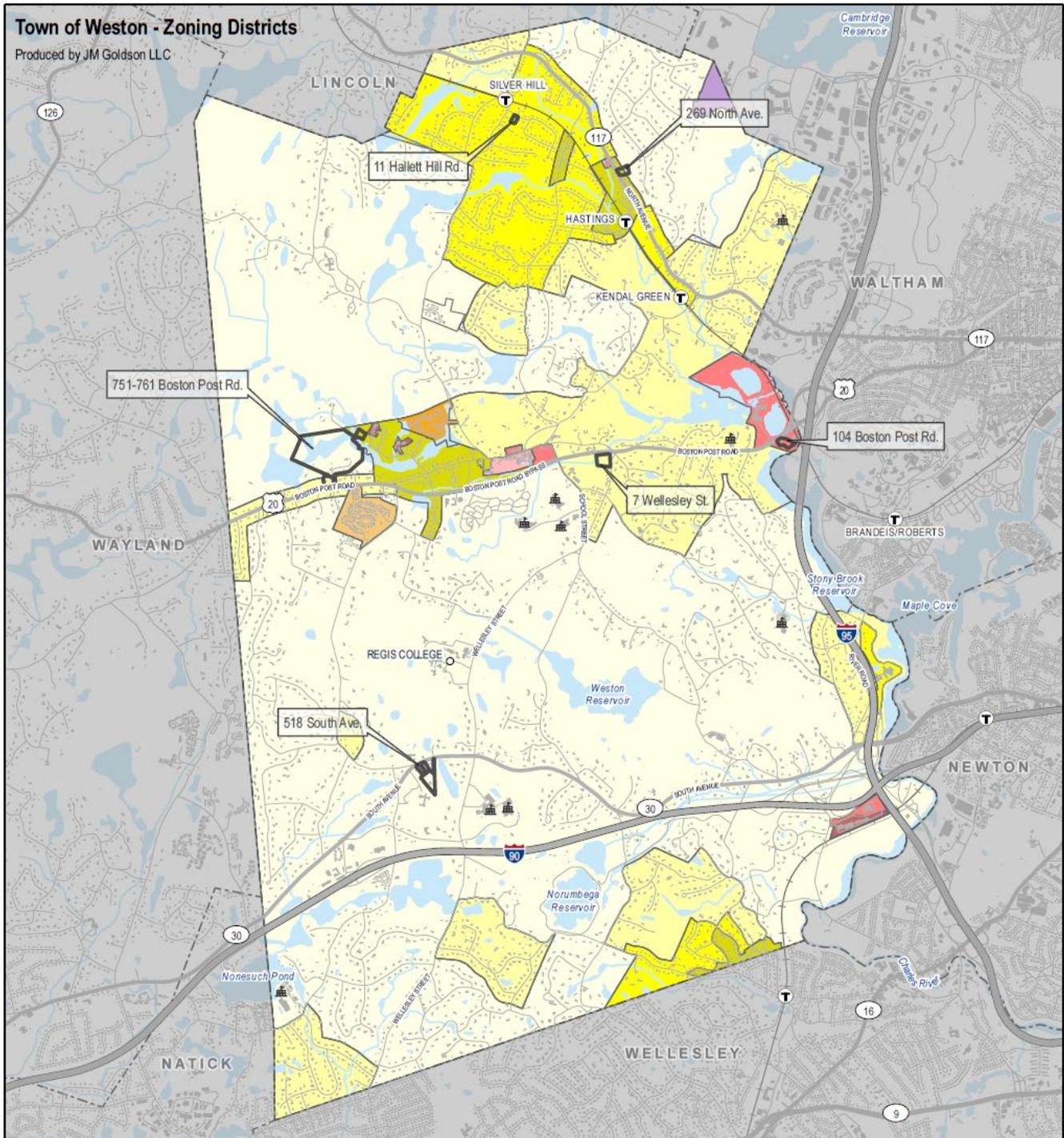
- (a) In cases where a lot line is adjacent to permanent conservation land, a railroad, or certain other types of municipal open land which in themselves serve as buffers, the minimum setback from the lot line may be 65 feet.
- (b) The number of square feet of land per unit shall consist entirely of land outside the Wetlands and Flood Plain Protection District.

Zoning defines multi-family housing as two (2) units or more not including a single-family house with an accessory apartment. Multiple Dwelling District A has not been mapped. The bylaw provisions allow the development of multi-family housing with four (4) units or less with Site Plan Approval, with five units or more also requiring a Special Permit.

There are also no provisions for allowing mixed-use residential and commercial buildings in town.

# Town of Weston - Zoning Districts

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station

- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites

### Zoning Districts

- Residence - District A
- Residence - District B
- Residence - District C
- Residence - District D
- Active Adult Residential District
- Multiple Dwelling District B
- Business - District A
- Business - District B
- Commercial District
- Office and Research & Development District

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Sources: MassGIS, Town of Weston

In the last 5 years, Weston has made progress in promoting housing options through the following zoning provisions:

### Active Adult Residential Development (AARD)

Highland Meadows was developed through the Active Adult Residential Development bylaw that was adopted to:

- Provide alternative housing for a maturing population (all dwellings are limited to those 55 years of age or older);
- Provide a type of housing which reduces residents' burdens of property maintenance as well as demands on municipal services;
- Encourage the development of affordable housing for active adults with low and moderate income, as defined in 760 CMR 45.02 (at least 10 percent of the units must be affordable and eligible for inclusion in the SHI, however some or all the affordable units may not be age-restricted); and
- Promote flexibility in site planning while protecting natural features, scenic views into property, existing vegetation and landforms and the utilization of land in harmony with neighboring properties.

An AARD is allowed in Single-family Residence Districts A or B and Business District B with Concept Plan approval by a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting and subsequent Site Plan and Special Permit Approval by the Planning Boards. AARD's must also contain at least 40 acres and meet other requirements including but not limited to the following:

- At least two (2) parking spaces per unit.
- Frontage and setback requirements of underlying zoning.
- At least 45 percent of the land area must be preserved as open space with buildings arranged efficiently or clustered.
- Density bonuses are provided for more open space and/or affordable housing.
- Maximum of 1.5 units per acre, excluding affordable units.
- No more than four (4) units per building.
- All roads within the AARD are to remain private.

### ACTIVE ADULT RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER (AARC)

In April 2020, Town Meeting approved an amendment to the AARD to incorporate provisions allowing the creation of small-scale Active Adult Residential Cluster (AARC) developments on qualifying land. Within an AARC, each of the dwelling units shall be owned and permanently occupied by at least one person aged 55 or older, and at least 12.5 percent of the dwelling units shall be affordable for purchase by persons of low or moderate income. Consistent with the current AARD Zoning By-law, all AARC developments must meet applicable General Design Guidelines and Standards set forth in the By-Law, and applicants must submit a Concept Plan to Town Meeting and receive a 2/3 vote approving said plan prior to obtaining Planning Board Site Plan Approval.

The same Town Meeting approved applying these provisions to the 255 Merriam Street and 11 Hallett Hill Road developments.

### Accessory Apartments

Accessory apartments, either as an alteration to a single-family dwelling or conversion of a detached accessory building (garage, barn, or gate house) can help diversify the housing stock by providing smaller rental units for increasing numbers of smaller households. They are also typically more affordable and can

provide income to cost burdened owners. Weston’s zoning under Section VI.G. allows both ADUs within a single-family dwelling and conversion of a detached accessory building to an ADU in any Residence District by Special Permit under the following conditions:

- The accessory unit is located on a lot that conforms to the lot area requirements of the Residence District.
- Construction of the structure to be converted, including any additions or enlargements, was completed at least ten (10) years prior to the date of the Special Permit application. Therefore, the bylaw does not allow new additions to the converted structure nor new construction that includes an accessory unit.
- The alteration will not result in an increase in building coverage, unless for safety purposes, or substantial changes to the exterior of the structure.
- The single-family dwelling to be altered must contain at least 3,000 square feet of living area, not including unfinished basements or attics.
- The proposed accessory apartment must have at least 600 square feet of gross floor area and no more than 25 percent of the single-family dwelling’s living space.
- The accessory unit must contain separate cooking facilities with one or two bathrooms but no more than two bedrooms.
- The Board of Health must issue a favorable recommendation concerning the suitability of the septic system to accommodate the accessory unit.
- There is sufficient space for at least one off-street parking space for the accessory apartment in addition to the off-street spaces required for the primary unit.
- The owner(s) of the property must reside in either the primary dwelling or accessory unit.
- A bond or cash deposit may be required for the performance of representations and agreements related to the Special Permit.
- The Special Permit will lapse with the transfer of the property unless the transferee applies for a renewal of the permit within six (6) months of the date of transfer.

### **Flexible Development**

Flexible development promotes greater flexibility and creativity in the design and layout of residential development, thus promoting smart growth principles. This allows for more compact development that will:

- Minimize the alteration of or damage to the natural and cultural features and topography of the land
- Avoid undue adverse impacts of new development on existing homes and neighborhoods
- Preserve wooded areas and other undeveloped open land particularly along Town roads
- Preserve the existing semi-rural appearance of the Town

Unlike flexible zoning provisions in some other communities, Weston’s bylaw does not include affordable housing requirements, limits development to single-family homes, and does not include density bonuses for specific public benefits.

## **OTHER REGULATORY PROVISIONS AND OVERLAY DISTRICTS**

### **Aquifer Protection Overlay District**

Section V.H. of the Zoning Bylaw establishes the Aquifer Protection Overlay (APO) Districts. The purpose of the APO Districts is to preserve and protect the quality and quantity of present and potential drinking water supplies, both public and private, and their recharge areas. This district prohibits any sewage treatment facilities, except for residential sewage disposal systems to a structure permitted as of right or by administrative site plan approval in the underlying district.

### Wetlands and Floodplain Protection District

At Town Meeting in 1980, Weston established the Wetlands and Floodplain Protection District. The official town map delineating this district is available at the Building Department. This map includes larger wetland areas but does not necessarily include all vegetated wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Protection Act. Approximately 1/6th of Weston is within the Wetland and Flood- plain Protection District. Most land within the district is undeveloped, and zoning will serve to keep it in its natural state

### Stormwater and Erosion Control Bylaw

In May 2011, Weston adopted a Stormwater and Erosion Control Bylaw at Town Meeting. The goal of the bylaw is to ensure that development, redevelopment, and land disturbance activities do not increase stormwater runoff. The Town established a Stormwater Engineer staff position as well as a Stormwater Permitting Authority, which includes the Conservation, Health, Public Works, and Planning departments, to administer, implement, and enforce the bylaw.

### Scenic Roads

Weston's Scenic Roads Bylaw (Article XXIII of the General Town Bylaw) serves to maintain the scenic beauty, aesthetic value, and historic significance of certain roads designated as Scenic Roads in Weston. It states that for a road that has been designated a Scenic Road, "any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done with respect thereto shall not involve or include the cutting down or removal of significant trees, or the tearing down, burial, relocation, or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, except with the prior written consent of the Planning Board."

The following Weston roads, or parts of roads, have been designated under the Scenic Roads Bylaw: Ash Street north of the reservoir bridge, Chestnut Street, Church Street, Conant Road, Concord Road, Crescent Street, Glen Road, Highland Street, Lincoln Street, Loring Road, Love Lane, Lexington Street, Maple Road, Merriam Street, Newton Street, Sudbury Road, Summer Street including the by-pass, and Ware Street.

The Zoning Bylaw (Article VIII of the General Town Bylaw) also recognizes Scenic Roads in its definitions. These include those roads in the Scenic Roads Bylaw as well as Boston Post Road (Route 20), North Avenue (Route 117), and South Avenue (Route 30).

***New residential construction along these roads is subject to Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.***

### Demolition Delay Bylaw

Passage of the Demolition Delay Bylaw in 1998 created a review process whereby houses constructed before 1945 are evaluated by the Weston Historical Commission for significance and, if so determined, can be protected from whole or partial exterior demolition for six months. This delay was increased to 12 months in 2015. The Demolition Delay process has helped in protecting historic resources, such as the 1934 early modernist house located at 74 Sudbury Road and 317 Glen Road, which dates to 1812. In both cases, the delay resulted in locating a buyer who wanted to preserve the house rather than demolish it.

## Local Historic District

Weston has one Local Historic District as enabled through MGL c.40C, the Historic Districts Act. A local historic district is established locally through town meeting or city council vote. It provides a regulatory review process for all changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way.<sup>27</sup>

Weston established the Crescent Street Local Historic District in 1994, which encompasses eight houses on Crescent Street. Crescent Street was originally part of the colonial “post road.” The eight houses, which range in date from about 1812 to 1920, were built by farmers, mill owners, and estate owners and reflect the evolution from rural community to suburb.

## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

The following series of mapping analysis examines potential development opportunities by exploring three factors: lot size, improvement to land value ratio, and land value.

### Lot Size

The following map shows the extent to which existing parcels comply, exceed, or fall short of the minimum lot size requirements (not including permanently protected open space). Most of Weston’s residential lots comply with or exceed the minimum lot size requirements.

### Improvement to Land Value Ratio

The improvement to land value ratio map can indicate properties that have potential value for redevelopment. When the improvement to the land (a building or parking lot, for example) is less valuable than the land itself it can indicate an opportunity for redevelopment. However, as land in Weston is some of the most expensive in the state with the exclusion of waterfront properties, the improvement to land value ratio has greatly reduced applicability in accurately indicating potential redevelopment properties. This map also highlights vacant properties (that are not permanently protected open space).

### Land Value

This map shows the land value per acre of each parcel (not including permanently protected open space).

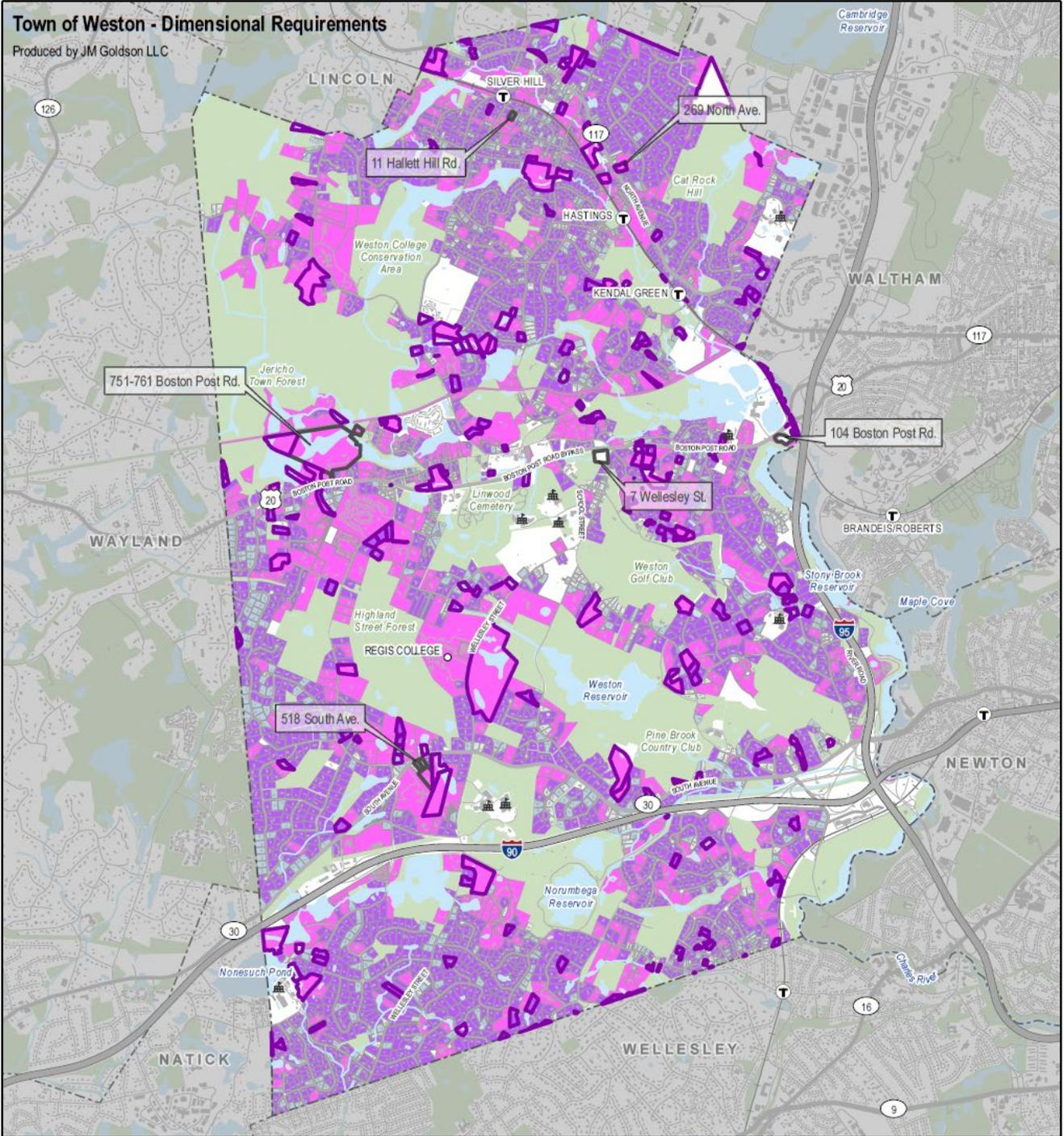
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<sup>27</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Establishing Local Historic Districts*, 2007.

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/establishinglocalhistoricdistricts.pdf>

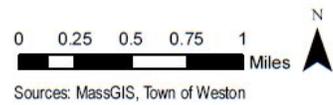
# Town of Weston - Dimensional Requirements

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



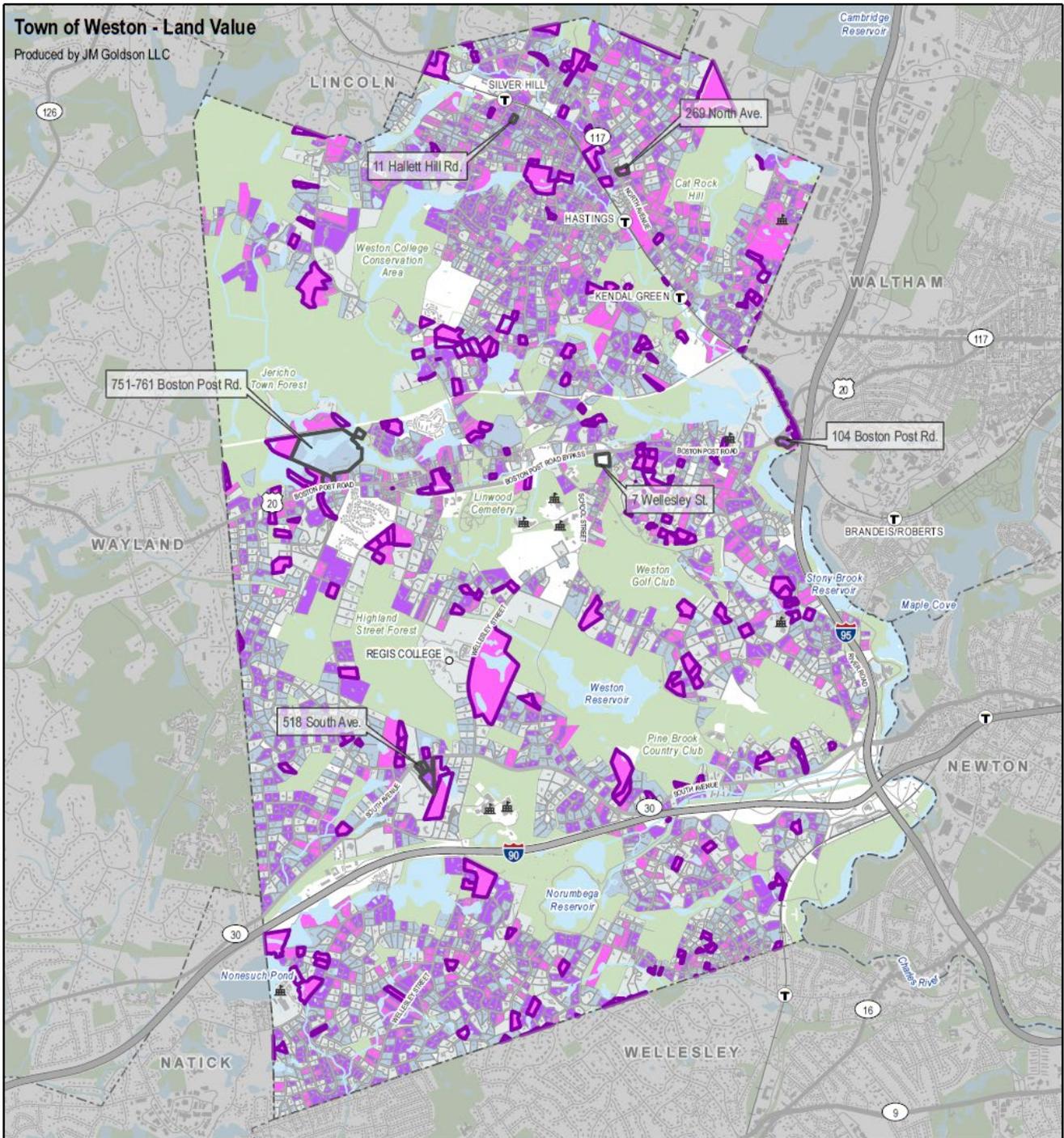
- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites

- Percent of Minimum Lot Size**
- ≤80%
  - ≤100%
  - ≤200%
  - More than 200%
  - Vacant Lots



# Town of Weston - Land Value

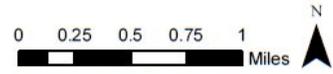
Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites

### Improved to Land Value Ratio

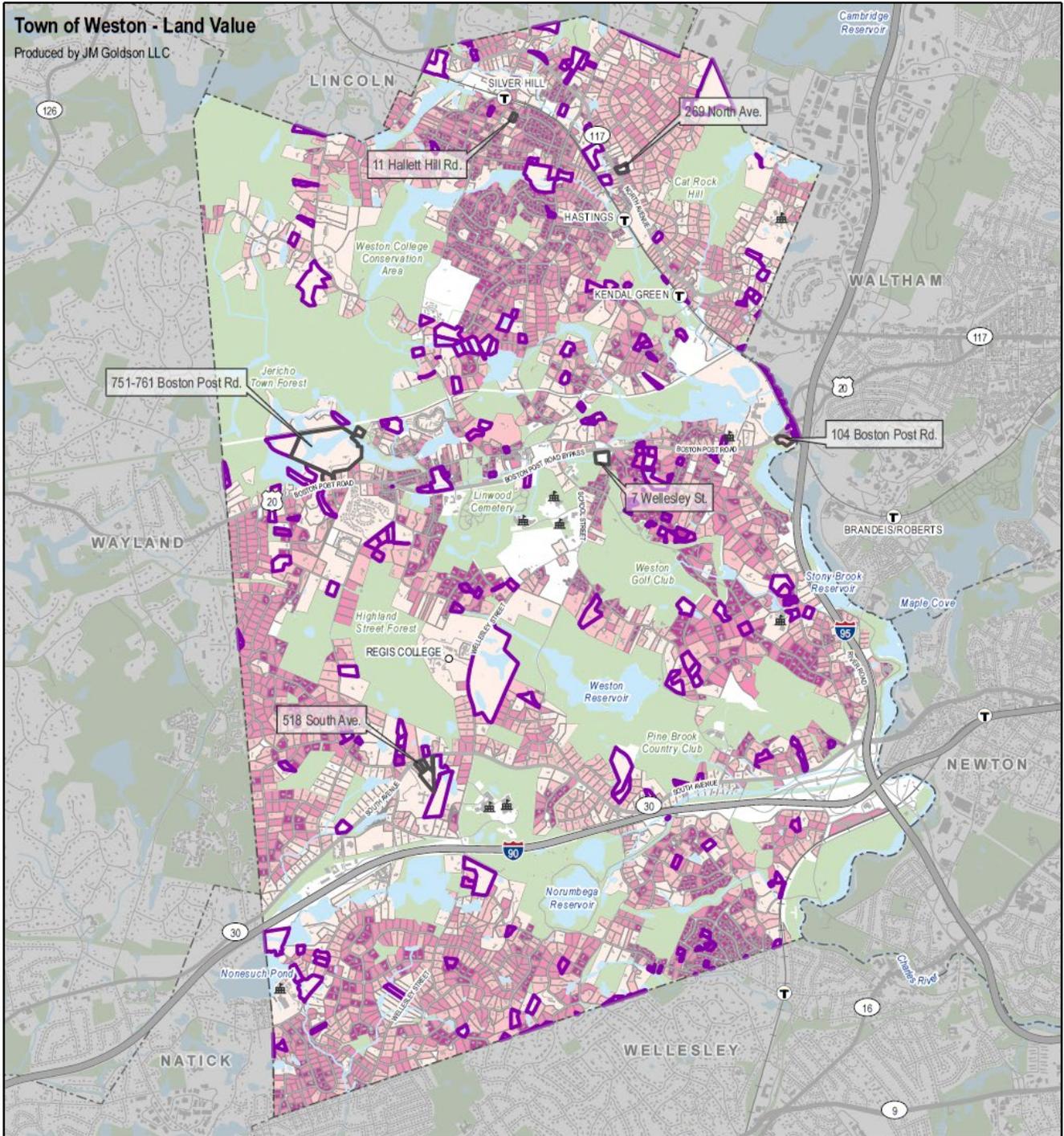
- ≤0.25
- ≤0.50
- ≤1.00
- More than 1
- Vacant Lots



Sources: MassGIS, Town of Weston

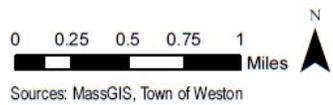
# Town of Weston - Land Value

Produced by JM Goldson LLC



- Interstate
- US or State Route
- Local Road
- Municipal Boundary
- Commuter Rail Line
- Commuter Rail Station
- Schools
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Rivers
- Open Space
- Proposed 40B Sites

| Land Value per Acre |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
|                     | \$400,000 or less |
|                     | ≤\$600,000.00     |
|                     | ≤\$800,000.00     |
|                     | \$800,000 or more |
|                     | Vacant Lots       |



# CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

This chapter describes local and regional capacity and resources for the implementation of affordable housing initiatives, including local and regional housing organizations and funds. The Town of Weston has several organizations with a focus on supporting community housing, including local government entities and non-profit organizations, as well as regional agencies that facilitate housing initiatives. In addition to the Affordable Housing Trust, Weston has an Elderly Housing Committee, the non-profit Weston Affordable Housing Foundation, Inc. (WAHFI), the Community Preservation Committee, and the Housing Committee of the Council on Aging.

Regional cooperation on housing issues is coordinated in partnership with the Regional Housing Services Office (RHSEO), Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, and other organizations that provide community resources that support and maintain affordable housing.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Existing and planned subsidized housing units are supported and managed by the Weston Affordable Housing Trust and local non-profit organizations and supported with Community Preservation Act funds.
- Older residents can access additional non-financial support for housing and other basic needs from the Weston Council on Aging, the Merriam Fund, and other regional organizations such as Springwell.
- The Regional Housing Services Office provides Weston with ongoing professional expertise to monitor progress towards affordable housing objectives and coordinate with nearby communities.
- Local collaboration with other regional organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, is continuing to provide new opportunities for homeownership in Weston.
- Non-profit organizations west of Boston, including Metro West Collaborative Development and Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council provide information and financial resources to support income-eligible residents.

## LOCAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

### WESTON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

After the completion of the 2016 Housing Production Plan, the Town merged the Weston Housing Partnership into the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT), expanding the latter's role to include oversight of Weston's activities related to affordable housing. Over the past five years, the AHT has continued to support the development of affordable housing, helped to oversee implementation of the previous HPP, reviewed projects proposed under MGL Ch. 40B and collaborated with other local and regional groups.

Some of the Trust's key accomplishments in the past five years include:

- Overseeing the creation of seven affordable housing units on Warren Avenue.
- Establishing the Homeowner Opportunity Fund through appropriation of CPA funds.
- Creating a Home Repair Grant program to make health and safety improvements to deed-restricted properties.

- Acquiring Town-owned land at 0 Wellesley Street and selecting Habitat for Humanity to develop affordable housing on the property. The Trust will contribute \$450,000 in CPA funds allocated to the Homeownership Opportunity Fund towards the development of housing on the site.
- Securing CPA funding and initiating an Emergency Rental Assistance Program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Coordinating with Select Board, Town Planner, and Community Preservation Committee to allocate funding for the update to the Housing Production Plan.

The Trust will continue to play a pivotal role in implementation of the Housing Production Plan, reviewing 40B development proposals, and continuing its existing rental assistance and home repair programs. The Homeowner Opportunity Fund will be used to seek additional opportunities to produce and support the creation of new affordable homes in Weston.

## COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is responsible for the management of the Community Preservation Fund, including the allocation for CPA funds for affordable housing. Weston approved the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2001 at the highest 3 percent surcharge. This funding has been a very important resource for supporting affordable housing efforts in addition to the other use categories of open space preservation, recreation, and historic preservation.

Since 2016, the CPC has supported affordable housing through the following appropriations:

- Allocating annual funds for staff assistance for community housing from Regional Housing Services Office (\$108,740 over five years)
- Establishing the Affordable Homeownership Opportunity Fund (\$950,000)
- Brook School Campus Building E feasibility study (\$30,000)
- Additional funding for Warren Ave. project construction (\$428,000)
- Emergency Rental Assistance Program (\$100,000)

The CPC is anticipated to continue providing funding to maintain housing staff assistance from RHSO and contributing to funds administered by the Housing Trust to help provide rental and homeownership options for low/moderate-income households in Weston.

## WESTON COUNCIL ON AGING

The Council on Aging (COA) provides a wide range of services targeted towards Weston's aging population. Based out of the Town's Senior Center, the COA offers support, advocacy, and information related to housing, health, in-home assistance, transportation, and financial and legal matters. The COA has multiple subcommittees including the Housing Committee that focuses on the housing needs of older adults. In 2019, the COA commissioned the University of Massachusetts Boston, Gerontology Institute for Social and Demographic Research to conduct the study *Aging in the Town of Weston: A community needs assessment*. Follow this link to obtain the study report:

<https://www.westonlibrary.org/DocumentCenter/View/18821/Aging-in-Weston-Needs-Assessment-Study---April-2019-PDF>

A full-time social worker is available to help connect residents to other programs and explore housing options, including potential renovations to existing housing to help seniors age in place, tax deferrals, and other local and regional funds.

## ELDERLY HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Town's Elderly Housing Committee manages and oversees operations at The Brook School Apartments. The Committee has overseen the development of a total of 75 rental units at the Brook School Apartments (55 of which are subsidized, with 51 included on the SHI). This committee, which is appointed by the Town Moderator, will continue to provide age-restricted housing, and will be involved in any future expansion of the Brook School housing complex.

## WESTON AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOUNDATION, INC.

The Weston Affordable Housing Foundation (WAHFI) was founded in 1997 as a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to help meet Weston's need for affordable housing at a neighborhood scale. WAHFI has developed and manages several small projects in town including Church Street, with a single rental unit, as well as a unit on Jones Road and a duplex on Pine Street, the latter two donated to the organization by Polly Dickson. These units are directed to those earning at or below 80 percent AMI. WAHFI owns another unit on Love Lane for tenants earning up to 100 percent AMI.

The most recent project WAHFI is undertaking is developing two 3-bedroom community housing units at 8-10 Birch Lane. Town Meeting approved appropriation of \$1,020,000 of Community Preservation Act funds to support this project at the May 2021 Town Meeting.

## WESTON COMMUNITY HOUSING, INC.

Weston Community Housing, a private, non-profit organization founded in 1977, owns and manages a total of 62 age-restricted multi-family rental housing units at Merriam Village, all of which are included on the SHI. The property was provided by the Town of Weston and is deed-restricted for residents age 60 and above who earn at or below 80 percent AMI.

## MERRIAM FUND

In 1865, Charles Merriam originated this fund for those Weston residents that are caught in a temporary situation of financial hardship. For over 156 years, this emergency fund has continued to help Weston residents with urgent short-term financial assistance. The Trustees of the Merriam Fund are appointed by the Select Board and award funds on an as-needed basis to cover basic living expenses.

# REGIONAL CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

## REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICES OFFICE

The Regional Housing Services Office (RHISO) is a collaborative effort among the nine communities of Acton, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Maynard, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston to aid in planning, permitting, monitoring, maintaining, and increasing their inventory of affordable housing. This collaboration was developed on the following premises:

- Develop a regional approach for finding common solutions for common challenges, looking at housing through a municipal lens.
- Make efficient use of resources, both leveraging knowledgeable staff and providing shared access to affordable housing opportunities for residents.
- Proactively monitor the community's Subsidized Housing Inventory to ensure the preservation of the units.

Each participating community pays an annual membership fee to cover the Office's expenses. This fee, funded by Community Preservation Funds, provides the Town of Weston with access to part-time

consultants with expertise in affordable housing. The relationship with RHSO also helps the Town of Weston stay up to date on progress towards housing production goals and other strategies being implemented in neighboring communities.

### **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF GREATER BOSTON**

Another important regional partner in addressing housing needs is Habitat for Humanity of Greater Boston. This organization is an ecumenical, non-profit Christian ministry dedicated to building simple, decent homes in partnership with families in need. The organization has grown over the past two decades into one of the largest private homebuilders in the world with almost 1,600 U.S. affiliates and over 2,000 affiliates worldwide, including one in the Greater Boston area that builds new homes for first-time homebuyers through donated land, materials, labor and funding as well as other special financing strategies. Weston's Affordable Housing Trust will continue working closely with Habitat on the 0 Wellesley Street project, as well as exploring other homeownership opportunities.

### **SPRINGWELL**

This organization, formerly known as West Suburban Elder Services, provides advocacy, services, and community grants to address the needs of seniors across several communities, including Belmont, Brookline, Newton, Watertown, Waltham, Wellesley, Weston, and Needham. Springwell is an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) under the U.S. Administration for Community Living that produces a 5-year Area Plan that highlights the needs of older adults and establishes goals and strategies for assisting vulnerable populations.

Services include information, care advice, meals, and in-home care. Special programs are also offered related to transportation, money management, nutrition, shopping assistance, friendly visitors, etc. Local organizations such as the Council on Aging can leverage senior resources offered by Springwell.

### **OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Several other non-profit and regional organizations provide resources that help Weston to address local housing needs, including:

- **Metro West Collaborative Development** – served as marketing and lottery agent for Warren Avenue housing and provides other resources related to affordable housing and quality of life.
- **Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership** – administers Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) and other rental voucher programs, provides programs to address homelessness, support tenants, and help prevent eviction and foreclosure.
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council** – regional planning agency for the Greater Boston area, MAPC provides information, data, and planning assistance to 101 communities, including Weston.
- **South Middlesex Opportunity Council** – provides programs for low-income households, including education, employment, housing, elderly services, and financial assistance for utilities.

# APPENDICES

Weston Subsidized Housing Inventory (12/2020)

Housing Type Examples

DHCD Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Guidelines

Interagency Bedroom Mix Policy

Comprehensive Permit Denial and Appeal Procedures

Summaries of Community Engagement Results

# WESTON SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY (12/2020)

## DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CH40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

### Weston

| DHCD ID #            | Project Name               | Address                                  | Type      | Total SHI Units | Affordability Expires                       | Built w/ Comp. Permit? | Subsidizing Agency |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------|-----------------|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| 3400                 | Brooks School Apartments   | 44 School Street                         | Rental    | 51              | 2025*                                       | No                     | <i>MessHousing</i> |
| 3401                 | Dickson Meadow             | Livermore Lane                           | Ownership | 6               | 2041  | Yes                    | DHCD               |
| 3402                 | Winter Gardens             | 154 Winter Street                        | Ownership | 6               | Perp  | Yes                    | DHCD               |
| 3403                 | Merriam Village            | 23 Village Road                          | Rental    | 62              | perp  | No                     | DHCD               |
| 4517                 | DDS Group Homes            | Confidential                             | Rental    | 0               | N/A   | No                     | DDS                |
| 7926                 | 809-811 Boston Post Road   | 809-811 Boston Post Road                 | Ownership | 2               | 2054  | YES                    | DHCD               |
| 7927                 | 680 South Avenue           | 680 South Avenue                         | Ownership | 4               | 2055  | YES                    | DHCD               |
| 8988                 | Church Street              | Church Street                            | Rental    | 1               | perp  | YES                    | DHCD               |
| 9013                 | Jones Road                 | Jones Road                               | Rental    | 1               | Perp  | NO                     | DHCD               |
| 9221                 | Highland Meadows           | Highland St; Boston Post Rd              | Ownership | 7               | Perp  | NO                     | DHCD               |
| 9380                 | Pine Street                | Pine Street                              | Rental    | 2               | Perp  | YES                    | DHCD               |
| 9815                 | Warren Avenue              | Warren Avenue                            | Rental    | 7               | Perp  | YES                    | DHCD               |
| 10029                | Viles Street               | Viles Street                             | Rental    | 2               | Perp  | NO                     | DHCD               |
| 10145                | The Village at Silver Hill | 255 Merriam Street; 11 Hallett Hill Road | Ownership | 0               | Perp  | YES                    | <i>MessHousing</i> |
| 10146                | Kendal Village             | 269 North Avenue                         | Rental    | 0               | Perp  | YES                    | <i>MessHousing</i> |
| 10559                | Modera Weston              | 0, 751, & 761 Boston Post Road           | Rental    | 180             | Perp  | YES                    | <i>MessHousing</i> |
| <b>Weston Totals</b> |                            |  |           | 331             | <b>Census 2010 Year Round Housing Units</b> |                        | 3,952              |
|                      |                            |  |           |                 | <b>Percent Subsidized</b>                   |                        | 8.38%              |

12/21/2020

Weston  
Page 1 of 1

This data is derived from information provided to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) by individual communities and is subject to change as new information is obtained and use restrictions expire.



# HOUSING TYPE EXAMPLES

## Town Houses and Two-Families



JMGOLDSON.COM

Sources: Cape Cod Community Resiliency by Design/Union Studio; Massachusetts Housing Partnership; Weston Affordable Housing Foundation



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# HOUSING TYPE EXAMPLES

## Small-Mid Sized Multifamily



JMGOLDSON.COM

Sources: Massachusetts Housing Partnership; Civico, New Atlantic Development, JM Goldson



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## HOUSING TYPE EXAMPLES

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### *Larger Multifamily*



Sources: Trinity Financial, Concord Mews, JM Goldson

JMGOLDSON.COM



## DHCD AFFIRMATIVE FAIR HOUSING MARKETING GUIDELINES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a compelling interest in creating fair and open access to affordable housing and promoting compliance with state and federal civil rights obligations. Therefore, all housing with state subsidy or housing for inclusion on the SHI shall have an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan. To that end, DHCD has prepared and published comprehensive guidelines that all agencies follow in resident selection for affordable housing units.

In particular, the local preference allowable categories are specified:

- *Current Residents.* A household in which one or more members is living in the city or town at the time of application. Documentation of residency should be provided, such as rent receipts, utility bills, street listing, or voter registration listing.
- *Municipal Employees.* Employees of the municipality, such as teachers, janitors, firefighters, police officers, librarians, or town hall employees.
- *Employees of Local Businesses.* Employees of businesses located in the municipality.
- *Households with Children.* Households with children attending the locality's schools.

These were revised on June 25, 2008, removing the formerly listed allowable preference category, "Family of Current Residents."

The full guidelines can be found here: <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/hd/fair/afhmp.pdf>.

# INTERAGENCY BEDROOM MIX POLICY

## INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

### Regarding Housing Opportunities for Families with Children

This Interagency Agreement (this "Agreement") is entered into as of the 17th day of January, 2014 by and between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting by and through its Department of Housing and Community Development ("DHCD"), the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund Board ("MHP"), the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (in its own right and in its capacity as Project Administrator designated by DHCD under the Guidelines for Housing Programs in Which Funding is Provided By Other Than a State Agency, "MassHousing"), the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency ("MassDevelopment") and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation ("CEDAC"). DHCD, MHP, MassHousing, MassDevelopment and CEDAC are each referred to herein as a "State Housing Agency" and collectively as the "State Housing Agencies".

### Background

A. DHCD's 2013 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice ("AI") includes action steps to improve housing opportunities for families, including families with children, the latter being a protected class pursuant to fair housing laws, including the federal Fair Housing Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 3601 *et seq.*) and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151B. In order to respond to development patterns in the Commonwealth that disparately impact and limit housing options for families with children, such steps include requiring a diversity of bedroom sizes in Affordable Production Developments that are not age-restricted and that are funded, assisted or approved by the State Housing Agencies to ensure that families with children are adequately served.

B. The State Housing Agencies have agreed to conduct their activities in accordance with the action steps set forth in the AI.

C. This Agreement sets forth certain agreements and commitments among the State Housing Agencies with respect to this effort.

### Definitions

1) "Affordable" - For the purposes of this Agreement, the term "Affordable" shall mean that the development will have units that meet the eligibility requirements for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory ("SHI").

2) "Production Development" - For purposes of this Agreement "Production Development" is defined as new construction or adaptive reuse of a non-residential building and shall include rehabilitation projects if the property has been vacant for two (2) or more years or if the property has been condemned or made uninhabitable by fire or other casualty.



Agreements

NOW, THEREFORE, DHCD, MHP, MassHousing, MassDevelopment and CEDAC agree as follows:

Bedroom Mix Policy

- 1) Consistent with the AI, it is the intention of the State Housing Agencies that at least ten percent (10%) of the units in Affordable Production Developments funded, assisted or approved by a State Housing Agency shall have three (3) or more bedrooms except as provided herein. To the extent practicable, the three bedroom or larger units shall be distributed proportionately among affordable and market rate units.
- 2) The Bedroom Mix Policy shall be applied by the State Housing Agency that imposes the affordability restriction that complies with the requirements of the SHI.
- 3) The Bedroom Mix Policy shall not apply to Affordable Production Developments for age-restricted housing, assisted living, supportive housing for individuals, single room occupancy or other developments in which the policy is not appropriate for the intended residents. In addition, the Bedroom Mix Policy shall not apply to a Production Development where such units:
  - (i) are in a location where there is insufficient market demand for such units, as determined in the reasonable discretion of the applicable State Housing Agency; or
  - (ii) will render a development infeasible, as determined in the reasonable discretion of the applicable State Housing Agency.
- 4) Additionally, a State Housing Agency shall have the discretion to waive this policy (a) for small projects that have less than ten (10) units and (b) in limited instances when, in the applicable State Housing Agency's judgment, specific factors applicable to a project and considered in view of the regional need for family housing, make a waiver reasonable.
- 5) The Bedroom Mix Policy shall be applicable to all Production Developments provided a Subsidy as defined under 760 CMR 56.02 or otherwise subsidized, financed and/or overseen by a State Housing Agency under the M.G.L. Chapter 40B comprehensive permit rules for which a Chapter 40B Project Eligibility letter is issued on or after March 1, 2014. The policy shall be applicable to all other Affordable Production Developments funded, assisted, or approved by a State Housing Agency on or after May 1, 2014.



## COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT DENIAL AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

(a) If a Board considers that, in connection with an Application, a denial of the permit or the imposition of conditions or requirements would be consistent with local needs on the grounds that the Statutory Minima defined at 760 CMR 56.03(3)(b or c) have been satisfied or that one or more of the grounds set forth in 760 CMR 56.03(1) have been met, it must do so according to the following procedures. Within 15 days of the opening of the local hearing for the Comprehensive Permit, the Board shall provide written notice to the Applicant, with a copy to the Department, that it considers that a denial of the permit or the imposition of conditions or requirements would be consistent with local needs, the grounds that it believes have been met, and the factual basis for that position, including any necessary supportive documentation. If the Applicant wishes to challenge the Board's assertion, it must do so by providing written notice to the Department, with a copy to the Board, within 15 days of its receipt of the Board's notice, including any documentation to support its position. The Department shall thereupon review the materials provided by both parties and issue a decision within 30 days of its receipt of all materials. The Board shall have the burden of proving satisfaction of the grounds for asserting that a denial or approval with conditions would be consistent with local needs, provided, however, that any failure of the Department to issue a timely decision shall be deemed a determination in favor of the municipality. This procedure shall toll the requirement to terminate the hearing within 180 days.

(b) For purposes of this subsection 760 CMR 56.03(8), the total number of SHI Eligible Housing units in a municipality as of the date of a Project's application shall be deemed to include those in any prior Project for which a Comprehensive Permit had been issued by the Board or by the Committee, and which was at the time of the application for the second Project subject to legal appeal by a party other than the Board, subject however to the time limit for counting such units set forth at 760 CMR 56.03(2)(c).

(c) If either the Board or the Applicant wishes to appeal a decision issued by the Department pursuant to 760 CMR 56.03(8)(a), including one resulting from failure of the Department to issue a timely decision, that party shall file an interlocutory appeal with the Committee on an expedited basis, pursuant to 760 CMR 56.05(9)(c) and 56.06(7)(e)(11), within 20 days of its receipt of the decision, with a copy to the other party and to the Department. The Board's hearing of the Project shall thereupon be stayed until the conclusion of the appeal, at which time the Board's hearing shall proceed in accordance with 760 CMR 56.05. Any appeal to the courts of the Committee's ruling shall not be taken until after the Board has completed its hearing and the Committee has rendered a decision on any subsequent appeal.

Source: DHCD Comprehensive Permit Regulations, 760 CMR 56.03(8).

# SUMMARIES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

## WESTON HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

### Webinar #1 Summary

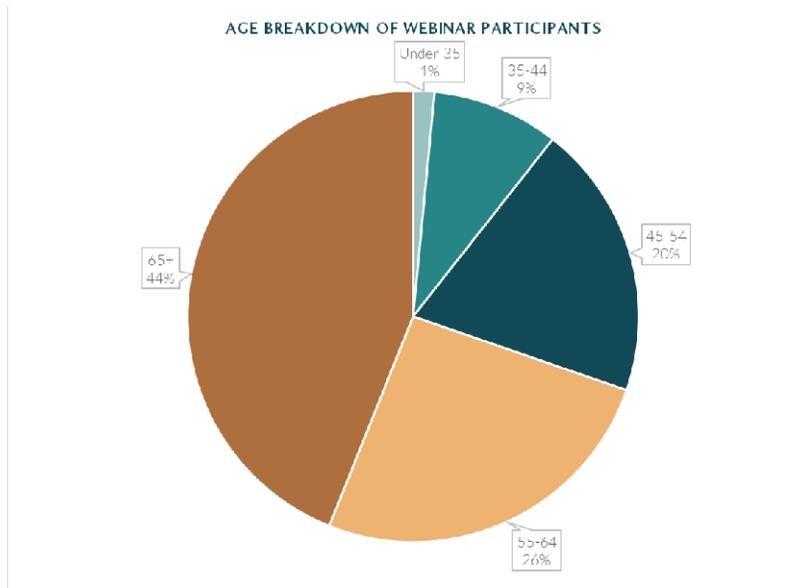
Prepared by JM Goldson LLC 12/22/2020

#### Summary

The Weston Housing Production Plan Steering Committee hosted a Zoom webinar to provide the community with an overview of the Housing Production Plan update process and collect initial input on the Town's housing priorities and concerns. The webinar was presented by a panel consisting of the HPP committee chair, Town Planner, and planning consultants from the Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO) and JM Goldson LLC.

The webinar was organized around four topics: introducing the purpose of the project, a summary of the Housing Needs Assessment, presentation of the development constraints analysis, and a review of the project schedule and opportunities for community engagement. Participants were invited to interact with the panel through a series of polling questions about affordable housing, responding to discussion questions in the chat, and asking for more information using the Q&A function.

Over 60 community members participated in the webinar, many of whom were over age 65 (44 percent), with an additional 26 percent between the ages of 55 and 64.



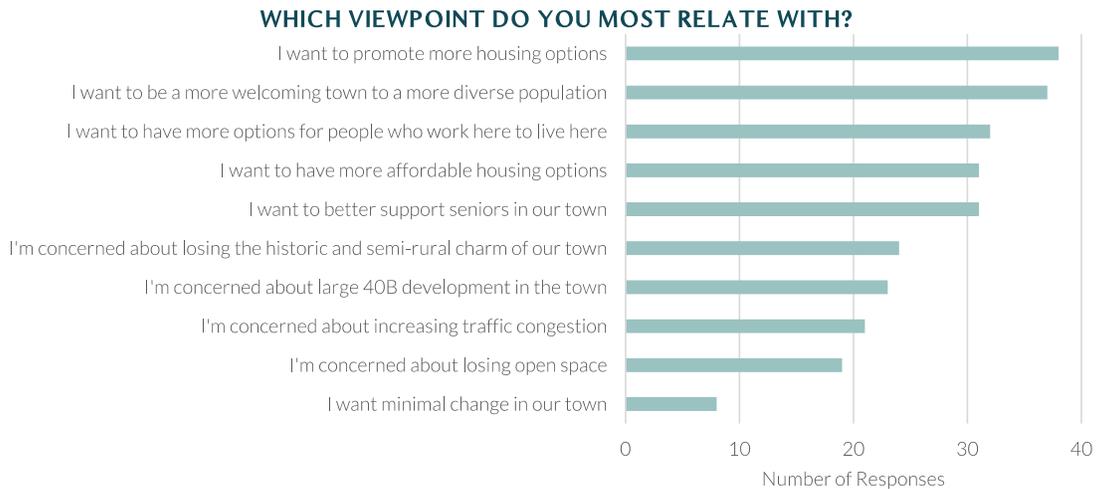
## Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #1 Summary

### Presentation

Members of the panel shared background information on the Housing Production Plan and key concepts, including Chapter 40B, the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and achieving safe harbor through certification of the HPP. The presentation covered a range of topics, including:

- Summary of the Housing Needs Assessment conducted by RHSO
- Update on the status of pending 40B development projects
- An initial look at the development constraints analysis and maps
- Opportunities for community engagement throughout the plan update process

Several polling questions were shared over the course of the presentation, which solicited more information about webinar participants and their understanding of housing needs and demographics in Weston. The final polling question of the evening provided some additional insights on shared housing priorities among members of the Weston community:



### Community Questions and Comments

Over the course of the webinar, more than 50 questions were asked and answered, a summary of these can be found as an attachment to this memo. At the beginning of the webinar, participants were also asked "If you had a magic wand to address housing issues in your community, what would your top 3 wishes be?" The responses to this question are presented below:

*"I would like to see a CCRC - a Continuous Care Retirement Community."*

*"A variety of rental as well as ownership options." "More local control over affordable housing."*

*"More affordable housing, truly green in concept and construction, that is focused on community building and pride with an eye towards inclusion."*

*"Not assuming that Brook School is the one option we should continue to expand."*

## Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #1 Summary

*"A community where all seniors could be in close proximity to the COA regardless of mobility issues, and enjoy a vibrant, interactive, and social living environment with additional services nearby—i.e. post office, coffee shop, library, common outdoor areas, etc. I envision a senior living environment that is a little less-silo'ed and isolated, and one that is more communal."*

*"1) Maintain open spaces and rural/historic viewsapes, 2) increase the diversity of housing options yielding naturally mixed income communities, 3) ADUs by right (along with conversion of single-families over 3000 sf into duplexes."*

*"Sincerity in our planning; we can't keep saying 'we want affordable housing' and then have everyone oppose it in their area."*

*"Develop housing near Town Center and/or transportation to allow folks to walk to stores and/or take public transport easily."*

*"Environmentally sound" "Vibrant center" "Strong education" "Maintain neighborhood character."*

*"Allow for in law apartments" "Allow for spots in town for mini houses."*

*"More affordable housing" "Undo historical racial bias in suburban planning."*

*"Reverse the trend of knocking down homes to build Mc Mansions. Find funds to but the Christian Science Monitor Building and convert it to affordable housing. Create a affordable housing building fund by taxing houses value in excellent of 3 Million dollars at a higher rate."*

*"Address the true need by looking at the demographic data, ensure that a project fits seamlessly in a neighborhood and scattered throughout the Town, provide support to residents"*

*"Locate affordable housing near shopping and public transport stations"*

*"As a long time Weston resident (1959-present), I see that gentrification has meant that there are far fewer "townies" of the trades, service, town employee type people living in town."*

*"I would want to see scattered sites for smaller affordable housing developments, more inter-generational and finally more diverse residency in the same."*

*"I would wish that in Weston we could develop housing near Town Center and/or transportation to allow folks to walk to stores and/or take public transport easily. I also wish that the housing be developed sustainably and with resource efficiency in mind so residents have low utility bills."*

*"Top wishes: community housing that would enable more town employees to live here; starter homes for younger families; smaller scale housing better suited for older residents who are currently over-housed"*

*"I think that we need to include the middle class people in our town through the preservation of 1st time buyers. We have low income housing and we have most smaller homes being torn down and larger, more expensive houses being built which middle class can't buy. We don't want high cost homes and low income- we need middle class. I know that you don't have legislative powers- but developers should need two entrances on different streets when their development is over 25 units."*

*"That any new affordable housing actually be built at an affordable price. Past proposals have had very high building costs despite the fact that the land was free and there was existing infrastructure."*

**Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #1 Summary**

Additionally, a set of four final discussion questions were presented and participants were asked to provide their responses in the chat. The following table is a summary of the responses that were shared with panelists.

| 1. What do you think are the most pressing housing issues in Weston?   | 2. What do you think are Weston's greatest strengths or opportunities to address housing issues?  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Condos for seniors to downsize and stay in Weston</i></li> <li>• <i>racial diversity</i></li> <li>• <i>Affordable and smaller sq ft units for seniors to be able to stay in town AND lowering the barrier for younger couples/families to afford homes</i></li> <li>• <i>not enough affordable housing for families with school age children which has resulted in declining school enrollment</i></li> <li>• <i>People who work in Weston can live in Weston. Weston residents can downsize and still live in Weston.</i></li> <li>• <i>We seem to have lost control and have become an attractive target for the types of 40B projects that will not be good for the town.</i></li> <li>• <i>The under a million housing stock is small and dwindling</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Abundance of open space. Everyone appreciates the open space, but I doubt there would be a significant difference if we gave up say 10% of our open space, which could have a significant impact on available housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Policy is an opportunity - Zoning and bylaw opportunities to encourage certain types of development</i></li> <li>• <i>change zoning rules so that people can add rental units if it meets affordability criterion</i></li> <li>• <i>Large houses that could be divided up into condos/apts if large-house-market collapses (and zoning permitted)</i></li> </ul>                                      |
| 3. What do you think are the greatest obstacles?   | 4. What are 3 priorities that you hope the HPP can help the Town address in the coming 5 years?   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It is easier to shoot something down rather than get something approved. Merriam Street is a great example. A very reasonable proposal was, I believe, stopped by abutters and we lost an opportunity to add stock</i></li> <li>• <i>Lack of available property of sufficient size or smaller lots that do not have abutters that will automatically object</i></li> <li>• <i>misinformation set out by some that 40B is some kind of boogy man</i></li> <li>• <i>Lack of available land to build a well thought out and planned housing community</i></li> <li>• <i>As open land comes available, the Town transfers [or] purchases it for Conservation Land. Similarly the Town transfers recreation land to conservation land.</i></li> <li>• <i>focus on the needs of current Weston residents and not prospective residents such as people who work in Weston or residents of neighboring communities who may want to live in Weston</i></li> <li>• <i>If I was a developer and I had 5 acres I would build a few big expensive houses because anything else will be months/years in meetings and in court</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Distributed housing throughout the town, not huge concentrations</i></li> <li>• <i>housing for town employees</i></li> <li>• <i>any newly created housing sponsored by the town make economic sense as a viable investment</i></li> <li>• <i>Priorities: (1) Identify new and innovative opportunities/partnerships for new housing (2) Establish rigorous green building/sustainability requirements for any new development (3) make Weston more diverse (economic and ethnic)</i></li> <li>• <i>actively working with organizations like Habitat for Humanity to create small affordable projects that actually help people</i></li> </ul> |

## WESTON HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

### Webinar #2 Summary

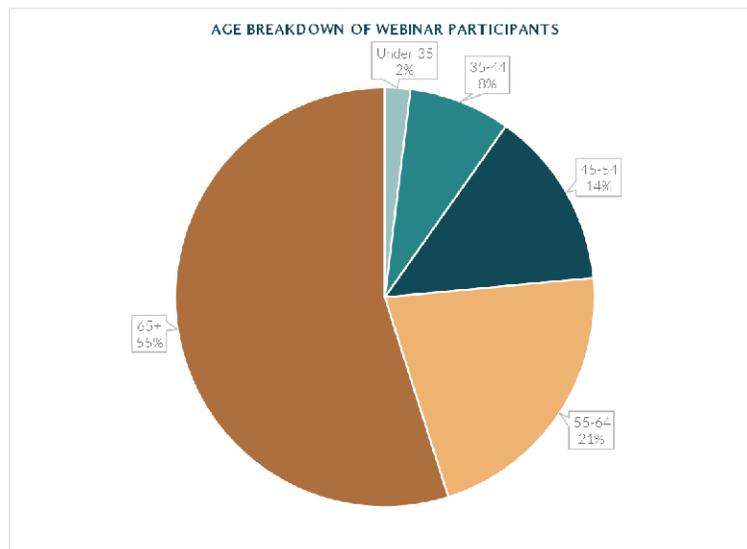
Prepared by JM Goldson LLC 3/12/2021

#### Summary

The Weston Housing Production Plan Steering Committee hosted the second Housing Production Plan Update Zoom webinar on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to provide the community with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft goals and strategies for addressing the Town's housing needs. The webinar was presented by a panel consisting of the HPP committee chair, Town Planner, and planning consultants from the Regional Housing Services Office (RHCO) and JM Goldson LLC.

The webinar was organized around four topics: a review of housing needs for different household types, an update on the status of permitted and proposed 40B developments and progress towards the 10% subsidized housing goal, examples of a range of housing types, and a summary of housing strategies and potential sites. Participants were invited to interact with the panel through a series of polling questions about affordable housing, responding to discussion questions in the chat, and asking for more information using the Q&A function. Written feedback is provided in the appendix.

A total of 65 community members participated in the webinar, many of whom were over age 65 (55 percent, 11 percent more than the first webinar), and 21 percent between the ages of 55 and 64.



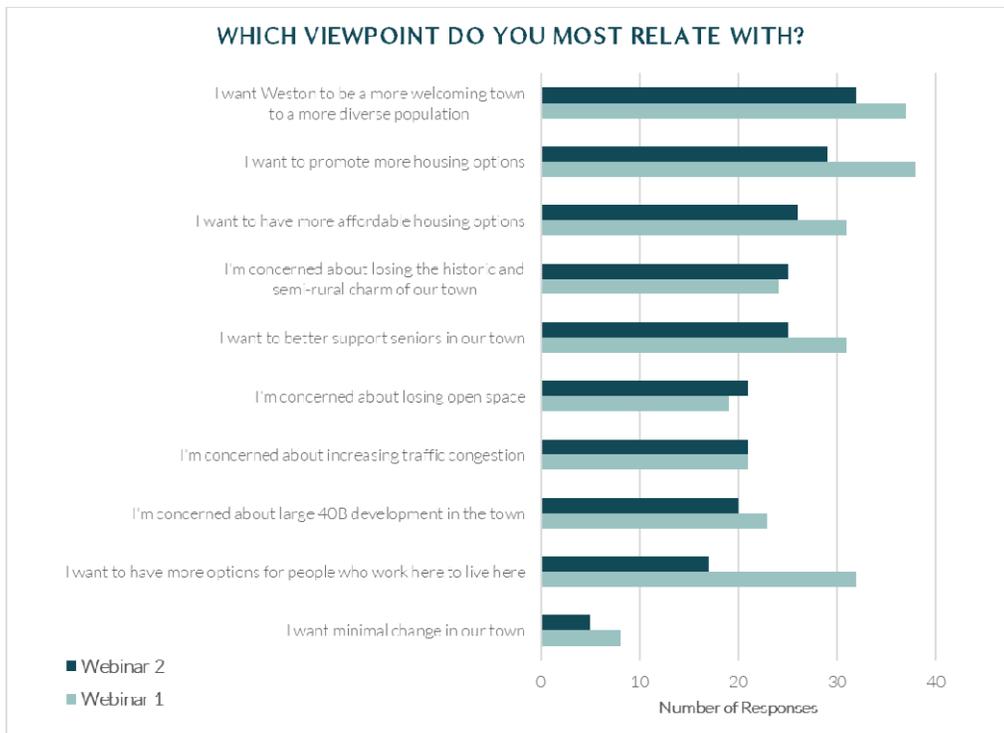
**Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #2 Summary**

**Presentation**

Members of the panel shared background information on the Housing Production Plan and key concepts, including Chapter 40B, the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and achieving safe harbor through certification of the HPP. The presentation covered a range of topics, including:

- Housing Production Plan background information and key terms
- A review of housing needs for different household types and income levels
- Update on the status of 40B developments and the Subsidized Housing Inventory
- A summary of public engagement to date and what we heard from the community
- An overview of different housing typologies, including examples from Massachusetts
- Strategic locations for future housing development at different scales
- A summary of strategies for zoning, local initiatives, and capacity enhancements

Several polling questions were shared over the course of the presentation, which solicited more information about their priorities and preferences related to future housing types and locations. One question was repeated from the first webinar, in order to understand the viewpoints of those in attendance. Many responses were similar to the first webinar; however, there were fewer people who were focused on housing for people who work in Weston.



The responses to other polling questions are summarized in the following table, which shows that most participants were generally in agreement with the sentiment behind the goals and strategies presented in the webinar.

Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #2 Summary

| Poll Questions  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Undecided |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Promoting a welcoming and diverse community is an important community goal. Do you ...  | 33             | 11    | 1        | 0                 | 5         |
| Architectural design standards to ensure sensitive and compatible design are important for Weston. Do you ...   | 31             | 15    | 3        | 1                 | 0         |
| Overall, the draft goals/strategies provide a reasonable framework to expand housing options in Weston while honoring our community assets and characteristics. Do you ...    | 19             | 21    | 1        | 1                 | 5         |
| Expanding the variety of housing options could benefit the community. Do you ...  | 33             | 10    | 1        | 0                 | 6         |
| Creating housing options through reuse of existing buildings could be a good way to create multi-family options and preserve some of Weston's historic buildings. Do you ...  | 35             | 9     | 1        | 0                 | 5         |
| In general, the three types of strategic locations are a good framework for encouraging different types of development in different contexts within the community. Do you ... | 21             | 18    | 1        | 1                 | 6         |

Strategic Locations for Housing

Several sites were identified as potential candidates for future housing, based on a review of potential development sites with the HPP steering committee and Town staff. These sites ranged from smaller scale infill and redevelopment to larger multifamily projects on commercial land that has fewer residential abutters. The following is a summary of each type of site, as presented in the webinar slides, as well as feedback from attendees on the different options that were provided.

Type 1: Smaller Infill and Reuse of Existing Buildings

## SITES: TYPE 1. SMALLER INFILL AND REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Smaller two-family, cottages, other *small infill* development, and *reuse of existing buildings* for multiple units including historic preservation

- #1. Historic Fire Station (Kendal Green/North Ave)
- #3. Case Estates Parcels 4 and 5
- #5. Campion Center (reuse of existing building)
- #6. Sunrise Property (Drabblington)
- #8. Christian Science Property (reuse of existing building)

cottage units

2 units

Drabblington

Old Firehouse

Campion Center

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**Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #2 Summary**

*"love your ideas for locations, especially Campion and Regis."*

*"Liked best- variety of housing options & especially using historic building as housing; like least- new development of historic buildings."*

*"Love the old firehouse on North Ave, Christian Science, Pope St. John... all the institutional properties."*

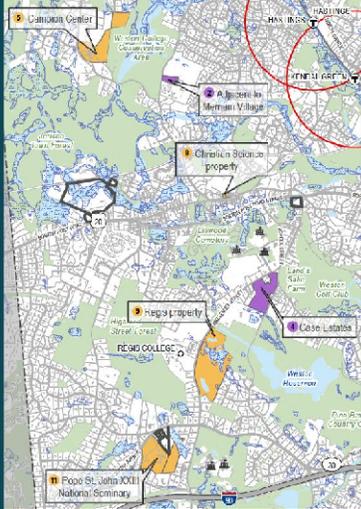
*"I'm concerned about large isolated projects. I would prefer scattered sites that become part of existing neighborhoods."*

**Type 2: Potential Development through New Local Zoning Tools**

**SITES: TYPE 2. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH NEW LOCAL ZONING TOOLS**

*Sensitively-designed development in context with existing neighborhood including projects that emphasize open space and natural resource conservation*

- #2. Adjacent to Merriam Village
- #4. Case Estates Parcels 2 and 9
- #5. Campion Center (new development)
- #8. Christian Science Property (new development)
- #9. Regis College property
- #11. Pope St. John XXIII Property



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*"love idea of turnpike property for level 3 housing- great idea!!! do not like idea of housing at Regis College location"*

*"love idea of campion center for housing- beautiful building to save and have housing options"*

*"I do not like the Type 3 approach. It smacks of NIMBY. Occupants could sleep there but then be expected to leave town. I also dislike cluster zoning; it encourages segregation by income."*

*"I would disagree with your comment that you're not taking away people's rights by changing zoning. You are taking away the rights of the abutters (existing residents) by increasing density."*

*"Initially didn't like idea of a level 3 housing option but the site locations that you presented changed my mind and I think those locations could be great for a larger building."*

**Weston Housing Production Plan – Webinar #2 Summary**

**Type 3: Potential 40B Development**

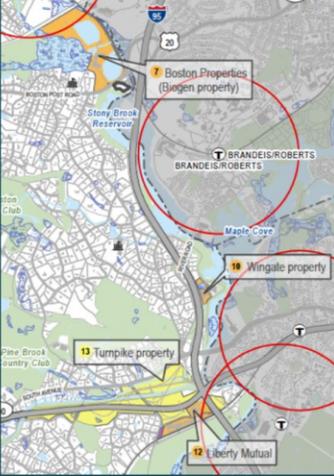
## SITES: TYPE 3. POTENTIAL 40B DEVELOPMENT

Previously developed institutional or commercial properties with good highway access and limited residential abutters

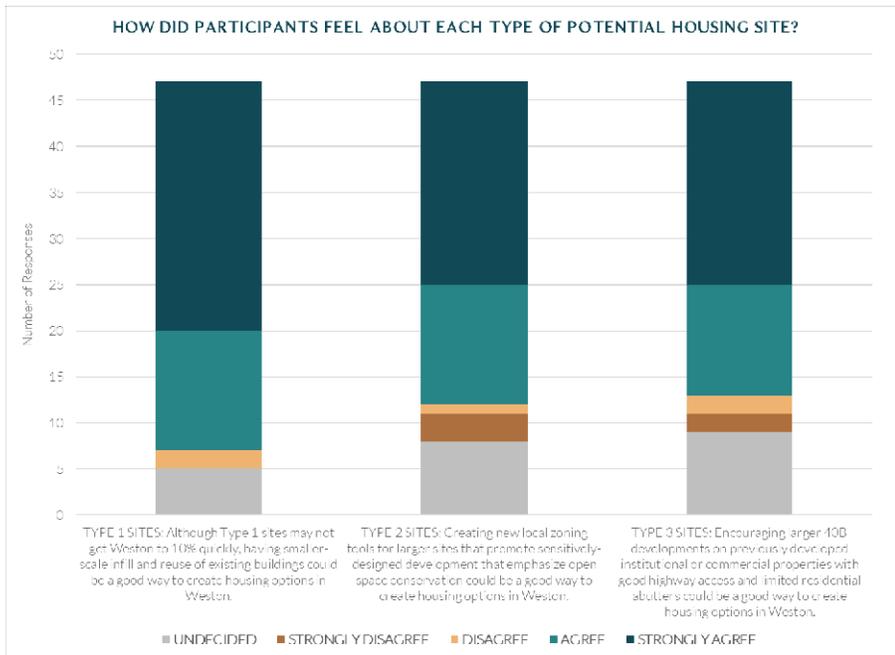
- #7. Boston Properties (Biogen property)
- #10. Wingate Property
- #12. Liberty Mutual Property
- #13. Turnpike Property




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Many residents indicated their support for reusing existing buildings and avoiding development that could impact existing open space. As shown in the graph below, Type 1 sites received the most support, but the majority were also in agreement with Type 2 and Type 3 sites as well. There were a few who voted “Strongly Disagree” to Type 2 and 3, but only two who disagreed with Type 1. Several attendees were undecided about each of the options.



## WESTON HPP HOUSING SURVEY SUMMARY

Prepared by JM Goldson LLC on 1/14/21

This memo summarizes the key findings of the community housing survey prepared by JM Goldson LLC, in collaboration with the Regional Housing Services Office and Weston HPP Steering Committee. The purpose of this survey was to collect additional community input for the update to Weston’s Housing Production Plan. The survey was available online (and in paper format) for four weeks, from December 11, 2020 to January 11, 2021.

A total of 451 responses were received, with 95 percent of those from current residents. Several recurring themes were identified by survey respondents, with a particular focus on housing affordability for people at a range of income levels, housing accommodations for the aging population of Weston, and concerns about 40B developments currently in the pipeline. A summary of these findings is presented here, and detailed comments from participants are included in the attachment.

### Summary of Key Findings

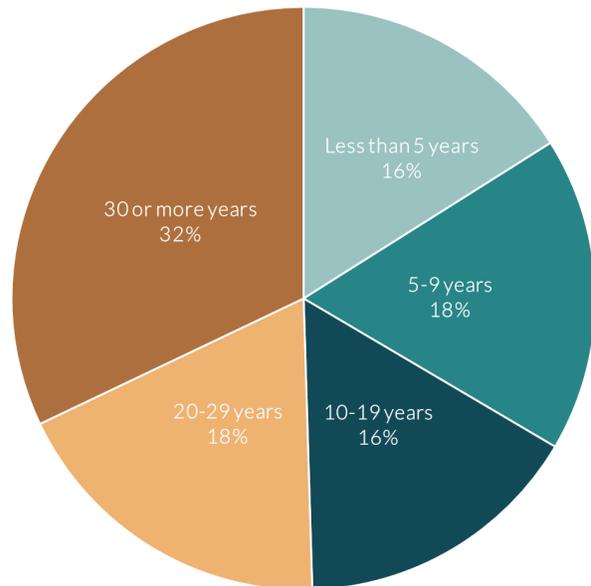
- Housing affordability is an issue that affects seniors, families, and the Town’s workforce
- More diverse housing stock is needed to address Weston’s housing needs, particularly smaller homes, senior housing, condos/townhouses, and apartments
- Proposed 40B developments have the potential to increase traffic, reduce open space, and impact the Town’s historic and rural character
- High taxes and strict local regulations make home renovations and redevelopment expensive
- Support for more diverse population, better walkability, and municipal infrastructure improvements

### Characteristics of Survey Respondents

About 10 percent of respondents work in Weston and five percent used to live in Weston; many participants also have friends and family living in Weston. Residents who responded to the survey have lived in Weston for different periods of time, the most common response was “30 or more years” (32 percent), the remaining breakdown is shown in the chart on the right.

Over 90 percent of respondents live in a single-family (detached) home, townhouses and five-to nine-unit buildings were the next most frequent housing options. The majority of responses came from homeowners (90 percent), with renters making up 7.3 percent, and less than 2 percent living with family. The 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for housing tenure indicate 86.5 percent of housing in Weston is owner-occupied and 13.5 percent is renter-occupied. The lower proportion of renters responding to the survey indicates they may be underrepresented in the results.

HOW LONG HAVE PARTICIPANTS RESIDED IN WESTON?



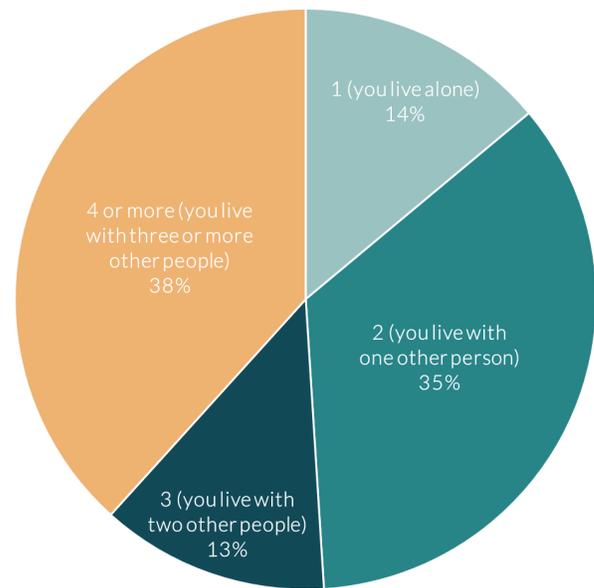
Analysis of the demographic details of all responses showed a normal distribution of age ranges, centered on the 55 to 64 age group, with only one response received from someone under age 25. Compared to the 2018 age distribution data from the US Census, the 18-24 age group was underrepresented and most other age groups were overrepresented, except 85 and over, which had a similar proportion.

In terms of race and ethnicity, nearly 84 percent are White or Caucasian, 5.3 percent are Asian or Asian American, two percent Hispanic/Latinx, one percent Black/African American, and nine percent preferred not to answer. For comparison, according to the 2018 ACS 5-year estimates for Weston, the population is 81 percent White alone, 11.2 percent Asian, and two percent Black or African American, this suggests that the Asian community was somewhat underrepresented in this survey.

Household size varied among survey participants, 38 percent had four or more people in their home, 35 percent lived with just one other person, the rest were split almost equally between one and three household members, as shown in the graph on the right. These proportions are similar to the latest household size data from the US Census. Nearly 40 percent of these households included children under 18, and about 30 percent have older adults (65+) as household members. A smaller proportion (16 percent) have adult children living with them or elsewhere who would like to live in Weston.

More than one-third of participants opted not to provide their annual household income, the category with the most responses (21 percent) earn \$400,000 or more per year. Each of the lower income categories included between four and nine percent of responses. Geographically, respondents were represented from north (52 percent) and south (39 percent) of Route 20, with a few commenting that they live directly on Route 20. Complete details of the demographic breakdown of responses are provided in the attached summary of the survey results.

**HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS**



## KEY THEMES

### Housing Costs and Options

A series of questions addressed the affordability of people’s current housing payments and whether they would be able to afford housing based on current prices. Of the 31 responses from renters, more than half have had an increase in their monthly payment over the past three years and nearly 40 percent have struggled to make their payment at least one month in the past year – 19 percent felt part of this was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. About half of respondents who rent indicated they could not afford Weston’s median rent in 2018 (\$1,729).

Among homeowners, 57 percent indicated they could afford the 2019 median sales price of \$1,425,000, and 34 percent said they could not (nine percent preferred not to answer). A majority (87 percent) did not have trouble making their mortgage payment over the past year, but almost eight percent recognized COVID-19 as a factor in their difficulty making those payments. When asked about accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on their property, 65 percent would not consider this option to create a new housing unit on their property, 23 percent would, about 11 percent were unsure, and 1.3 percent already have one. Many commented about lack of land for an ADU or setback requirements limiting that option.

All survey respondents were asked about the conditions of their current housing. The options showing the most agreement reflect the town’s older housing stock and challenges associated with larger homes and properties:

- “It is difficult/expensive to maintain” (15 percent strongly agree, 40 percent somewhat agree)
- “It is not energy-efficient” (15 percent strongly agree, 37 percent somewhat agree)
- “It needs renovations” (18 percent strongly agree, 36 percent somewhat agree)

The conditions that people generally disagreed with focused more on the land around their home, specifically:

- “It does not have enough outdoor space” (60 percent strongly disagree, 21 percent somewhat disagree)
- “It has too much land” (60 percent strongly disagree, 20 percent somewhat disagree)
- “It is in a flood-risk area” (63 percent strongly disagree, 13 percent somewhat disagree)

### Senior Housing Needs and Preferences

Most participants (84 percent) also responded to the section of the survey focused on housing accommodations for Weston’s aging population. More than 75 percent felt it would be important or extremely important to stay in the community as they age, and over 70 percent felt similarly about staying in their home. Respondents also shared their preferences related to housing needs, with many highlighting the importance of options that would support their ability to live independently. The options indicated as most important were:

- “Home-based services (i.e., in-home nurse, snow shoveling or other services to help age in your home)”
- “Covered parking”
- “Availability of units that are physically-accessible (i.e., no stairs required, wider doorways)”
- “Physical improvements or modifications to existing home (i.e., ramp, grab bar)”

An additional analysis was done to compare responses from survey participants 65 and older (141 people) to those from participants under 65 (213 people). The following table highlights some of the key contrasts between these two age groups in terms of household composition and future housing needs.

| 65 AND OVER   | UNDER 65  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most respondents have lived in Weston for 30 years or more</li> <li>• 82 percent live in detached single family homes, five percent in townhouses, 11 percent in two-to-nine-unit buildings, five percent said “other”</li> <li>• More than half of respondents have a household of two people, about one-third live alone</li> <li>• Fewer than half of respondents could afford the current median housing price</li> <li>• Of those who shared their household income, more than half earn under \$200,000 per year</li> <li>• 92 percent indicated it would be important or extremely important to stay in the community as they age</li> <li>• Close to half of respondents felt apartments, condominiums, and affordable units would be important options as they age</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of residence is more evenly distributed, only 14 percent are 30+ year residents</li> <li>• 97 percent live in detached single family homes, one percent in two-unit buildings, two percent indicated “other” as their property type</li> <li>• More than half of households include four or more people, only three percent live alone</li> <li>• 68 percent indicated they could afford the current median housing price</li> <li>• Of those who shared their household income, more than half earn over \$300,000 per year</li> <li>• 68 percent indicated it would be important or extremely important to stay in the community as they age</li> <li>• Only about one-third of respondents felt that apartments, condominiums, and affordable units would be important for the aging population</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving in the next five years is a likelihood for half of respondents</li> <li>• Less than half would be interested in single-family detached homes in the future</li> <li>• Less interest in commuter rail access, more interest in housing complexes with amenities, and cooperative living arrangements</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving in the next five years is a likelihood for one-third of respondents</li> <li>• 83 percent would be interested in single-family detached homes in the future</li> <li>• More interest in commuter rail access, less interest in housing complexes with amenities and cooperative living arrangements</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Of those who indicated they would be likely to move in the next 5 years, respondents 65 and over were primarily looking for a home with less maintenance needs, lower housing costs, lower taxes, and a different type of home. Many of these concerns were reiterated in the comments about the town’s most pressing housing issues.

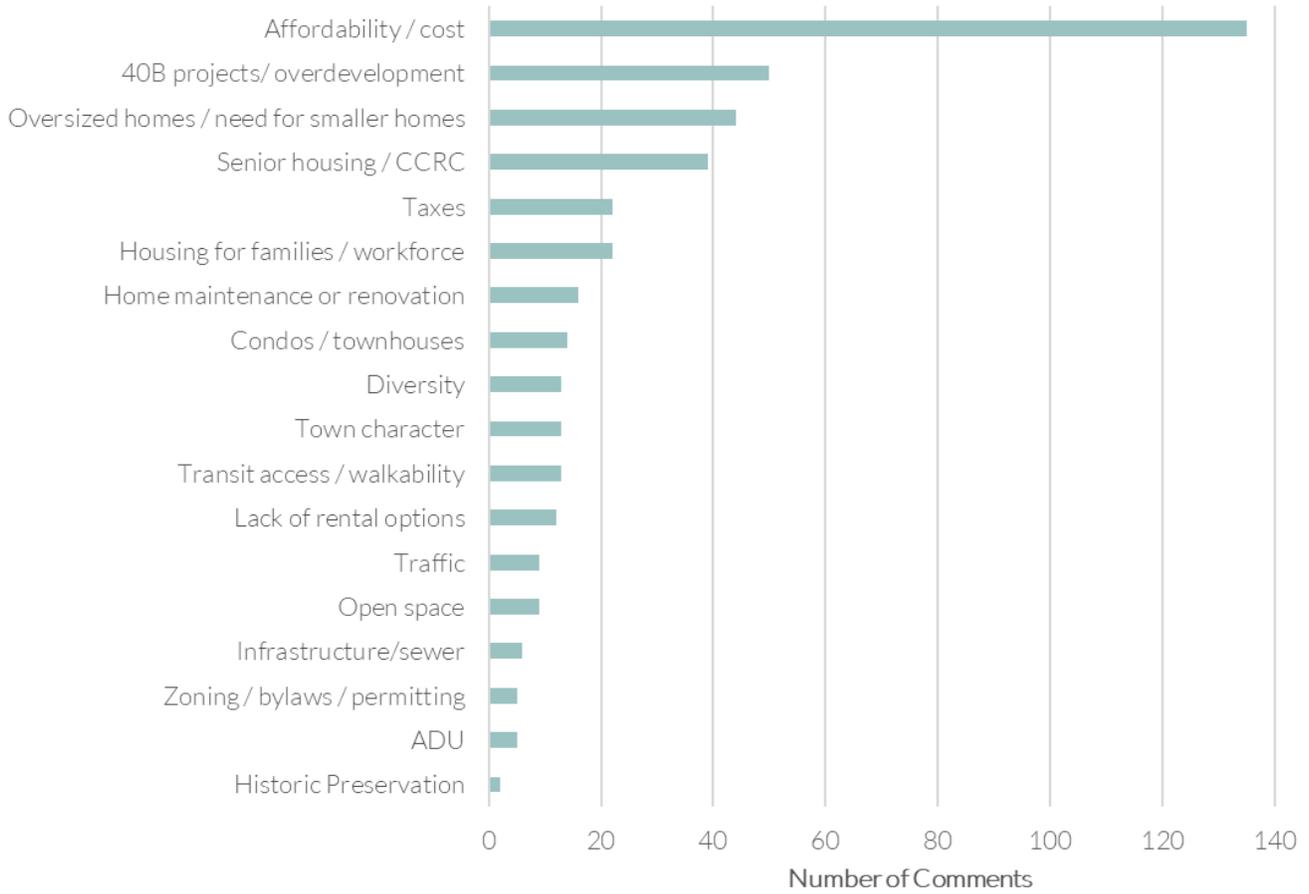
**Issues and Opportunities**

The shortage of affordable housing options was the most frequently mentioned issue in the final comment section of the survey, with over 130 comments. Another recurring theme was concern about overdevelopment and the impacts of proposed 40B developments, particularly 518 South Ave (often referred to as the “Weston Whopper”). Many of these comments mentioned the potential repercussions on traffic and the town’s rural and historic character. Some suggested that smaller dispersed developments would be preferable to the larger multifamily developments that have been proposed.

One of the other points brought up by many survey participants was the loss of moderately sized homes, which used to provide an option for first-time homebuyers or households hoping to downsize after children move out. Many mentioned that smaller homes have been bought and torn down to build much larger mansions, leaving few options with a purchase price under \$1 million.

Several opportunities for senior housing were also brought up, including age-restricted housing complexes, continuing care retirement communities, and apartments. Many respondents emphasized the need for affordability, as well as providing other services for Weston’s aging residents, including local transportation and home care support. The following chart summarizes the topics that were mentioned most frequently in the comments, and the full text of these comments is provided in the attached survey summary report.

## MOST PRESSING HOUSING ISSUES OR OPPORTUNITIES IN WESTON



## WESTON HPP HOUSING FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

*Prepared by JM Goldson LLC on 1/15/21*

This memo summarizes the key findings of the housing focus groups organized by JM Goldson LLC, in collaboration with the Regional Housing Services Office and Weston HPP Steering Committee. The purpose of these focus groups was to collect additional community input for the update to Weston's Housing Production Plan. Focus groups were held between December 15, 2020 to January 13, 2021 as virtual sessions using the Zoom teleconferencing platform.

A total of 24 community members participated, including long-term residents, people who work for the town, current or previous board and committee members, participants in community groups such as Land's Sake, and people with a background in real estate, architecture, and housing development. Focus group participants shared insights into Weston's development, past and current debates about proposed projects, and potential strategies for addressing the town's housing needs and meeting the state's 40B requirements. A summary of the feedback collected during these discussions is presented in this document.

### Summary of Key Findings

- Residents highly value Weston's excellent school system, extensive open spaces, convenience to employment centers, community-minded population, and historic, semi-rural character.
- The influx of larger 40B housing development proposals over the past several years has raised concerns about the scale and density of these projects in primarily single-family residential areas, strain on the town's infrastructure, environmental impacts related to wastewater and stormwater, and traffic
- People recognize the demand for more modest, affordable homes that can help address the housing needs of seniors, young families, and the town's workforce – especially teachers and public safety staff
- Protected open space and wetlands, combined with septic issues, limit the availability of land for future development; however, many participants identified possible redevelopment opportunities
- There is a desire for future housing development to be highly sustainable – relying more on geothermal not fossil fuels, and located closer to schools, public transit, and the amenities of the Town Center
- The proposed Historic Heritage Overlay District was generally viewed in a positive light, and some mentioned the potential to integrate provisions related to affordability
- Generally there was a focus on producing housing that would help meet the town's incremental housing goals, maximizing the proportion of affordable units, and increasing the subsidized housing inventory
- Desire to improve the town's capacity to identify and pursue specific opportunities to purchase land or redevelop properties for affordable housing, possibly through a dedicated full-time staff position
- There are concerns about how the town has handled past development proposals, some participants expressed a desire for more transparency around the process and education about Chapter 40B and the purpose of the Housing Production Plan

### Development Pressure

Many of the focus group participants brought up the issues presented by proposed 40B developments and reasons that the previous Boston Properties proposal fell through. Traffic was one of the most frequently cited concerns, particularly with projects that could include over 100 units. While some showed support for

identifying strategic locations for smaller developments, they also indicated that a sewer system would be needed to support any significant increase in housing density. One of the primary barriers identified by participants is the strong resistance of abutting property owners, regardless of the neighborhood where projects have been proposed. Most agreed that there would probably be more support for housing developments with fewer units, up to 10 or 20, which is distributed throughout Weston – without putting undue pressure on any one neighborhood or road corridor. Participants were also concerned about the need for infrastructure improvements, and funding for road redesign was mentioned as a way to help mitigate traffic impacts.

Several participants shared negative sentiments about how the town has handled recent development proposals, suggesting that communication and transparency were lacking, and projects that may have been good opportunities were missed or lacked support from the municipality. With respect to the Boston Properties proposal, the need to route residential traffic over the rail trail was mentioned as a key concern for neighbors. Residents also voiced some opposition to continuing to expand on the Brooks School housing complex, due in part to the loss of recreational facilities and the need for wastewater treatment if more homes were added to the site.

In reference to Chapter 40B, participants felt the legislation was unfair to communities like Weston that have contributed significantly to open space preservation and were not in favor of the provision that encourages large rental developments, due to the large proportion of market rate units, and shortage of truly affordable housing. In terms of the Housing Production Plan process, some participants stated they did not feel well-informed and wanted to better understand the purpose of the plan, how much protection is afforded by safe harbor, and the municipal finance implications associated with specific development sites.

### Housing Opportunities

The focus group discussions also generated a lot of ideas about how to address Weston’s housing needs and continue working towards the 10percent subsidized housing goal. Feedback included specific properties that have been discussed in the past or recently became available, as well as local regulations that could provide opportunities for redevelopment or new construction of affordable homes. Long-term residents also brought up the decreasing inventory of smaller single-family houses due to tear-downs, and the demand for this type of home by seniors and young families who cannot afford Weston’s high median home value.

Several sites were brought up in multiple focus group sessions, including the following:

- **Campion Center:** declining population of retired priests, extensive land area, and the potential to renovate the existing structure could represent a sustainable option. Participants noted that it would depend on the Jesuits considering sale of the property, which has not been the case up to this point.
- **Wingate Residences:** recently sold, could be a missed opportunity. Potential to convert the former assisted living facility to apartments for seniors.
- **Sunrise of Weston:** another former assisted living facility that closed, similar to above, it represents an opportunity to renovate an existing structure for senior housing.
- **Christian Science church:** despite septic issues and lack of parking, several participants felt the location of this property would make it a good option for housing in the town center.

Several other sites were mentioned as options worth exploring, and are listed here, in no particular order: the large parcel across from Regis College (participants noted strong opposition to a previous proposal by the school, which would have included large buildings that were not appropriate in scale); First Parish Church properties; the Liberty Mutual site; state-owned land along major highways; the former golf course near Kendal Green; the Baghdady property on North Ave.; Green Power Farm; the Ogilvie property (former

hardware store, near Warren Ave.); the bus barn; sections of the Case Estate; and the potential for mixed-use in town center. If the Biogen site became an option in the future, some indicated a willingness to reconsider it.

In order to help identify and pursue potential property acquisition and housing development opportunities, participants also suggested that Weston could benefit from a municipal employee dedicated to this effort, potentially as part of an office of community development. Overall, residents expressed a desire to be more involved in the process of reviewing development proposals and evaluating the trade-offs associated with specific sites, particularly as they relate to traffic, environmental impacts, and financial obligations for the community.

The groups also considered potential changes to local bylaws that could encourage more suitable affordable housing development in specific areas of Weston. The Historic Heritage Overlay District being considered generally received a favorable response, with participants supporting the subdivision of large historic homes to produce more housing units as an alternative to new construction. The possibility of incorporating incentives to include affordable housing as part of the redevelopment also received some support.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) were brought up as an option, if existing regulations were relaxed to enable more flexibility related to the occupancy and location of such housing units. People also acknowledged that ADUs would probably not make a significant contribution to achieving safe harbor. The topic of town-owned land was also brought up, and participants seemed to support the idea of issuing Requests for Proposals for appropriate sites, particularly if it would allow the community to have more input on the scale and type of housing development.