



Historic Preservation Demolition Review Bylaw

*A Presentation to the
Wellesley Board of Selectmen*

Town of Wellesley
Historical Commission



Demolition Review Bylaw: A Priority of Wellesley's Comprehensive Plan (2007 – 2017)



This bylaw was specifically recommended in Wellesley's current Comprehensive Plan

Current Comprehensive Plan Recommended that the WHC:

Completed or
In Process

- Establish Neighborhood Conservation Districts
- Designate individual properties as single building historic districts
- Complete an historic property inventory list (in process)

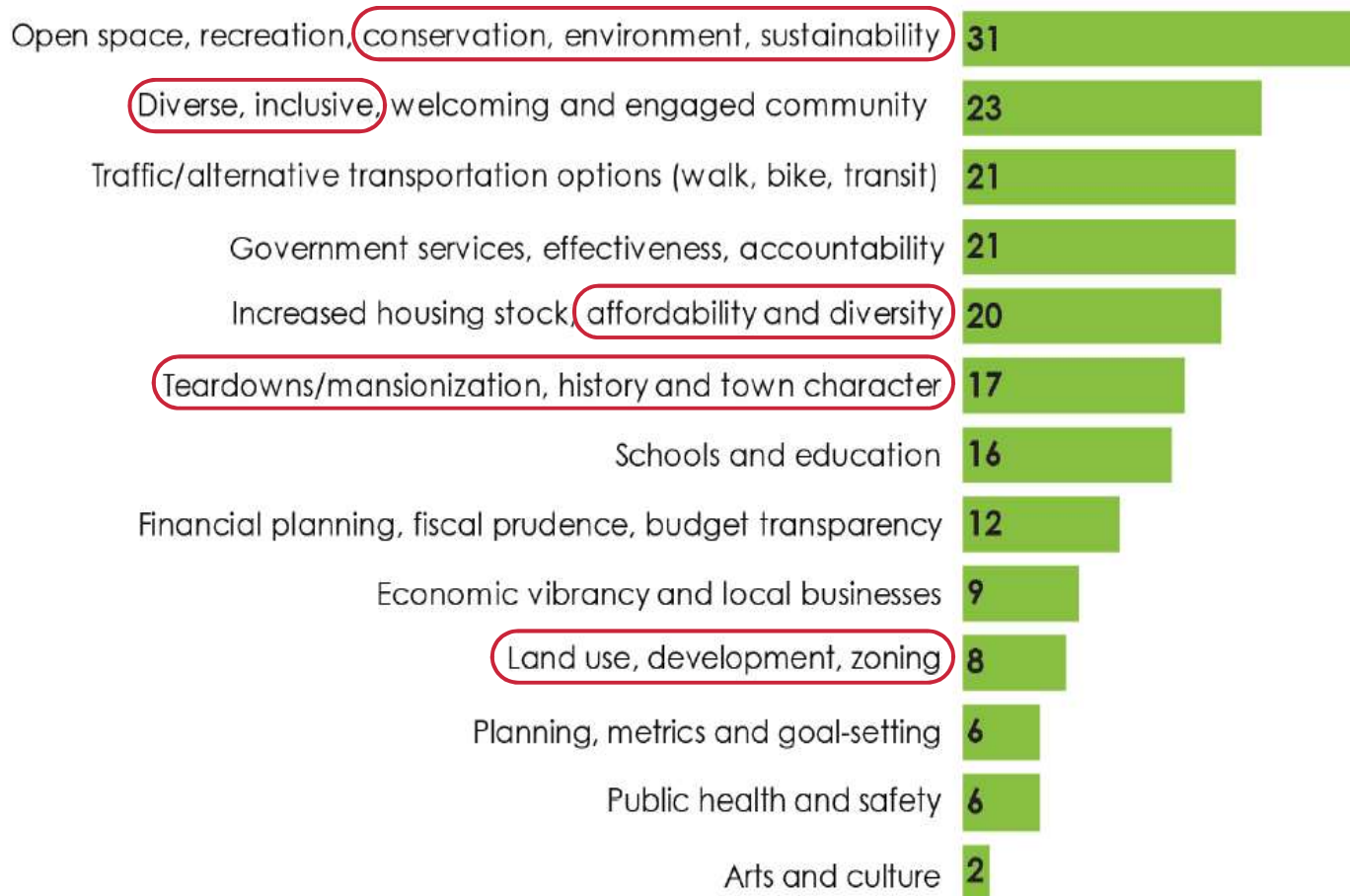
Proposing

- **Protect historic properties by passing a Demolition Delay Bylaw**

Current Unified Plan Effort



10 years later, this topic – concern for teardowns and the related effect on town character – is recognized as an ongoing priority, and our teardowns also impact other concerns



- Key themes from ongoing Visions and Values effort
- A Demolition Review Bylaw will address many of these priorities

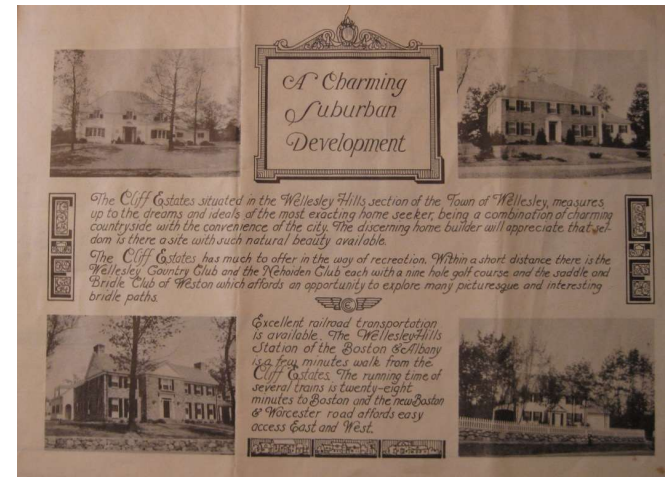
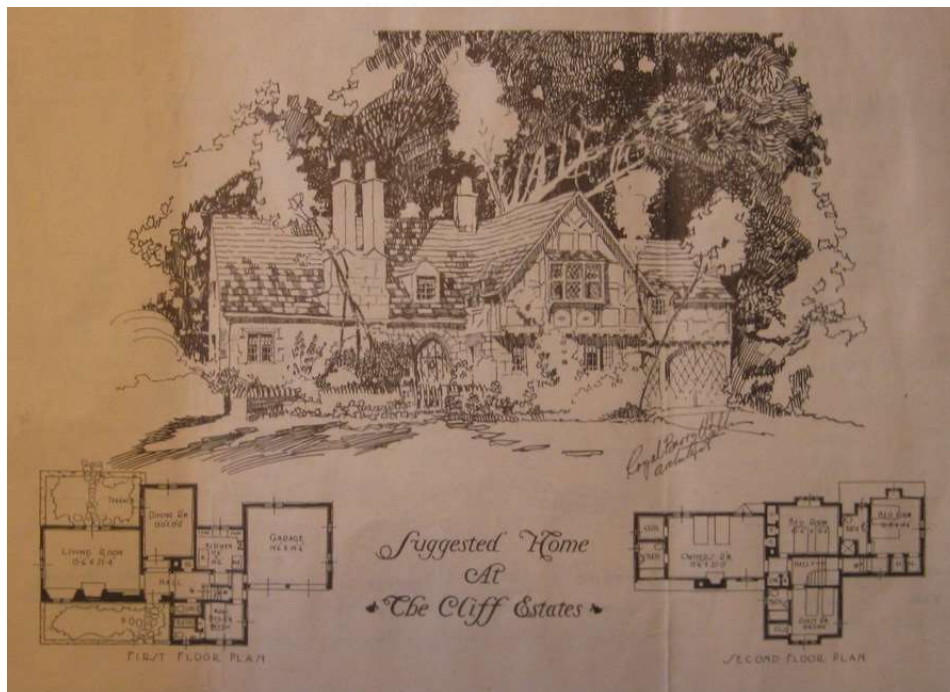
“Wellesley, the Beautiful” Didn’t Just Happen It Was Planned That Way



The beauty and charm of Wellesley’s neighborhoods did not happen by accident; even in the early 20th Century when much of our housing stock was built, cohesiveness and details mattered



III---Wellesley, the Beautiful

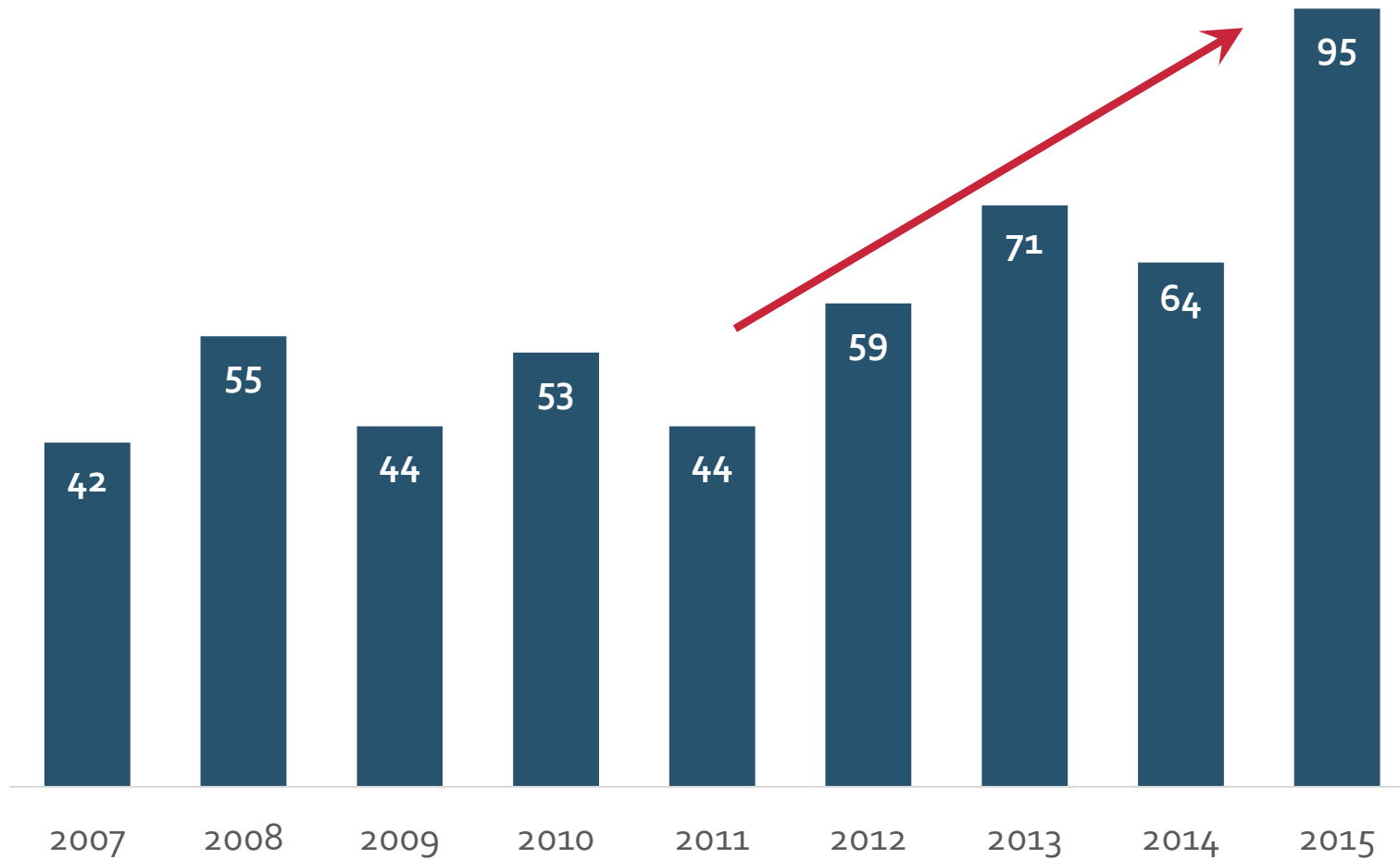


Teardowns on the Rise



There have been 772 teardowns since 2002, significantly more (pro rata) than neighboring towns

Teardowns per Year



Current Teardown Pace?



1 HOME

EVERY 3.8 DAYS

Homes of All Sizes and Styles Are Being Lost



Townspeople In Their Own Words



WHC has launched an online petition to capture town opinions and provide a forum for residents to share their perspectives; below is a brief sample of the received comments

"We feel so strongly **that the character of Wellesley has changed with all the tear downs** and resulting mansions being built that cover so much of the lots."

"I can see 6 new houses from my house; all are teardowns within the last 5 years. **The town has not done anything to preserve most neighborhoods and developers have run amuck** with bigger is better. Some streets such as the lower part of Royalston Road are totally unrecognizable. The pace must slow down and **some structure must be imposed** by the town."

"Most **teardowns are ruining the feel of this town**. They clear out all the trees and typically build on the entire property. It is really troubling and sad to me. There needs to be strict oversight to protect the character of this town. Let me know how I can help."

"We are lucky to live in a town with such a rich history. **Preserving what has been handed down to us is the gift we give to future generations of Wellesley residents.**"

Townspeople In Their Own Words



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"I have never seen a town so "for sale" as Wellesley is lately. It seems that **you can literally tear down anything no matter the historical significance**. Unfortunately the character and a esthetic of the town is going down with each new McMansion. I really hope this petition does something. As a life long resident of Wellesley **I've been shocked at how little the town cares to protect historical homes.**"

"I would hope the town Planning Board [would] start focusing on citizens instead of developers."

"Wellesley urgently needs to upgrade policies to limit the number of teardown and to limit the size of the new houses that are squeezed into these vacated lots--often built sideways so all you see from the street is garages!"

"It is vital to preserve Wellesley's architectural history by addressing the Issue of tear downs. Preservation is not just about bricks and mortar but is also about those who designed, built, and lived in the houses that have existed in Wellesley's many neighborhoods. Lose these houses and we lose a sense of who came before us. It's time to consider preservation planning."

What is the Purpose of the Bylaw?



- Provide a Window of Opportunity to Protect Significant Historic Resources
- Thoughtful discussion in the face of wonton destruction; allow neighbors to weigh in on a proposed demolition; a pause to consider and encourage renovation and additions versus a complete teardown

Thoughtful Renovation Can Provide Modern Amenities While Retaining Historical Character



And Thoughtful Renovations Work For All Sized Structures



They wanted to hang on to the integrity of the small-scale house. “There are a lot of teardowns in Wellesley that are being replaced with larger homes,” says Maria. **“We didn’t want to go there.”**

“While the house has expanded to a generous 3,500 square feet — roughly 1,000 square feet was added — **its beautified facade remains relatively modest**”

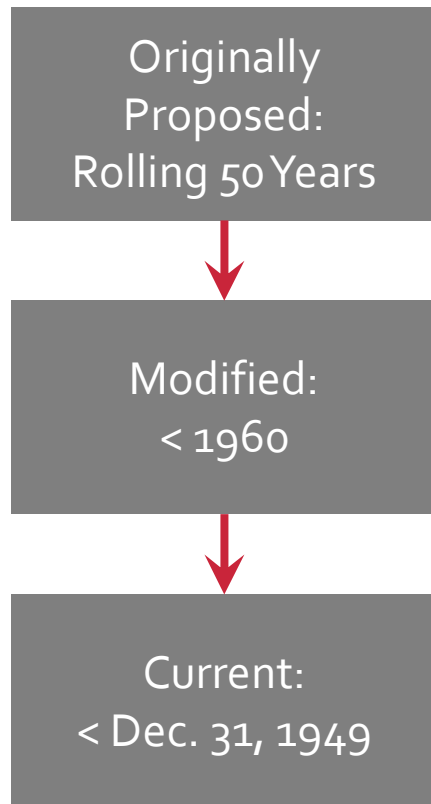
“It’s a lovely Shingle-style cottage that **seems like it’s been there for years**. We’re very pleased with how the house sits in the neighborhood. **Our neighbors have given us a lot of compliments. They tell us that we’ve inspired them, and that makes us feel great.**” – *Maria Ashbrook, Homeowner*

Historical Eligibility and Delay Length



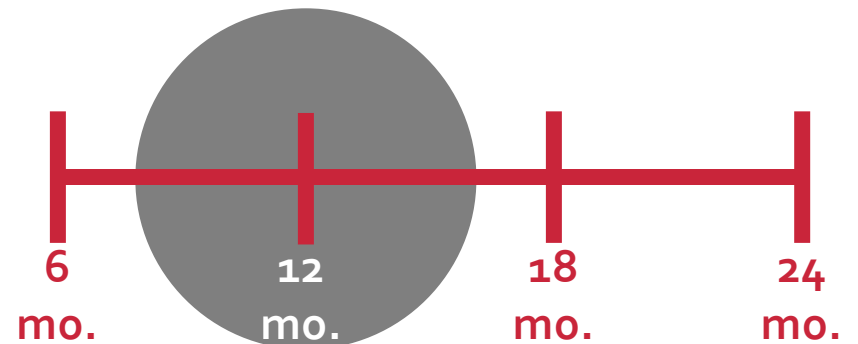
WHC has listened hard to feedback from townspeople, the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, and other groups; we have attempted to find common ground and a productive bylaw

Determining Eligible Building

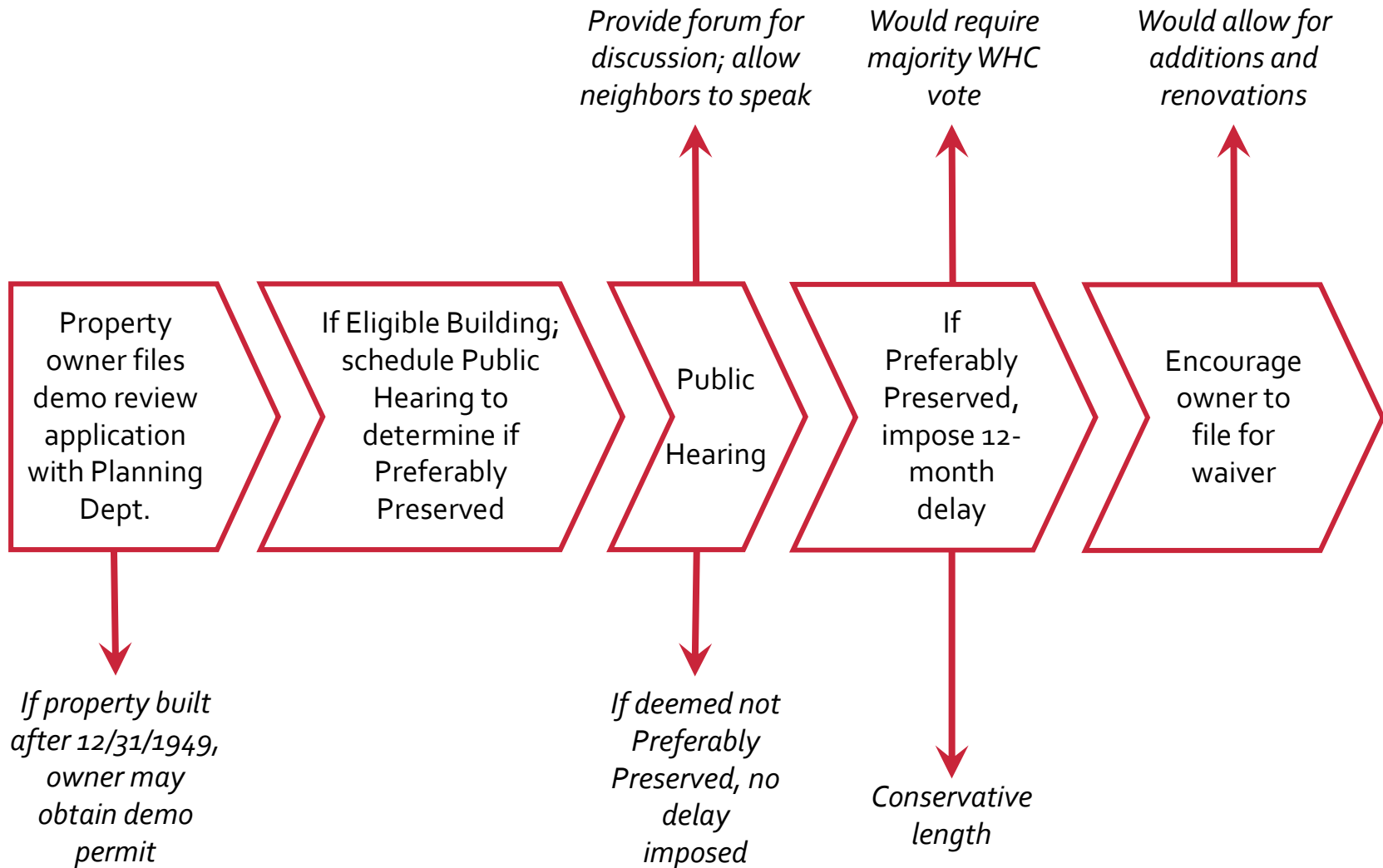


Determining Delay Length

- Since the '90s, >30 towns introduced 12-mo. delays, 8 extended delay to 18-mo., many exploring 24-mo. or longer
- Towns with six month delays have acknowledged that the delay is not effective and many are attempting to lengthen the delay period
- Our goal: be moderate while still being effective



How Would the Demolition Bylaw Work?



Existing procedures (e.g., ZBA, Wetlands, Planning) would continue concurrently



Historic Preservation Review Bylaw



WHC hopes to level the playing field and better manage the unchecked pace of demolitions which are negatively affecting the character of our town given the loss of architectural diversity

- We are losing: our history, the unique character of older homes, smaller homes that help maintain homeowner and town diversity
- We are a target for development: No potential for delay = disproportionate teardowns in Wellesley (e.g., 3x more than Newton); all abutting towns and most peer towns have delays
- We are unnecessarily harming the environment: clear-cutting trees to make way for larger foundations, huge environmental costs from new materials and associated transportation

The bylaw has been endorsed by the Planning Board and NRC

>400 townspeople have voiced support through an online petition

Other boards and town organizations have reached out to offer support