

Date: January 31, 2024

To: Town of Wellesley Planning Board

Cc: Eric Arbeene, Planning Director, Wellesley Planning Department

Cc: Town of Wellesley Select Board, Advisory Committee

From: Michelle Ho

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Re: Zoning Changes – Proposed Article 43 Amendments to Section 2.1 Single Residence Districts

I am writing to provide comments to the proposed new Article 43 (previously Article 47) which amends Section 2.1 Single Residence Districts (proposed language is included as attachment 1)

I believe this proposing zoning changes sets a dangerous precedent in town since it would allow any developer to build whatever they please in any single residence district if their stated purpose is senior living facility. The language is vague and it appears that projects proposed by adjacent towns for senior housing purposes would be allowed driveway access through Wellesley properties. That would mean any project in an adjacent town for the purpose of senior housing would have site access through Wellesley. The language clearly needs to be revisited and likely revised to clarify to avoid significant problems for Wellesley residents and the community. I do not support this language as currently written.

This proposed zoning change would literally destroy single family neighborhoods in the supposed name of “senior living”. What adherence would be required to all the normal permitting requirements – tree removal, environmental/wetlands protection, property line setbacks, density, etc.? What consultation and input would be allowed from the surrounding community, if any?

I feel that the Town would be better served analyzing the current demand for senior housing and areas that would be most suitable for such housing should demand warrant it. A thoughtful planning process and identification of appropriate areas is what the Town should be focused on. I realized that the Town has already developed a “Unified Housing Plan”, but it may make sense to revisit the plan and determine where and if it needs adjustments to address some of the proposed concerns raised to avoid changing the character of many single residence districts in Town. I believe what seniors need is to be able to walk to shops, have access to public transportation (MBTA as well as MetroWest Transit), access to medical care, Town facilities and a safe walkable environment. Not all single residence districts provide these amenities.

I would venture that developers’ goals are usually to maximize the profit from any development they undertake so they do not necessarily take into consideration the interests of the surrounding community in which they propose a development. Theirs is development for profit’s sake which I understand. They need to make a return on their funds expended but at what cost to the neighborhoods? Development for the sake of development and profit is not necessarily a good thing for the Town or the surrounding community. A lot needs to be taken into consideration including demands on existing infrastructure, traffic and safety, fire/police/ambulance services, etc.

The Town has already seen this type of development thrust upon neighborhoods and with this proposed zoning change the options would open up all areas whether they are suitable locations or not. When we first moved to Wellesley what attracted us here was that the Town had a strong character. There were beautiful single family residence districts, lots of greenspace, commitment to preservation/conservation of outdoor space and the environment, walking/biking trails, thoughtful development related to commercial districts (not just everywhere but in corridors along the main streets) great schools, and great library. It was a beautiful, small but lively Town. We need to remember what attracts people to come to want to live in our Town and continue to strive to maintain the character of the Town. I firmly oppose the amendments as proposed in Article 47.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on the proposed zoning change.

Attachment 1: PLANNING ARTICLE 47: AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 2.1 SINGLE RESIDENCE DISTRICTS

To see if Town Meeting will vote to amend its Zoning Bylaws Section 2.1 Single Residence Districts, by adding a provision in Paragraph A. Permitted Uses, adding:

12. Use of land for access, and utilities to service any Assisted Elderly Living, Independent Elderly Housing, Nursing Homes or Skilled Nursing Facilities (hereinafter referred to as any "Senior Housing Project") on directly abutting property in an adjacent municipality, shall be allowed, subject to the following:

- a. the Senior Housing Project must be either allowed as of right or receive any necessary zoning relief in the zoning district in the other municipality in which the abutting property is located.
- b. The Minimum Lot Area in the Single Residence District in which such access and utilities are provided shall be four (4) acres.
- c. Not less than 50% of the Lot Area in the Single Residence District shall be restricted from further development by means of a Conservation Restriction under M.G.L. c. 184, Secs. 31-33, or another appropriate deed restriction; provided, that the uses described in clause "f" below and other uses generally consistent with conservation restrictions may be permitted.
- d. Use of the land located in the Single Residence District for access shall include any vehicular and pedestrian access necessary to service the Senior Housing Project to and from any public way located within the Town.
- e. Any access driveway shall meet the requirements of Section 5.17.D.3 of this Bylaw.
- f. Use of the land located in the Single Residence District for utilities shall include any necessary utilities that may be provided in or by the Town, including without limitation, water, sewer, storm water, electrical, telecommunications and facilities and improvements related thereto (such as, by way of example only, electrical transformers).
- g. Permitted signage shall be in accordance with signs for Institutional Uses as set forth on Table 22A.1.
- h. Provided that all of the foregoing requirements are met, notwithstanding Sections 2.1.B and 2.1.C below, the provisions of Sections 5.5 [Design Review], 5.6 [Project Approval] and 5.7 [Inclusionary Zoning] shall not apply to such use of the land in the Single Residence District solely for access and utilities for any Senior Housing Project in another municipality.

or take any other action in amending or enacting new zoning bylaws in relation thereto.