

ARTICLE 3

LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

NEW SECTION XVID

2007 Wellesley STM

What is mansionization?

- Teardowns and large additions
- The gated community look
- Big homes on small lots
- Removal of characteristic older homes
- Pressure from outside town, national developers
- Pressure inside town, local developers and residents

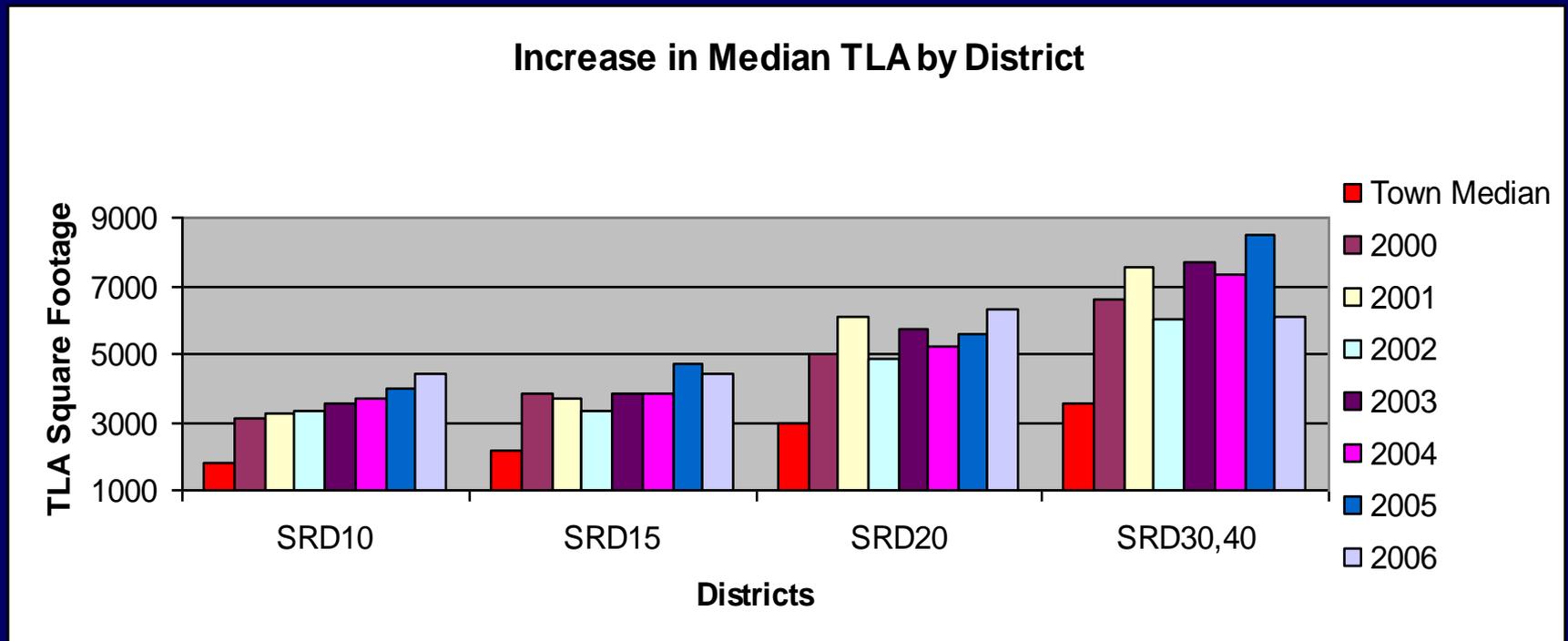
What is mansionization?

- It's part of a nationwide trend towards bigger homes

Year	Average new single family house – Northeast (US Census data)	Percent change relative to 1973
1973	1,450	
1983	1,650	14
1993	2,050	41
2003	2,288	58
2006	2,395	65

What is mansionization?

- Trend in Wellesley



Why are people unhappy about mansionization?

- Loss of green space to paved space
- Loss of open space to buildings
- Loss of trees
- Regraded lots in established neighborhoods without regard for drainage or other impacts on neighbors
- Loss of neighborhood feel
- Less friendly to pedestrians, more oriented towards cars

What is mansionization?

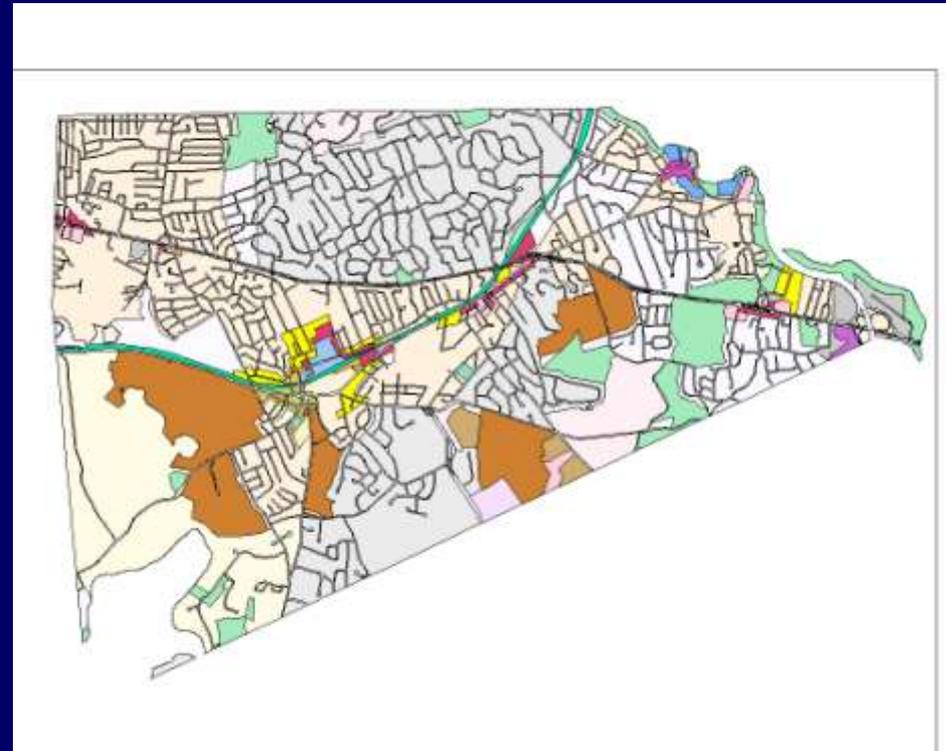
- Here is what we want to protect
- Need to add photos here

What does zoning do?

- Regulates property:
 - Limits use of land
 - Limits types of structures permitted
 - Imposes building dimensional requirements (height, setback, lot coverage)
 - Limits density
- Creates amenity value shared by all
 - protects open space
 - Protects owners, especially residential owners, from incompatible uses in their neighborhood
 - Adds value for residents

What Is Zoning?

- Zoning Map
 - Designates permitted uses of land geographically
 - Purpose is to separate incompatible uses



WHAT ARE CURRENT REGULATIONS FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES?

- Lot Coverage
- Yard Regulations
- Building Height
- Frontage
- Regulations are enforced by the Building Inspector

RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Sample of Dimensional Requirements – Table 1

District	10,000 sq. ft.	15,000 sq. ft.	20,000 sq. ft.	30,000 sq. ft.	40,000 sq. ft.
Minimum Frontage	60 ft.				
Minimum Front Yard Width	60 ft.	60 ft.	60 ft.	60. ft.	60 ft.
Minimum Front Yard Depth (Setback)	30 ft.*				
Minimum Side Yard Width	20 ft.				
Minimum Rear Yard Depth	10 ft.	15 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.

WHAT IS GRANDFATHERING?

- Zoning is not retroactive
- “Grandfathering” means that an existing house is not subject to zoning regulations that were enacted after the house was built.
- Many houses in Wellesley are grandfathered, because there are many older homes in town
- However, alterations or replacement of existing structures must meet current regulations
- There is a special permit process to allow alterations of older homes that do not conform to zoning.
- There are around 50 or 60 such special permits issued by the ZBA per year

What Is Large House Review?

- Establishes a limit for house size based on Total Living Area, plus extra Garage Space for more than two bays
- Houses larger than the limit are still permitted, but only after they go through a process of review to determine their impact on neighbors and the neighborhood
- Total Living Area is the heated space in a home. It is one of the key figures used by the Assessors for valuing a house for property tax purposes.
- Process applies to new single family dwellings and to some additions

What is TLA?

- Home size is quantified by Total Living Area for tax assessment purposes. It is a statewide standard for measuring housesize.
- Total Living Area (TLA) is all finished area above ground obtained by using the outside measurements of the house.
- TLA is used by the Board of Assessors, who maintain a detailed database of information, including TLA
- TLA can be obtained for every dwelling in the Town
- There is not much controversy about how to measure TLA, whereas other measures of house size are controversial or difficult to implement

How Is TLA Measured?

- Measurements are taken from the exterior surface of the exterior walls
- Fractional stories are calculated as a percent of the first floor area
- *Finished* attic space is calculated as 25% of the footprint of the house
- Bay windows with foundations are counted, bow windows without foundations are not counted

- Multi story interior space is counted –
Example: features such as a 2-story foyer
- Patios, canopies, porches, including three-season porches are not counted as living space.
- Basement/Cellar area is calculated differently

A few comments on the scope of LHR

EXEMPTIONS

- Garage space and storage space up to 600 sq. ft. would not count
- Unfinished attics would not count
- Only a percentage of basement area counts, depending on the degree to which the basement walls are above ground.
- Grandfathered houses seeking a Special Permit from the ZBA for an addition are exempt

WHY LARGE HOUSE REVIEW?

- Wellesley Residents have asked for it
- We had 48 teardowns in 2006 and 43 in 2007
- Accelerating trend to replace/enlarge homes to ever increasing sizes
- Town might look very different in 10 years
- Mansionization impacts neighbors
- Growing pressure from national developers, e.g., Toll Bros.

- 2004 Residential Survey, with over 1000 responses, found preservation of residential character, residential parks and open space to be second highest priority after schools.
- 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommended:
 - Site Plan Review for large homes
 - Neighborhood Conservation Districts
 - Advisory Design Guidelines for Neighborhoods

LARGE HOUSE REVIEW – The increasing size of houses

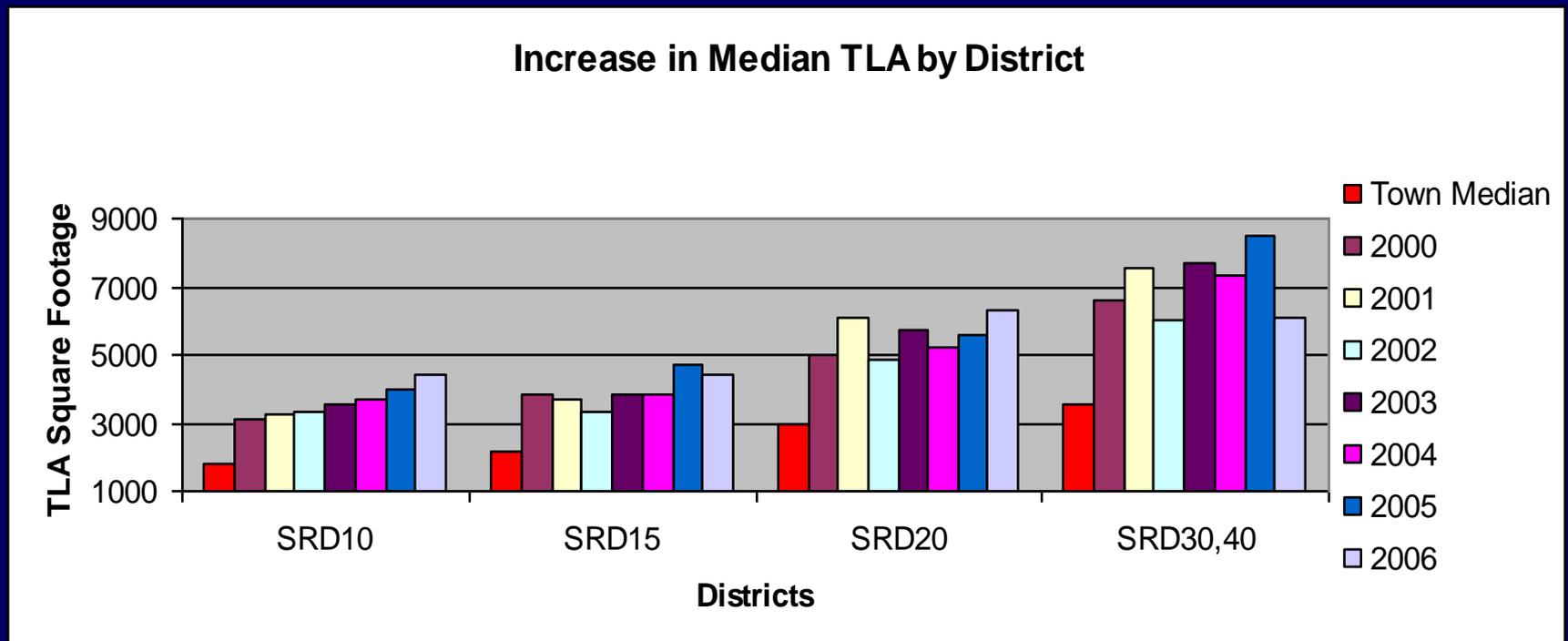
Median TLA by District

District	Median	# of units	% of Town
SRD 10	1796	3765	52%
SRD 15	2144	1142	16%
SRD 20	2933	2150	30%
SRD 30 & 40	3568	209	3%
Total SR Dwellings	2162	7266	100%

LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

RATIONALE

- Reviewed new home construction from 2000-2006 and found an escalation in median home size.



HOW IS TLA MEASURED?

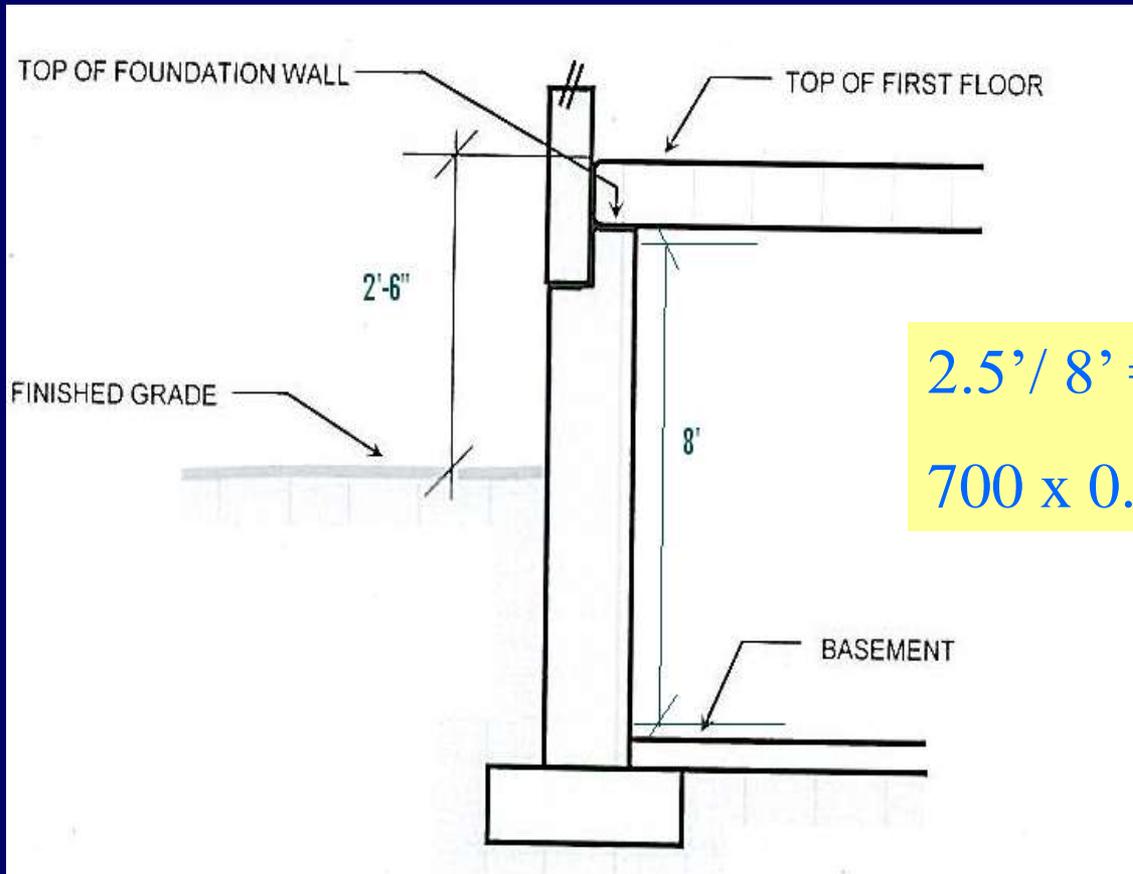
Basements

Basement Area X

External above ground area of walls
Total surface area (above and below)

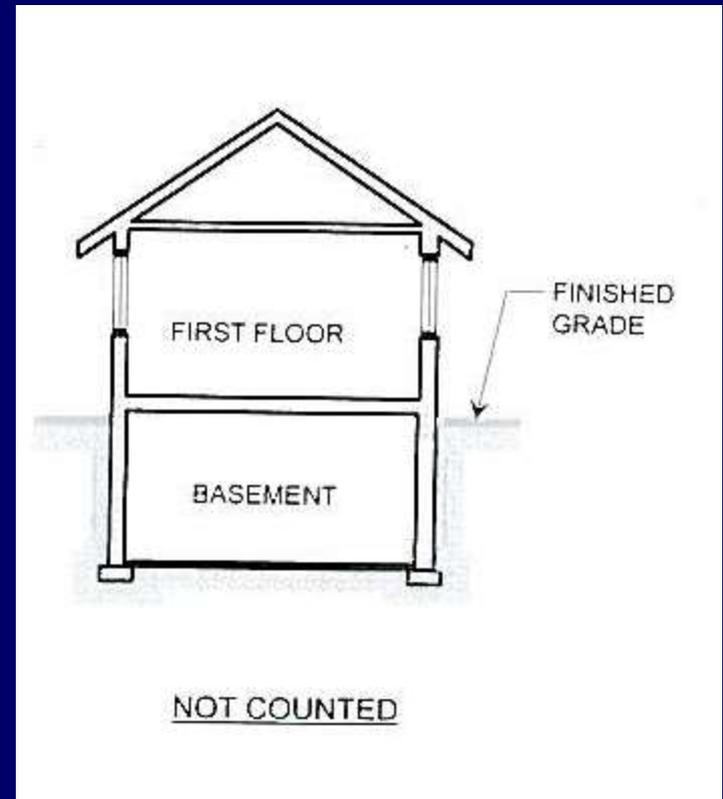
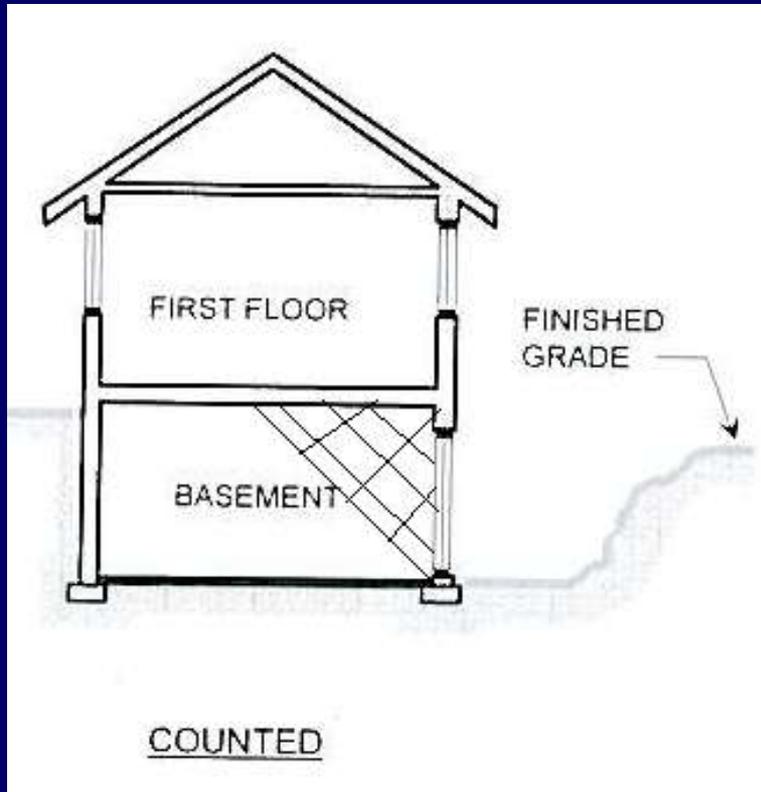
If > 0.25%

**Example: 700 sf basement
2.5' above grade
8' total elevation**



$2.5' / 8' = 0.3125$
 $700 \times 0.3125 = 219 \text{ ft TLA}$

Example 2



How would we assess impact of a large house?

Source (to be provided by applicant)	Standard
Landscaping plans, including an inventory of existing features, such as trees, and plans for landscaping after construction	To the extent practicable: preservation trees and other natural features, enhance landscape after construction, protect open space
Building plans, existing and proposed, and photographs showing existing buildings	To the extent practicable: site house in keeping with the scale of other houses nearby, arrange building masses to minimize visual impact from adjacent properties and street
Site plans, including topographic features, proposed drainage structures, existing site and how the new construction would change the site	Minimize grade changes, manage storm water so as to minimize impact on street and abutting lots, arrange driveways and parking so as not to overwhelm the view with asphalt and for safety Erosion and sedimentation control when slopes over 15% are disturbed
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LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

This is not a LIMIT on house size...

This is:

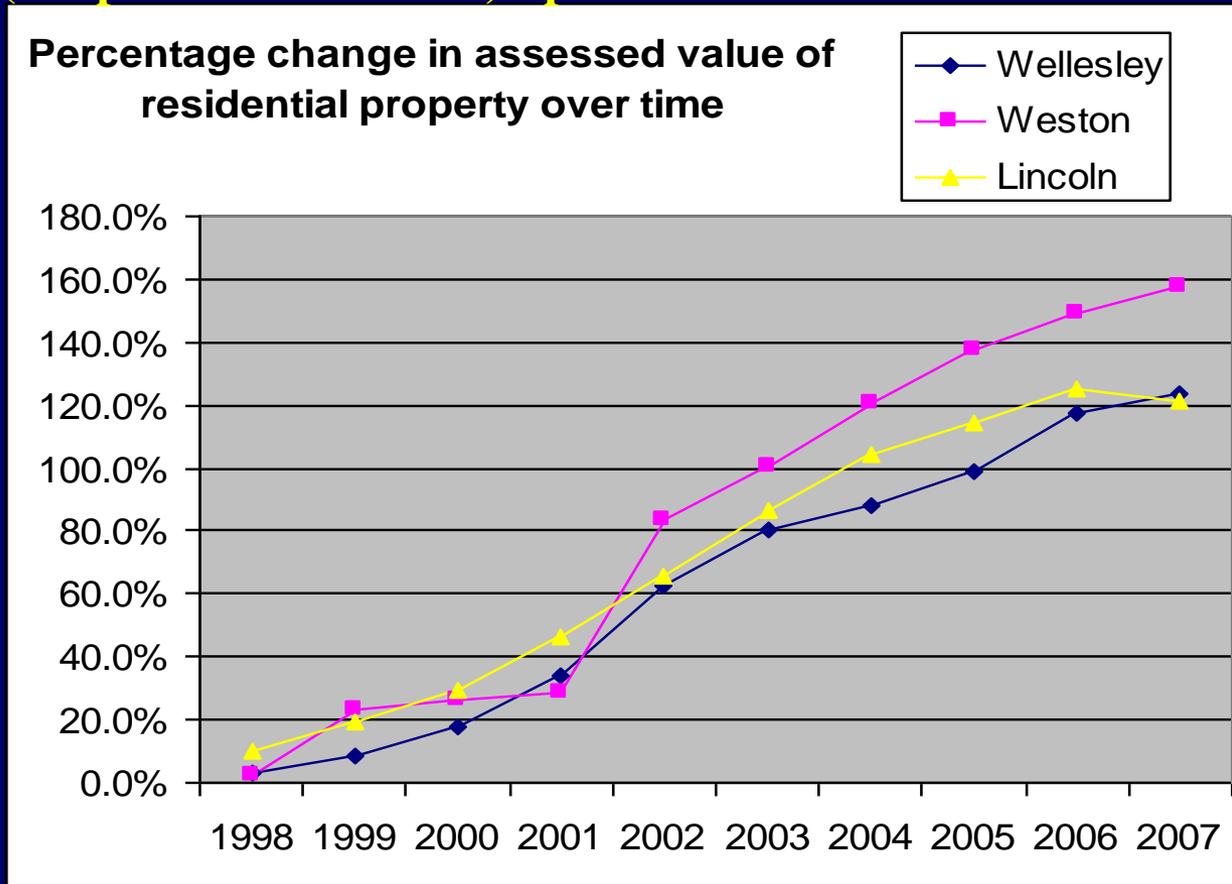
- The ability to build nearly twice as large as the median home size in your district without review
- A flexible approach to regulation
- A review of individual properties in the context of a neighborhood.

Does LHR have an effect on property values?

Wellesley up 123%

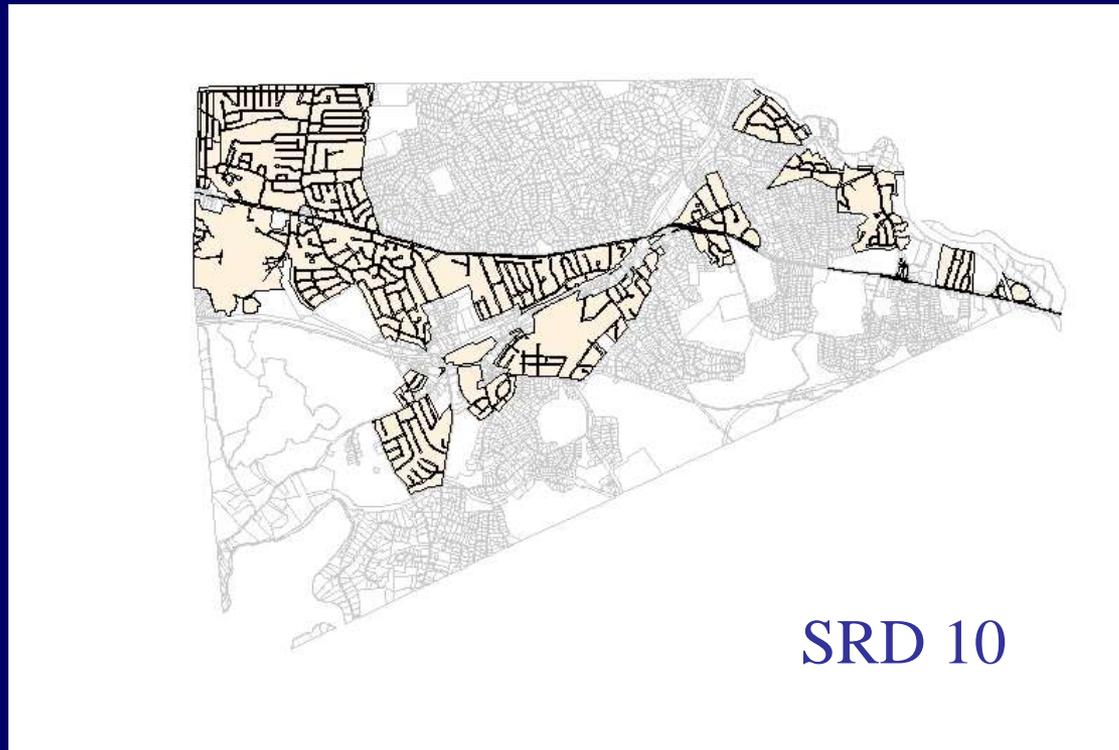
Weston (adopted LHR in 1997) up 157%

Lincoln (adopted LHR in 1999) up 121%



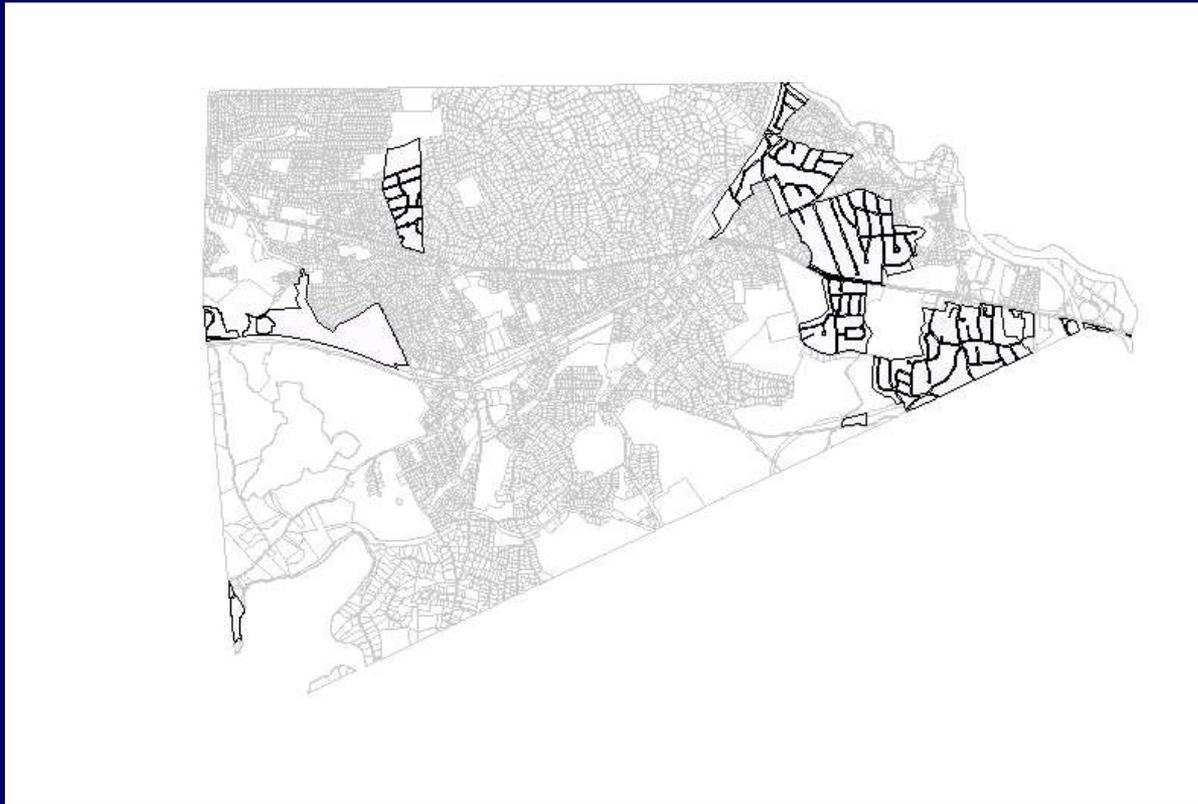
Proposal for Change

- Homes in this area will have a limit of 3,600 sq ft TLA



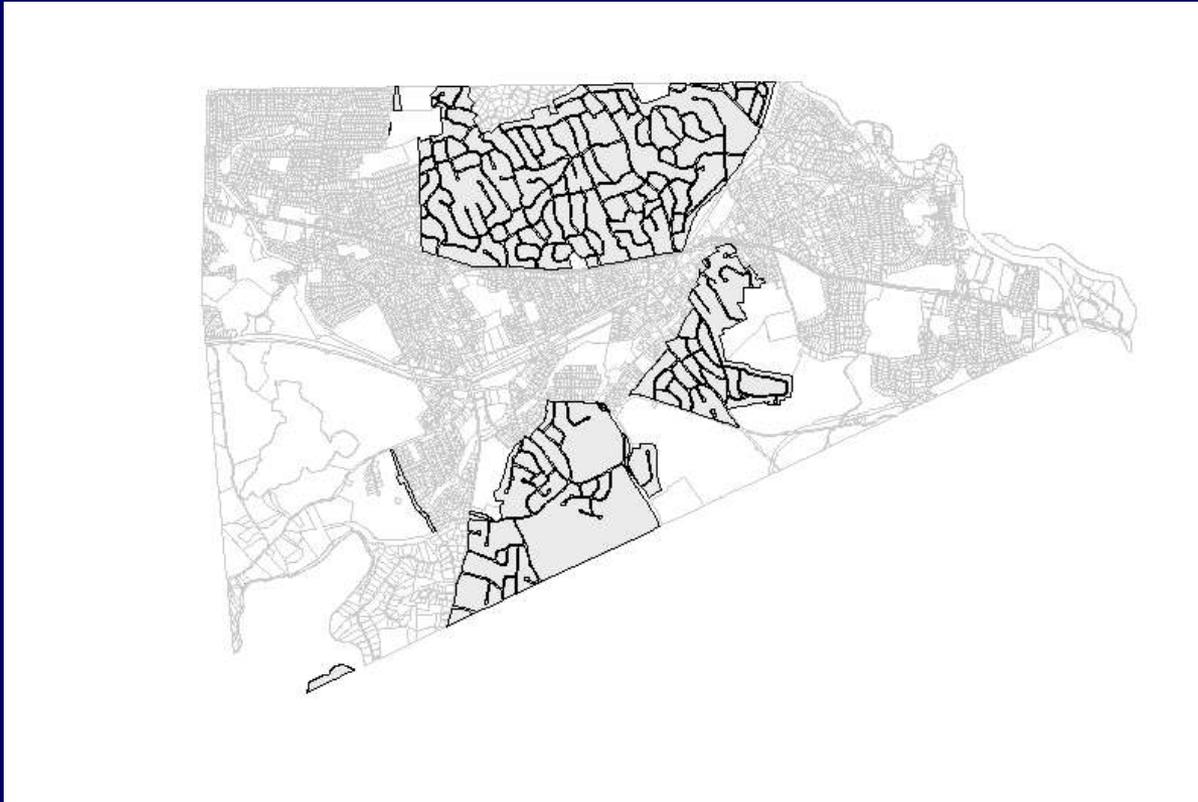
LARGE HOUSE REVIEW PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE

- Homes in the SRD15 will have a limit of 4,300 sq ft TLA



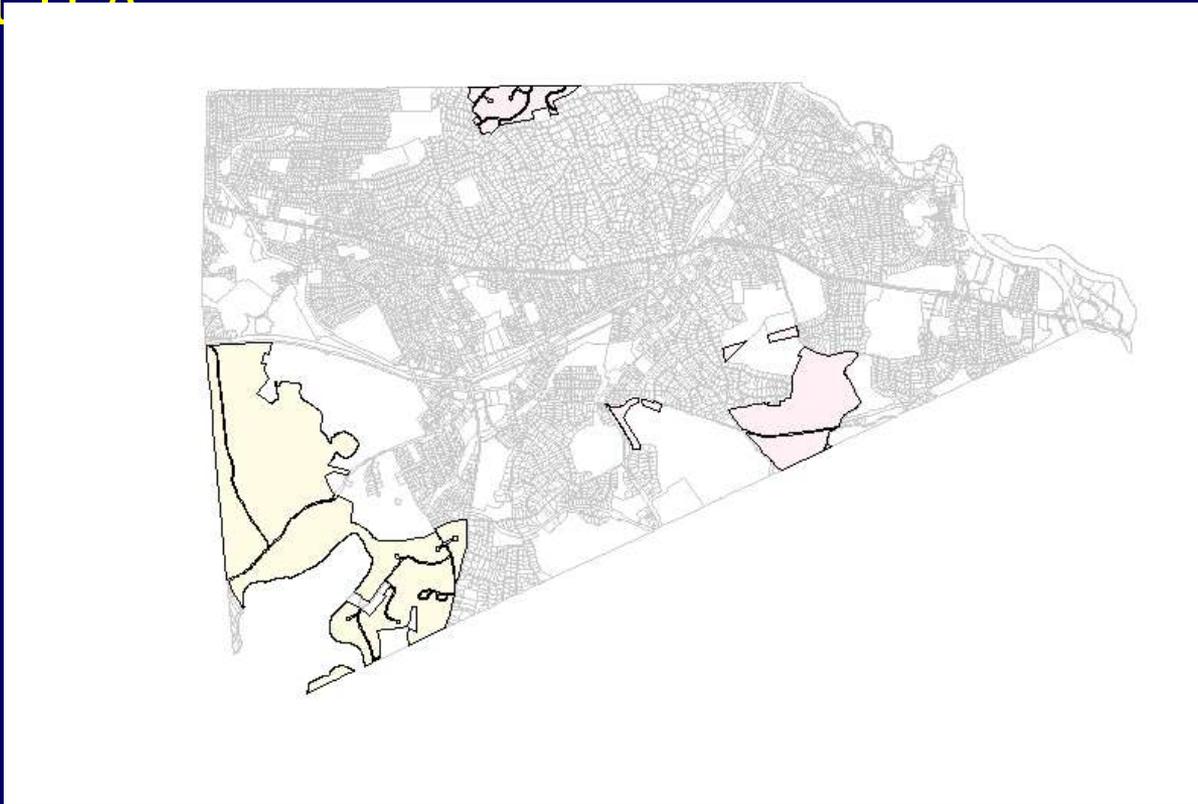
LARGE HOUSE REVIEW PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE

- Homes in the SRD 20 will have a limit of 5,900 sq ft TLA



PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE

- Homes in the SRD30 and SRD40 will have a limit of 7,200 sq ft TLA



WHY LHR BY DISTRICT?

- Wellesley has substantial variation in single family lot sizes across town.
- There are both a number of under sized and over sized lots in each district.

Number of Single Family Lots Varying from Zoning District			
District	SF Lots	Under	50% Over
SRD 10,000	3764	931	668
SRD 15,000	1142	377	186
SRD 20,000	2150	463	407
SRD 30,000 & 40,000	209	28	58

WITH LHR LOT SIZE DOES MATTER

- Current zoning allows for greater lot coverage with greater lot size.
- Wellesley has a number of odd shaped lots
- Buildable area can be limited on an odd shaped lot, yet still allowing for a larger house to be constructed.

Example: Odd Shaped Lots

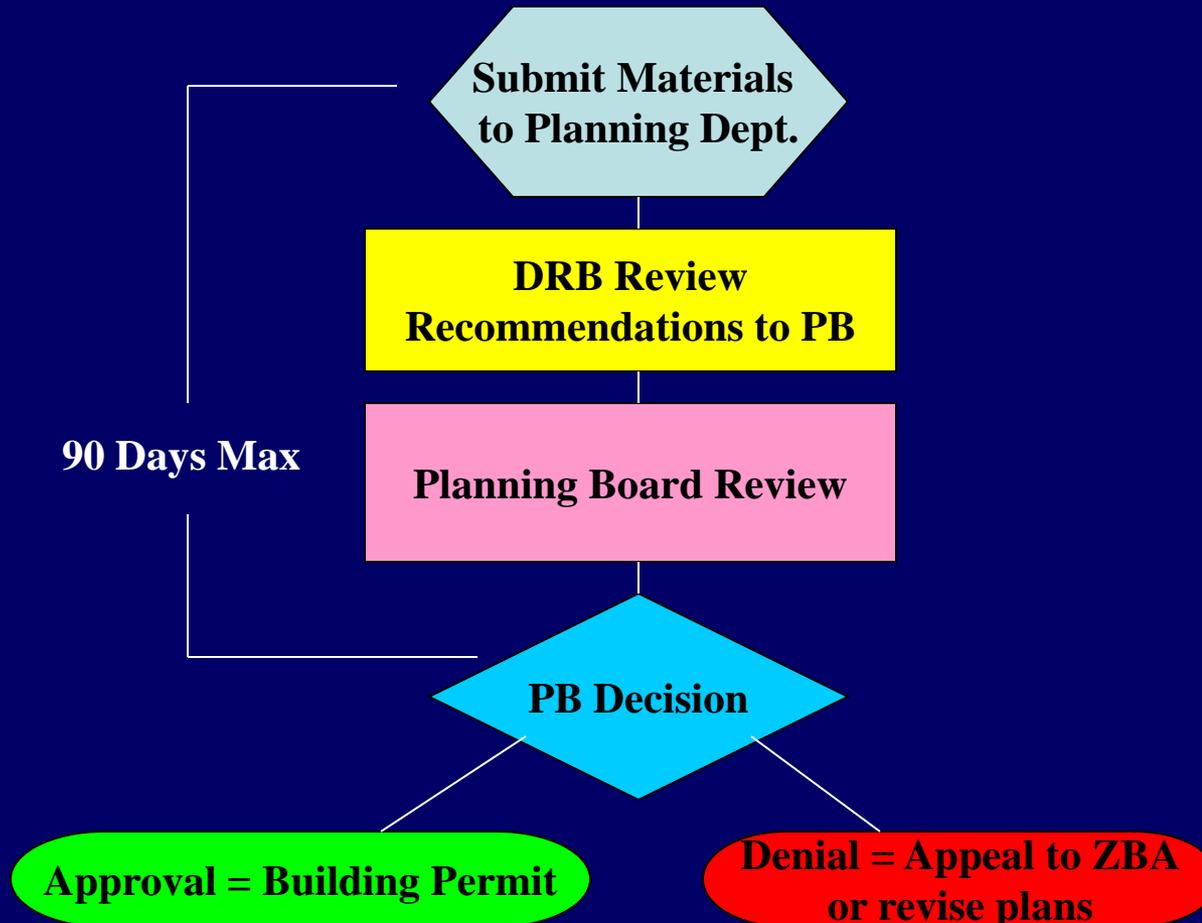


How do we deal with additions?

- Review for additions is triggered by:
 - An increase of 10% or more of TLA, and
 - A TLA over the threshold in the district
- Examples
 - A 3500 sf house in a SRD 10 would trigger review with a 350 sf addition
 - A 4200 sf house in a SRD 15 would NOT trigger review with a 400 sf addition although triggering threshold. Not 10%.

LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

GENERAL PROCESS



LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

Design Review

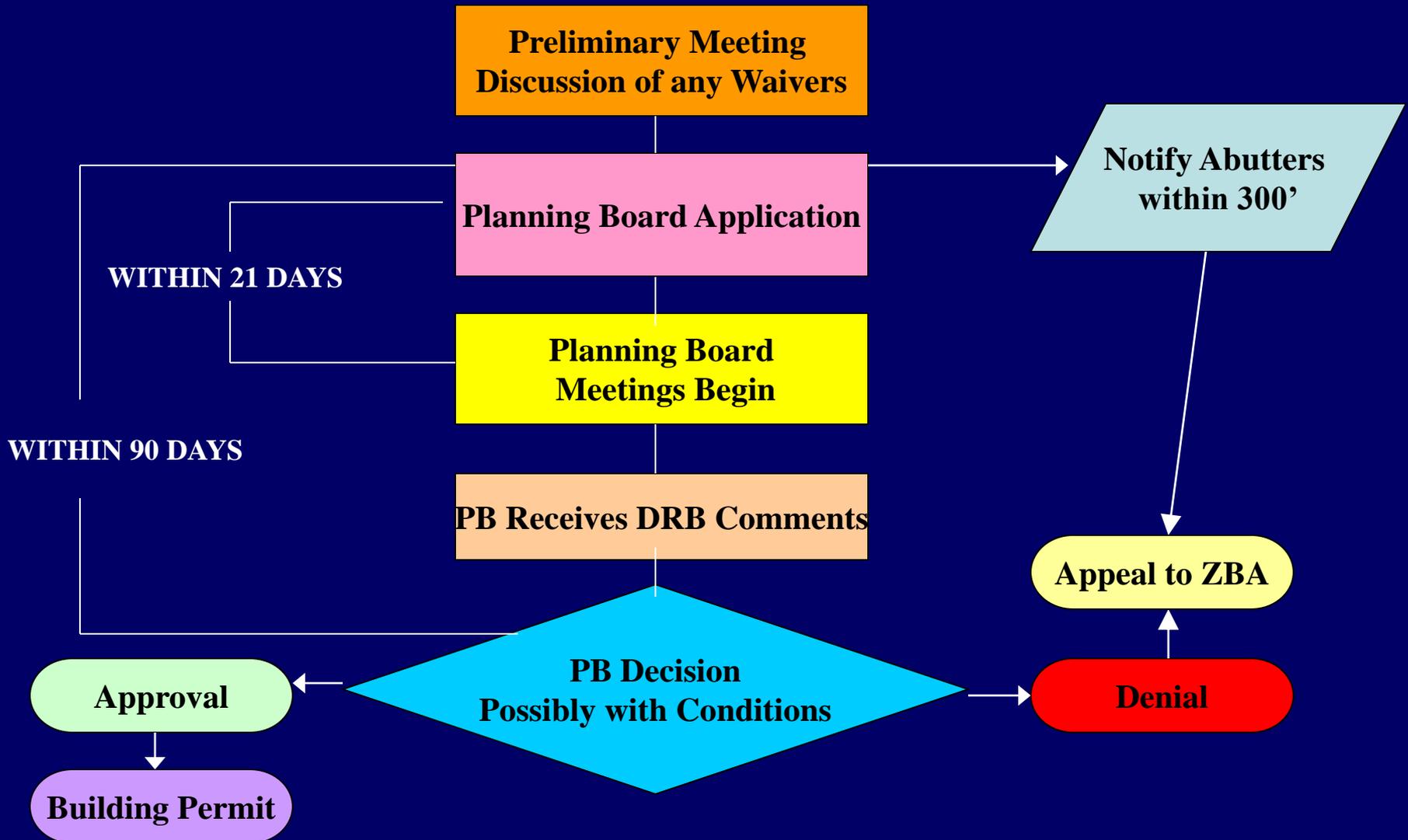


What is the Design Review Board?

- Required to include: (1) Planning Board member or designee, (2) architect, (3) landscape designer, (4) design professional, (4) designee of the retail business community
- Functions in advisory capacity only for LHR
- Will doubtless receive increased attention if LHR is adopted

LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

PLANNING



- 2004 Residential Survey, with over 1000 responses, found preservation of residential character, residential parks and open space to be second highest priority after schools.
- 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommended:
 - Site Plan Review for large homes
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ESTIMATED COST OF LHR- New Construction

Existing Site Plan (Trees, natural features)	\$3000-\$5000
Existing Elevations	\$1500-\$3000
Proposed Site Plan	Required Now
Proposed Elevations	Required Now
Proposed Grading	\$2000
Landscape Plan	\$2000-\$10,000
Application Fee	\$2500

Total	\$11,000-\$28,500
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Possible Additional Fees

*Provisions for Erosion	\$3000-\$5000
*Legal Fees	\$1000-\$4000

CAN WE CONTROL SIZE WITHOUT LHR?

- Planning Board has tried various approaches and several proposals have been enacted:
 - Increased frontage requirements
 - Height reduction
 - Setback changes
 - Prohibition on clearing lots
 - Lot coverage requirements

Planning Board Scorecard

Date	Action	Vote
1988	Proposed to reduce lot coverage town wide from 25% to 18%	Lost on voice vote
1989	Proposed to increase frontage in SRD10 to 75'	Adopted 159-44
1989	Proposed to increase side yards in SRD30 and 40	Lost on reconsideration
1989	Proposed to increase rear yard in SRD 10 & SRD15	Lost on voice vote
1989	Proposed to reduce SF building height to 40'	Adopted 134-66
1991	Historic Demo Delay Proposed	Lost 78-117
1995	Proposed to clarify building height "necessary projections"	Lost 79-95
1996	Proposed new dimensional requirements (Table 3)	Lost 104-109
1996	Proposed 0.30 FAR for SF residences	Lost 76-134
1997	Proposed to further reduce building height to 36'	Adopted 149-21
1997	Proposed new dimensional requirements (Table 3)	Adopted 170-5
1999	Proposed lot grading bylaw	Lost on voice vote
2000	Proposed lot grading bylaw	No motion
2000	Proposed increase setback for corner lots in SRD 10 & 15	Adopted on voice vote
2001	Proposed temporary moratorium on tear downs	No motion
2002	Proposed to limit soffit height	Lost 96-114
2002	Proposed to further modify lot coverage	Lost 121-78
2002	Proposed requiring a landscape plan for homes >3,000 sf	Lost on voice vote
2002	Proposed prohibition of ac units and equipment in setback	Adopted on voice vote
2002	Proposed side facing garages to have 30' side setbacks	Adopted on voice vote
2003	Proposed prohibition on clearing and grading of lots prior to building permits being issued	Adopted on voice vote
2003	Proposed correction of lot coverage	Adopted on voice vote
2003	Proposed review of unaccepted street projects with increase or demolition of 50% of existing home	Adopted 128-56
2007	Proposal to define retaining walls as structures	Lost 126-68

Can we control without cost?

What have other communities done?

- Pasadena, CA – 30 degree inclined plane starting 6 feet from lot line
- Nantucket, MA – demolition delay
- Brookline, MA – Floor area ratio limits between 0.15 and 0.35, subject to “public benefit incentives”
- Weston, MA – LHR
- Lincoln, MA – LHR
- Newton, MA – discretionary demolition delay for one year for houses over 50 yrs old

Standards for review in other towns

- Brookline, Lincoln, Weston: Preservation of landscape, relation of buildings to environment, open space, circulation, surface water drainage, utility service
- Glaeser: Housing in Wellesley and Weston are “close substitutes.”