

Large House Review (LHR) Committee
Monday September 8, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Select Board Chambers
Needham Town Hall, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA
AND
Virtual Meeting using Zoom
Meeting ID: **885 4714 5967**
(Instructions for accessing below)

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your phone, download the “Zoom Cloud Meetings” app in any app store or at www.zoom.us. At the above date and time, click on “Join a Meeting” and enter the following Meeting ID: **885 4714 5967**

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your computer, at the above date and time, go to www.zoom.us click “Join a Meeting” and enter the following ID: **885 4714 5967**

Or to Listen by Telephone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 9128 or +1 253 215 8782 Then enter ID: **885 4714 5967**

Direct Link to meeting: <https://needham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/88547145967>

1. Approval of meeting minutes.
2. Recap of LHR Committee report to Planning Board.
3. Review draft agenda for September 15 Community Meeting.
4. Review draft presentation for September 15 Community Meeting.

LHR Committee Members:

Artie Crocker	Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Heidi Frail	Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Marianne Cooley	Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Moe Handel	Design Review Board Member / Design Review Board Designee
Tina Burgos	Finance Committee Member / Finance Committee Designee
Nik Ligris	Zoning Board of Appeals Member / Zoning Board of Appeals Designee
Bill Paulson	Real Estate Broker appointed by the Planning Board
Paul McGovern	Developer appointed by the Planning Board
Oscar Mertz	Architect appointed by the Planning Board
Chris Cotter	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Rob Dangel	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Joe Matthews	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Ed Quinlan	At Large appointed by the Planning Board

Large House Review (LHR) Study Committee
Community Meeting
Monday, September 15, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Powers Hall, Needham Town Hall, 1471 Highland Ave, Needham

AND

Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Zoom: <https://needham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/82721638505>

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your phone, download the “Zoom Cloud Meetings” app in any app store or at www.zoom.us. At the above date and time, click on “Join a Meeting” and enter the following Meeting ID: 82721638505

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your computer, at the above date and time, go to www.zoom.us click “Join a Meeting” and enter the following ID: 82721638505

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Direct Link to meeting: <https://needham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/82721638505>

1. 7:00 – 7:15 pm: Welcome & Introduction
2. 7:15 – 8:00 pm: Presentation
3. 8:00 – 8:45 pm: Open mic for comments, questions, ideas
4. 8:45 – 9:00 pm: Closing and Next Steps.

LHR Committee Members:

Artie Crocker	Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Heidi Frail	Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Marianne Cooley	Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Moe Handel	Design Review Board Member / Design Review Board Designee
Tina Burgos	Finance Committee Member / Finance Committee Designee
Nik Ligris	Zoning Board of Appeals Member / Zoning Board of Appeals Designee
Bill Paulson	Real Estate Broker appointed by the Planning Board
Paul McGovern	Developer appointed by the Planning Board
Oscar Mertz	Architect appointed by the Planning Board
Chris Cotter	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Rob Dangel	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Joe Matthews	At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Ed Quinlan	At Large appointed by the Planning Board



LHRSC Review Draft of Presentation

Large House Review (LHR) Study Committee Community Meeting #2

September 15, 2025

Town Hall, Powers Hall and Zoom



Format for the evening:

- 7:00 – 7:15 pm: Welcome & Introduction
- 7:15 – 8:00 pm: Presentation of Committee Work
- 8:00 – 8:45 pm: Open mic for comments, questions, ideas
- 8:45 – close: Wrap-up, Survey & Next Steps

Committee Composition:



Member	Seat		Member	Seat
Artie Crocker	Planning Board Member		Bill Paulson	Real Estate Broker
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board Designee		Paul McGovern	Developer
Marianne Cooley	Select Board Member		Oscar Mertz	Architect
Heidi Frail	Select Board Member		Chris Cotter	At Large
Moe Handel	Design Review Board Designee		Rob Dangel	At Large
Tina Burgos	Finance Committee Member		Joe Matthews	At Large
Nik Ligris	Zoning Board of Appeals Member		Ed Quinlan	At Large



Committee Charge:

The study area shall be all properties located in the Single Residence B and General Residence Districts, which are the residential zoning districts with the smallest lot size/dimensional requirements.

Purpose: To develop recommendations on how best to ensure that new residential construction in the Single Residence B and General Residence Districts will complement existing buildings, settings and neighborhood character. *(To date the LHRSC has not spent time studying changes for General Residence district).*

The Large House Review Study Committee (LHRSC) shall:

1. Review past reports, plans and maps prepared by town committees, town officials, state agencies and consultants including the previous Large House Study Committee.
2. Seek the input of neighborhood residents, builders, contractors, real estate agents, property owners and others as required. It is also expected that the Large House Review Study Committee will hold citizen information meetings to elicit general public comments and input.
3. Review and analyze the current Zoning By-Law and Planning Board Regulations and consideration of amendments to each.
4. Analyze the impact of recent planned and potential new housing constructed in the past 5 years in the Residence B and General Residence Districts.



Committee Charge (cont.):

5. Review and analyze alternative zoning dimensions, restrictions or limitations that may address neighborhood concerns.
6. Review the current FAR definition to determine whether it is too permissive and, if so, how it should be revised including whether the floor area designed for human occupancy on the third floor or basement level of a house should be included in the FAR calculation.
7. Prepare recommendations to amend the Zoning By-Law or propose other regulatory strategies that will protect the characteristics valued by residents in the Single Residence B and General Residence Districts.
8. Generally, identify key issues and needs, analyze alternative solutions, and make recommendations to the Planning Board, both short and long term, within the overall purpose of the Large House Review Study Committee.
9. Prepare Fiscal Impact Analysis to accompany recommendations of Committee.
10. Coordinate with current efforts around the Stormwater By-Law and Tree By-Law.



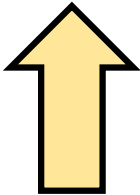
Committee Timeline / Schedule:

- June 2025 – first community meeting primarily for listening and collecting concerns
- July 2025 – first contractor meeting primarily for collecting feedback
- Summer 2025 – LHRSC continues to meet to research Needham and other town data and work with consultant teams on modeling house size reduction options and real estate property sales value impacts
- September 2025 – second community meeting to present research results, consultant analyses and collect feedback
- Fall 2025 – Integrate feedback for final proposals
- November 2025 – third community meeting to present final LHR proposal
- November 2025 – hand-off to Planning Board

Schedule/Timeline



Large House Review Committee Launches	Community Meeting #1	Contractor Meeting	Planning Board Update	Community Meeting #2	Community Meeting #3	Present Final recommendations to Planning Board	Planning Board to take over process, begin statutory process to take any zoning to Town Meeting
December, 2024	June 09, 2025	June 21, 2025	Sept. 02, 2025	Sept. 15, 2025	November, 2025	November, 2025	December, 2025



We are here!



Goals for the evening:

- Raise awareness of the Large House Review Committee, its charge, and its work completed to date.
- Present the materials developed by the committee and their consultant showing alternatives for reducing large house size.
- Listen and learn what questions, ideas, and feedback Needham community members have about these reduction alternatives.
- Answer any questions that we can. Make note of any that we cannot answer yet but can circle back on later.



LHRSC Survey Results (*June 2025*):

The following is a summary of the responses we received from a non-scientific survey of 1,155 residents.

Please rate the following statements. You may elaborate on any of these statements in the open response section in question #2.						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
Needham has a large house and/or teardown issue	9%	9%	6%	18%	58%	0%
The Town should be regulating/moderating house sizes in Needham differently than it currently does	9%	10%	6%	24%	51%	0%
Large houses and/or teardowns in Needham have impacted me negatively	14%	15%	19%	24%	26%	2%
Spacing (side setbacks) between houses in Needham is acceptable	20%	34%	14%	22%	10%	0%
Spacing (front setbacks) between houses and the street in Needham is acceptable	16%	22%	21%	31%	9%	1%



LHRSC Survey Results (*June 2025*):

The following is a summary of the responses we received from a non-scientific survey of 1,155 residents.

Please rate the following statements. You may elaborate on any of these statements in the open response section in question #2. (continued)						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
Current height restrictions of new houses being built in Needham are acceptable	21%	28%	20%	21%	9%	1%
The footprint (lot coverage) of new houses being built in Needham is acceptable	39%	33%	7%	12%	8%	0%
I am comfortable with the current volume (bulk) of new houses being built in Needham	29%	30%	15%	16%	10%	0%
My neighborhood in Needham has changed negatively over the last 10 years	17%	20%	20%	23%	18%	4%
I am concerned that my house in Needham will be torn down and replaced after I sell it	17%	17%	19%	15%	27%	5%

Current Large House Dimensional Regulations:



- The following slides reflect the current zoning and dimensional regulations for houses on non-conforming (< 10K lots) and conforming lots (>10K lots)

Reference material from 2017



Dimensional Regulations:

	Criteria Being Considered	New Construction							
	Minimum Lot Area (sq ft)	Minimum Frontage (feet)	Front Setback (feet)	Side Setback (feet)	Rear Setback (feet)	Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Maximum Lot Coverage %	Maximum Stories	Maximum Height (feet)
Single Residence B Zoning District (New Construction)	10,000	80	20 (a)(b)	14 (b)(c)	20	.36-.38 (d)	25%-30%	2.5	35 (e)(f)
General Residence Zoning District (New Construction)	10,000	80	20 (a)(b)	14 (b)(c)	20	NR	30%-35%	2.5	35 (e)(f)

- (a) Attached garages have minimum setback of 25'.
- (b) Special permit exception for existing structure non-conforming relative to front or side yard setback.
- (c) Increased to 16 feet for any length over 32' feet on a frontage conforming lot. On lots with non-conforming frontage side setback is 12 feet, increased to 14 feet after 32' of building length along the sideline.
- (d) For lots < 12,000 sq. ft. .38. For lots 12,000 sq. ft. or more .36.
- (e) .Maximum height of building at any one point may not exceed 41'.
- (f) If basement wall exposed to full height, dormers in half-story are not permitted.

Lot Coverage



	Lot Size (SF)	% Coverage	Allowable Coverage (SF)
Single Residence B	7500 or more	25	1875 or more
	7000-7499	26	1820-1950
	6500-6999	27	1755-1890
	6000-6499	28	1680-1820
	5500-5999	29	1595-1740
	5499 or less	30	1650 or less
General Residence	9000 or more	30	2700 or more
	8500-8999	31	2635-2790
	8000-8499	32	2560-2730
	7500-7999	33	2475-2640
	7000-7499	34	2380-2550
	6999 or less	35	2450 or less



Floor Area Ratio

- Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) Requirement in the SRB District as noted in table below (*FAR did not exist as a dimensional regulation in SRB before 2017 when Town Meeting adopted it specifically to limit the size of new homes*).
- **Area calculated for FAR is the first and second floor area. Attic/third floor and basement are currently not included.** There is currently an additional allowance of 600 square feet for the garage.
- Basic House Program Assumptions (from Large House Committee in 2017):
First floor includes 2 car garage, LR, DR, kitchen, family room, mud room and study. **Second floor** includes 4 BRs, 2-3 Baths, Laundry.

Lot Size in Square Feet	FAR
Lot size < 12,000	.38
Lot size ≥ 12,000	.36

Height Measurement Method



- In all residential districts, two measurement options are offered at applicant's discretion:
 - Measure from average existing grade or average new grade, whichever is lower. Height limit is 35 feet.
 - Measure from a single point in the street centerline as the average of the highest 1/3 of the properties' street frontage. Height limit is 32 feet.
- In SRB and General residence districts:
 - Maximum height at any point may not exceed 41 feet.
 - Dormers in the half story above second floor on the façade containing a basement walk-out are not permitted.

Large House Dimensional Regulations Being Considered: (*SRB District*)



The LHRSC is seeking appropriate methods to assist the town in regulating house “bulk” to achieve appropriately sized houses for the size of the lot.

The dimensional controls considered include:

- ☐ Floor Area Ratio (FAR):

- 1. Change definition to counting 1, 2, 3 + Garage, instead of 1 and 2 only without garage

- ☐ Lot Coverage:

- 1. Change from a fixed ratio to a sliding ratio based on lot size to favor smaller lots

- ☐ Height Limits:

- 1. Reduce current Building Height limits to provide respectful neighborhood house scales

- ☐ Setbacks:

- 1. Maintain current Side Setbacks but introduce an Average Front Setback (to preserve special neighborhood setback character around town). *Examples: Fair Oaks, Highland, Webster, Warren*



Sample Reduction Study – House #1:

- Summary data slide
- Floor Plans: includes original house plans and three reduction plan studies
- Side-by-side model view comparisons illustrating original house vs. each reduced house study – three step reductions to dimensional regulations for:
 - Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (measuring 1, 2, 3 and G)
 - Lot Coverage
 - Height
- Neighborhood model view comparisons illustrating original house and three reduced houses shown between two neighbor houses – one older (smaller) and one newer (larger)
- See Appendix Section for complete modeling studies of houses #1, 2 & 3

NOTE: Third party consultant, Raymond Design Associates, Inc. (RDA), is providing the computer modeling services.

House Reduction Study

View Comparison

The images below illustrate the existing house on the left followed by three reduced house models. The dashed lines show the comparison of the original house to the reduced houses. The following slides show the original and potential reduced floor plans.



Base



Reduction 1



Reduction 2



Reduction 3



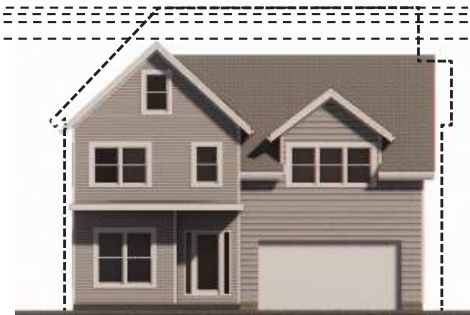
Base



Reduction 1



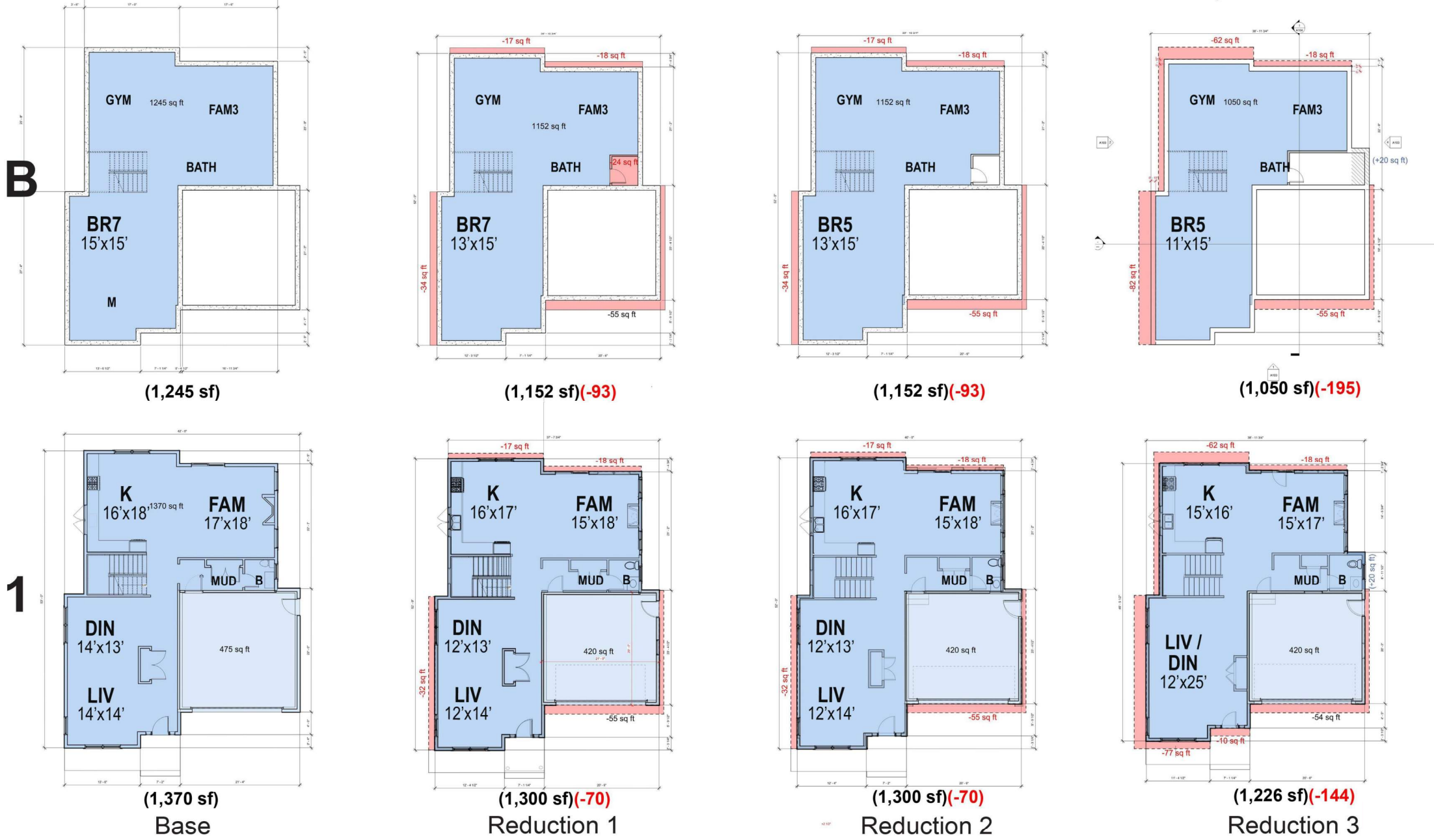
Reduction 2



Reduction 3

House 1

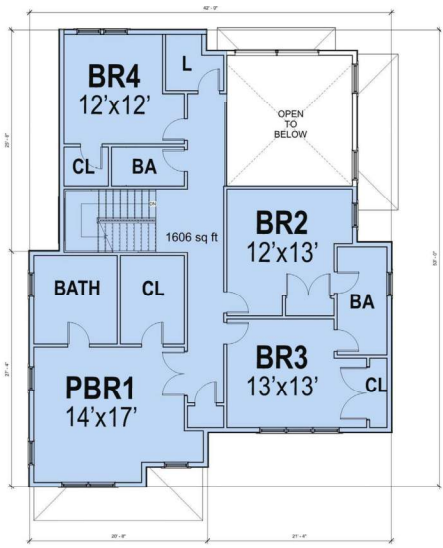
NOTE: Floor plans reflect an architect's test of each set of reduced plans to be able to accommodate layouts to achieve a target program of reasonably sized main family spaces on the ground floor and reasonably sized bedrooms with supporting baths and closets on the second floor. Layouts shown reflect just one of many possible layouts.



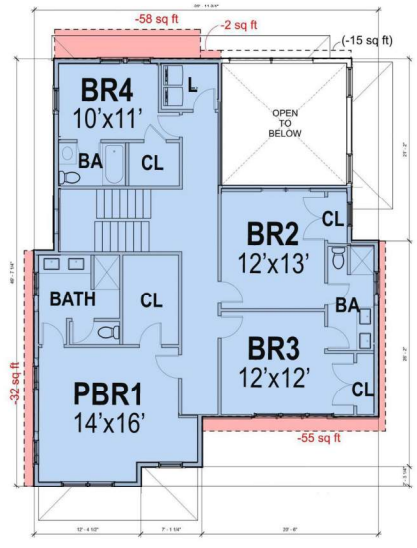
House 1

NOTE: Floor plans reflect an architect's test of each set of reduced plans to be able to accommodate layouts to achieve a target program of reasonably sized main family spaces on the ground floor and reasonably sized bedrooms with supporting baths and closets on the second floor. Layouts shown reflect just one of many possible layouts.

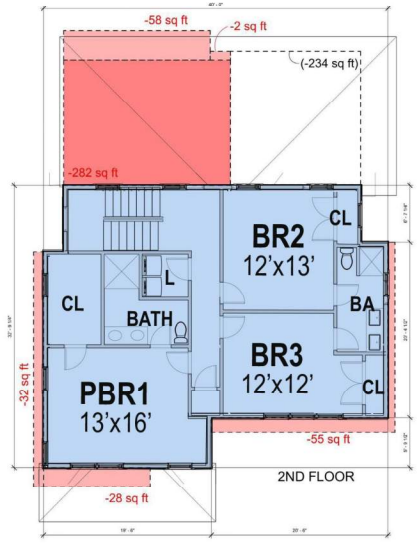
2



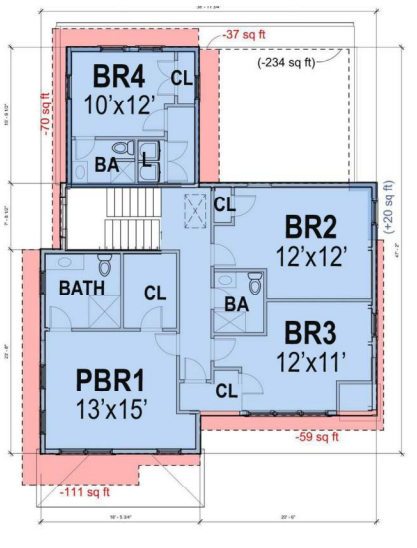
(1,606 sf)



(1,460 sf)(-146)

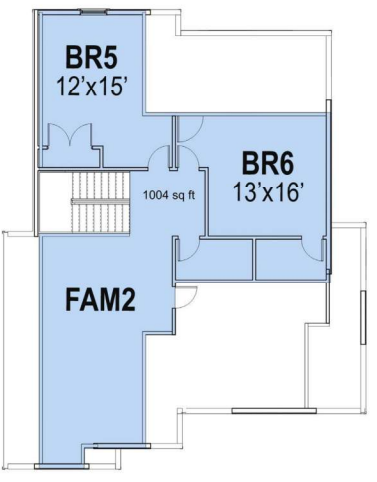


(1,152 sf)(-454)

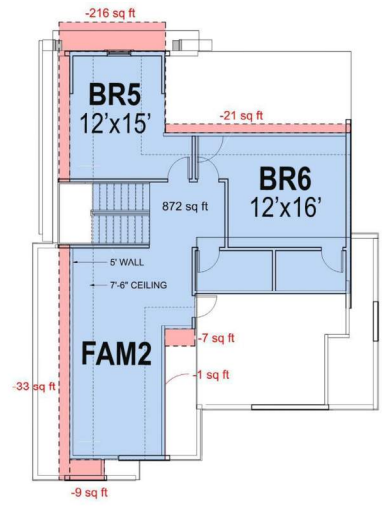


(1,317 sf)(-289)

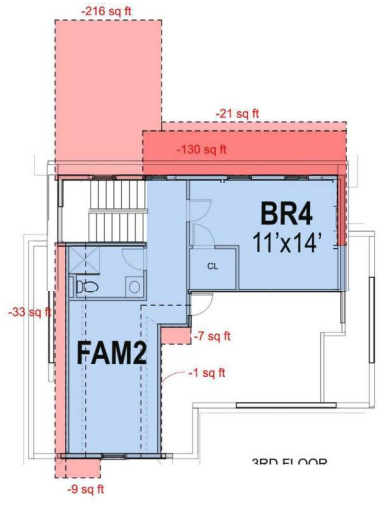
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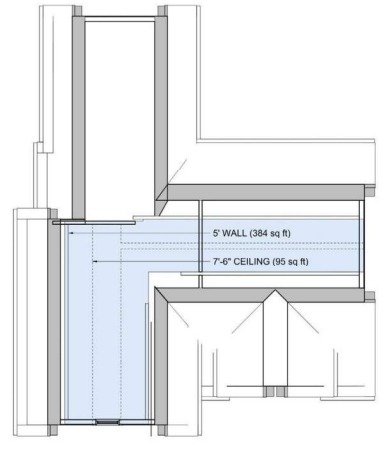
(1,004 sf)
Base



(872 sf)(-132)
Reduction 1



(587 sf)(-417)
Reduction 2



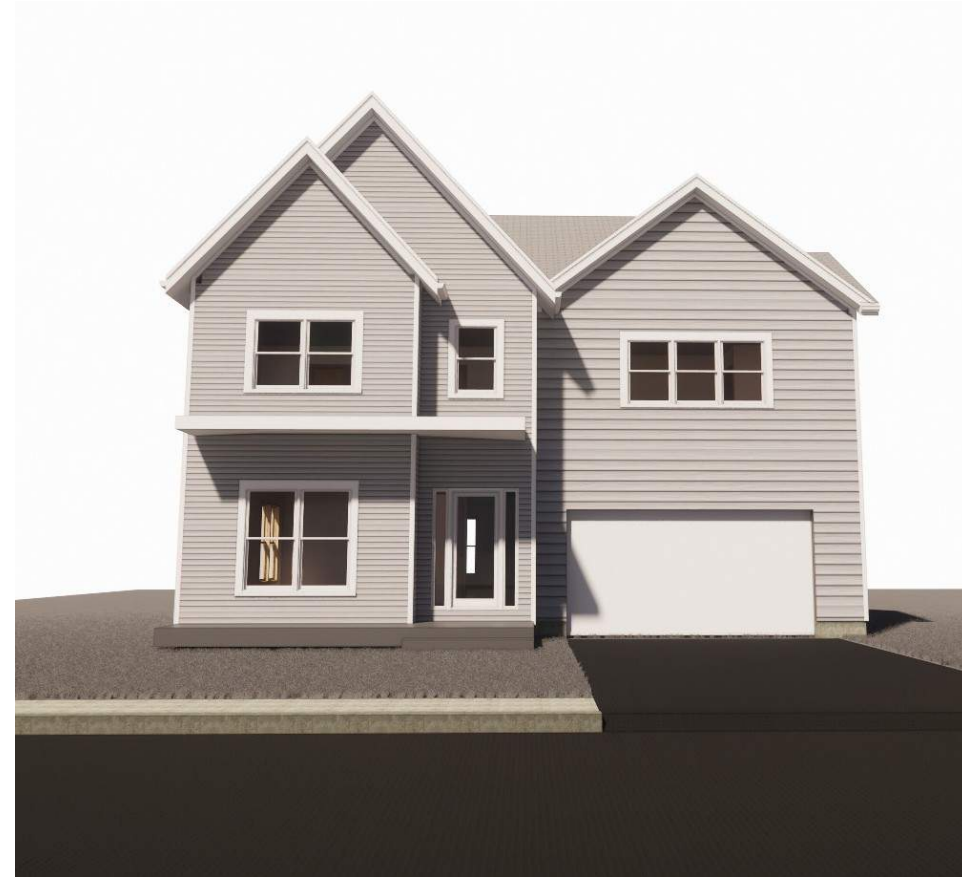
(unhabitable)(-1,00)
Reduction 3

Side-by-side Comparison

Front View



Base
(5,700 sf)



Base
(5,700 sf)

House 1

Side-by-side Comparison

Front View



Base
(5,700 sf)



Reduction 1
(5,207 sf)

House 1

(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 493 sf)

Side-by-side Comparison
Front View



Base
(5,700 sf)



Reduction 2
(4,614 sf)

House 1

(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 1,086 sf)

Side-by-side Comparison

Front View



Base
(5,700 sf)



Reduction 3
(4,013 sf)

House 1

(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 1,687 sf)

Neighborhood Comparison

Corner View 1



House 1 - Base (5,700 sf)

Neighborhood Comparison

Corner View 1



House 1 - Reduction 1 (5,207 sf)
(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 493 sf)

Neighborhood Comparison

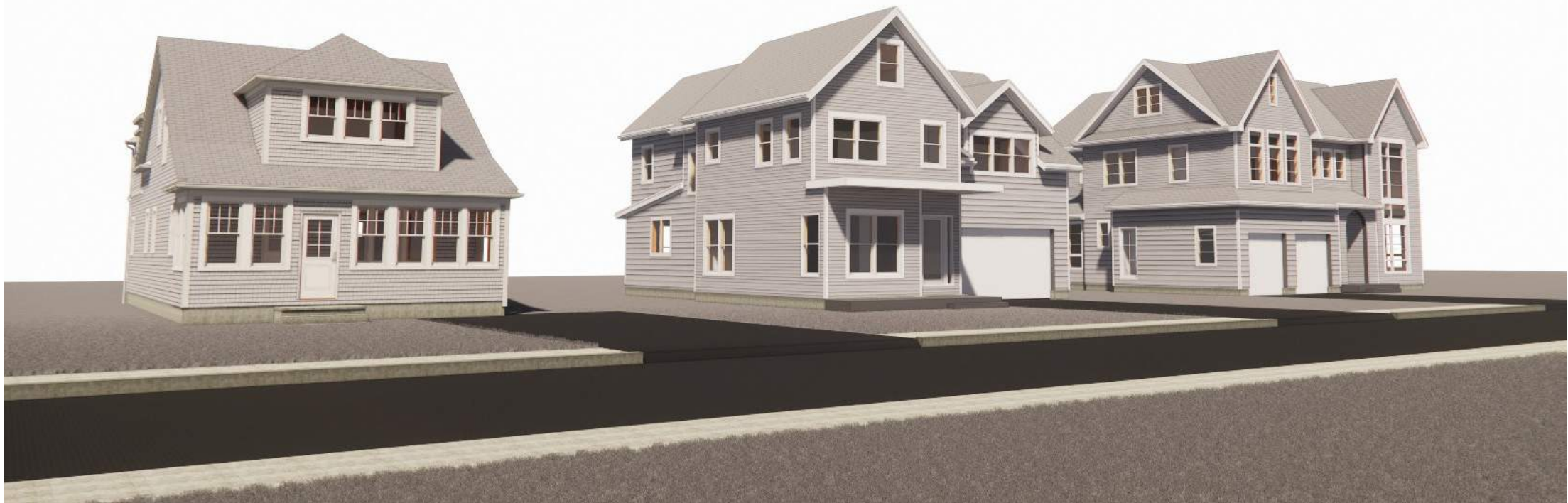
Corner View 1



House 1 - Reduction 2 (4,614 sf)
(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 1,086 sf)

Neighborhood Comparison

Corner View 1



House 1 - Reduction 3 (4,013 sf)
(TOTAL AREA REDUCED: 1,687 sf)

**TOTAL BUILT AREA
INCLUDING ALL
FLOORS AND GARAGE**

House 1 Summary of Reductions

BASE:	5,700	1st Reduction:	5,207	2nd Reduction:	4,614	3rd Reduction:	4,013
1st fl	1,370	1,300	-67	1,300	-67	1,226	-144
2nd fl	1,606	1,460	-146	1,152	-454	1,317	-289
attic	1,004	872	-132	587	-417	0	-1,004
basement	1,245	1,152	-93	1,152	-93	1,050	-195
garage	475	420	-55	420	-55	420	-55
TOTAL AREA EXISTING	5,700	TOTAL AREA REDUCED	493	TOTAL AREA REDUCED	1,086	TOTAL AREA REDUCED	1,687
footprint	1,875	1,720	-122	1,720	-122	1,627	-248
Lot Size	7,828	7,828		7828		7,828	
1st-2nd Flr	10'-2 1/2"	10'-2 1/2"	0	9'-8 1/2"	-6"	9'-6"	-8 1/2"
2nd-Attic	9'-2 3/4"	9'-2 3/4"	0	8'-8 3/4"	-6"	8'-6"	-8 3/4"
FAR	57% (4,455)	51% (4,029)	-10%	44% (3,459)	-22%	38% (2,963)	-33%
Livable Area	67% (5,225)	60% (4,754)	-9%	54% (4,191)	-20%	46% (3,593)	-31%
Coverage	24.8%	22.9%		22.9%		21.9%	
Ave Grade - Ridge	34'-2 1/2"	33'-4 1/2"	-10"	32'-4 1/2"	-1'-10"	30'-4 1/2"	-3'-10"

Town Comparison of Reduction Study – House #1:



□ The following charts reflect the information used to generate these reduction studies. In general, the studies have looked at both Floor Area Ratio (FAR) with a proposed new definition to count 1,2,3, + Garage, as well as, “Livable” SF, which is the total of marketable area on B,1,2, & 3:

- 1. Chart of Three Existing Sample Houses compared to three towns
 - *(Wellesley, Concord and Lexington)*
- 2. Graph of Above Comparison between Needham and three towns
- 3. Chart of 20 Needham Sample Houses compared to four towns
 - *(Wellesley, Concord, Lexington and Newton)*

Comparison of Towns – FAR (Floor Area Ratio)



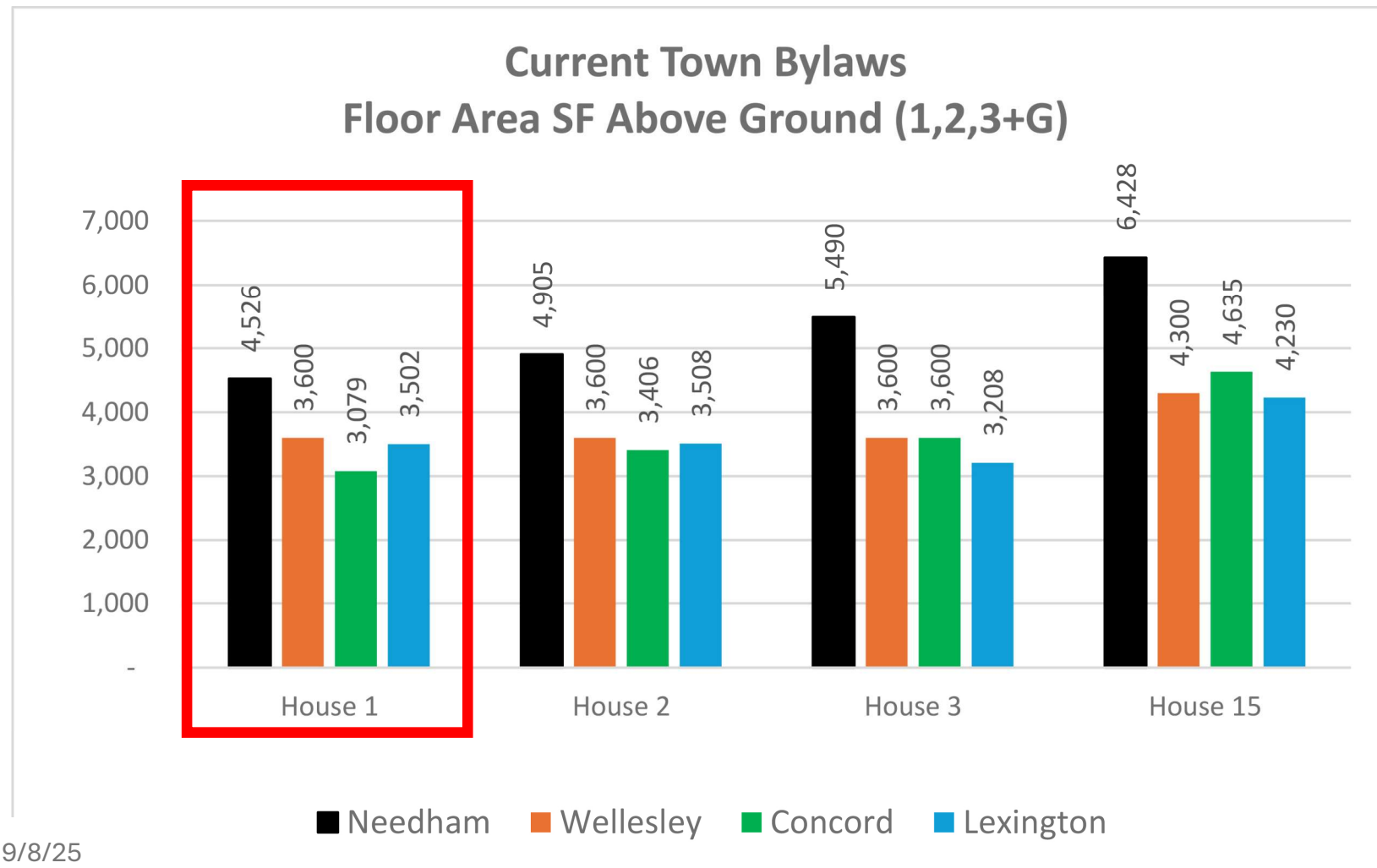
This shows an FAR comparison of existing Needham sample House #1 size compared to a possible house size in three neighboring towns using each town's area calculation methods:

House Size Limit Comparison Needham, Wellesely, Concord, Lexington Floor Area Above Ground (1,2,3+G)									
Needham House ID	Model House (Existing As-Built)						Conforming House		
	#1		#2		#3		15		
Lot Area	7,828	SF	9,191	SF	10,001	SF	14,314	SF	
Lot Coverage	1,841	SF	2,298	SF	2,500	SF	3,722	SF	
Lot Coverage %	23.5%		25.0%		25.0%		26.0%		
Floor Area (By Floor)									
Bsmt Gross	1,388	SF	1,544	SF	1,942	SF	1,395	SF	
Bsmt Net (10% Utility Rm Deduct)	1,249	SF	1,390	SF	1,748	SF	1,256	SF	
Garage	473	SF	572	SF	529	SF	598	SF	
First (w/o G)	1,368	SF	1,680	SF	2,039	SF	2,558	SF	
Second	1,604	SF	1,748	SF	1,974	SF	2,462	SF	
Third	1,081	SF	905	SF	948	SF	810	SF	
Total Gross (ALL Floor Area)	5,914	SF	6,449	SF	7,432	SF	7,823	SF	
Total 1,2,3+G SF (proposed FAR)	4,526	SF	4,905	SF	5,490	SF	6,428	SF	
Floor Area Above Ground (1,2,3+G) Based on Current Town Bylaws									
Needham Above Ground Area (As-Built)	4,526	SF	%Less	4,905	SF	%Less	5,490	SF	%Less
Wellesley Above Ground Area	3,600	SF	-20%	3,600	SF	-27%	3,600	SF	-34%
Concord Above Ground Area	3,079	SF	-32%	3,406	SF	-31%	3,600	SF	-34%
Lexington Above Ground Area	3,502	SF	-23%	3,508	SF	-28%	3,208	SF	-42%
	4,230	SF	-34%						

Comparison of Towns – FAR (Floor Area Ratio)



This shows an FAR comparison of existing Needham sample House #1 size compared to a possible house size in three neighboring towns using each town's area calculation methods:



Comparison of Towns – Livable SF



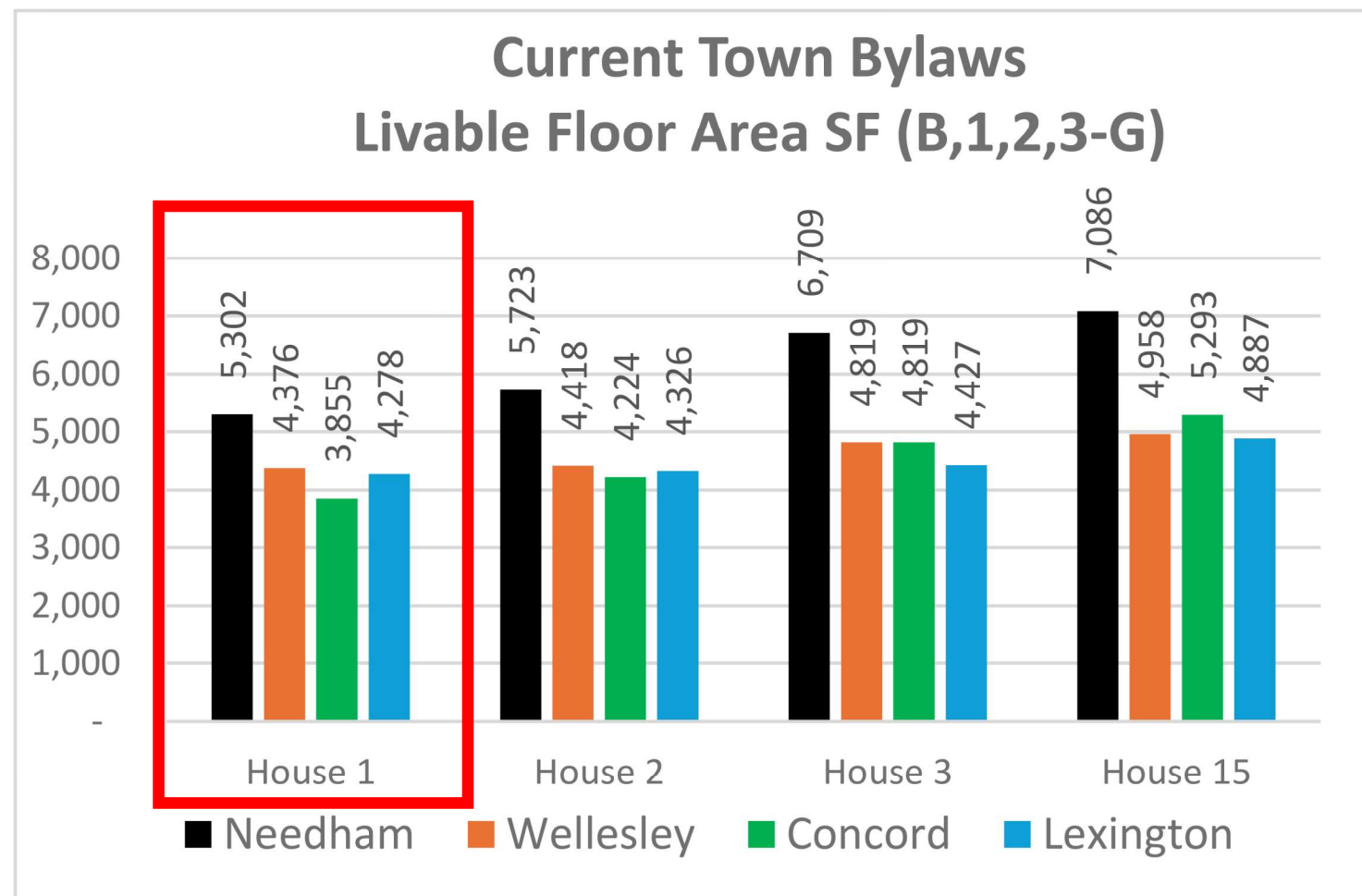
This shows a Livable SF area comparison of existing Needham sample House #1 compared to a possible house size in three neighboring towns using each town's area calculation methods:

House Size Limit Comparison Needham, Wellesely, Concord, Lexington Livable Floor Area Calculation (B,1,2,3-G)											
Needham House ID	Model House (Existing As-Built)						Conforming House				
	#1			#2		#3		15			
Lot Area	7,828	SF		9,191	SF		10,001	SF	14,314	SF	
Lot Coverage	1,841	SF		2,298	SF		2,500	SF	3,722	SF	
Lot Coverage %	23.5%			25.0%			25.0%		26.0%		
Floor Area (By Floor)											
Bsmt Gross	1,388	SF		1,544	SF		1,942	SF	1,395	SF	
Bsmt Net (10% Utility Rm Deduct)	1,249	SF		1,390	SF		1,748	SF	1,256	SF	
Garage	473	SF		572	SF		529	SF	598	SF	
First (w/o G)	1,368	SF		1,680	SF		2,039	SF	2,558	SF	
Second	1,604	SF		1,748	SF		1,974	SF	2,462	SF	
Third	1,081	SF		905	SF		948	SF	810	SF	
Total Gross	5,914	SF		6,449	SF		7,432	SF	7,823	SF	
Total Livable SF (B,1,2,3-G)	5,302	SF		5,723	SF		6,709	SF	7,086	SF	
Livable Floor Area (B,1,2,3-G) Based on Current Town Bylaws											
Needham Livable Floor Area (As-Built)	5,302	SF	%Less	5,723	SF	%Less	6,709	SF	7,086	SF	%Less
Wellesley Livable Floor Area	4,376	SF	-17%	4,418	SF	-23%	4,819	SF	4,958	SF	-30%
Concord Livable Floor Area	3,855	SF	-27%	4,224	SF	-26%	4,819	SF	5,293	SF	-25%
Lexington Livable Floor Area	4,278	SF	-19%	4,326	SF	-24%	4,427	SF	4,887	SF	-31%

Comparison of Towns – Livable SF



This shows a Livable SF area comparison of existing Needham sample House #1 compared to a possible house size in three neighboring towns using each town's area calculation methods:



Comparison of Towns – FAR Alternatives



This shows an FAR area comparison of possible house sizes based on lot size. We are illustrating the possible house sizes in Needham using the current FAR and three reduced house FAR alternatives and comparing them with four neighboring towns using each town's area calculation methods:

Sample 10k lot			Existing House			Reduced House Alternatives						Other Towns					
Based on proposed FAR - 1, 2, 3, G.																	
Lot Size	Lot Coverage		Needham Current				Reduction 1		Reduction 2		Reduction 3			Wellesley	Concord	Lexington	Newton
	Current	Proposed	FAR	1,2 FAR SF	1,2,3,G SF		FAR Calc	FAR SF	FAR Calc	FAR SF	FAR Calc	FAR SF		10,000sf district		GLA-Basement	SR3
7,000	26%	25%	0.38	2,660	3,888		0.55	3,870	0.48	3,380	0.42	2,915		3,600	2,880	3,756	3,360
7,500	25%	24%	0.38	2,850	4,125		0.53	4,000	0.47	3,500	0.40	3,025		3,600	3,000	3,890	3,525
8,000	25%	23%	0.38	3,040	4,425		0.52	4,130	0.45	3,620	0.39	3,135		3,600	3,120	4,044	3,680
8,500	25%	22%	0.38	3,230	4,663		0.50	4,260	0.44	3,740	0.38	3,245		3,600	3,240	3,878	4,080
9,000	25%	22%	0.38	3,420	4,900		0.49	4,390	0.43	3,860	0.37	3,355		3,600	3,360	3,862	3,870
9,500	25%	21%	0.38	3,610	5,138		0.48	4,520	0.42	3,980	0.36	3,465		3,600	3,480	3,846	3,990
10,000	25%	20%	0.38	3,800	5,375		0.47	4,650	0.41	4,100	0.36	3,575		3,600	3,600	3,830	4,100
10,500	25%	20%	0.38	3,990	5,613		0.46	4,780	0.40	4,220	0.35	3,685		3,600	3,720	3,809	4,305
11,000	25%	20%	0.38	4,180	5,850		0.45	4,910	0.39	4,340	0.35	3,795		3,600	3,840	3,788	4,400
11,500	25%	20%	0.38	4,370	6,088		0.44	5,040	0.39	4,460	0.34	3,905		3,600	3,960	3,767	4,600
12,000	25%	20%	0.36	4,320	6,025		0.43	5,170	0.38	4,580	0.33	4,015		3,600	4,080	3,842	4,800
							FAR = 0.26 + (2050 / Lot Size)		FAR = 0.24 + (1700 / Lot Size)		FAR = 0.22 + (1375 / Lot Size)						



Comparison of Towns – Livable SF

This shows Livable SF calculations for 20 Needham sample houses comparing the Existing house size with four neighboring towns:

Sample
House 12:
10K lot

Comparing
Existing
house

As-built Livable under Proposed FAR Definition.							
		Needham	Wellesley	Concord	Lexington	Newton	
	Lot Size	Prop FAR def	SF	100,000sf district		GLA-Basement	SR3
Sample 1	7,000	0.69	5,349	4,126	3,861	4,335	3,886
Sample 2	7,000	0.55	3,939	3,669	2,949	4,278	3,429
Sample 3	7,274	0.45	3,659	3,979	3,324	4,299	3,798
Sample 4	7,353	0.49	4,125	4,105	3,470	4,259	3,961
Sample 5	7,828	0.57	5,152	4,287	3,765	4,456	4,288
Sample 6	8,159	0.56	4,778	3,846	3,404	4,459	3,918
Sample 7	7,353	0.56	4,623	4,091	3,456	4,432	3,947
Sample 8	8,250	0.54	4,862	3,967	3,547	4,407	4,080
Sample 9	9,191	0.56	5,730	4,182	3,988	4,480	4,534
Sample 10	9,801	0.58	6,298	4,206	4,158	4,661	4,722
Sample 11	9,953	0.46	5,221	4,217	4,206	4,608	4,698
Sample 12	10,001	0.58	6,618	4,401	4,401	4,628	4,901
Sample 13	10,001	0.56	6,385	4,360	4,360	4,650	4,860
Sample 14	10,001	0.51	5,990	4,515	4,515	4,615	5,015
Sample 15	10,061	0.52	5,729	4,143	4,157	4,597	4,668
Sample 16	10,045	0.45	5,334	4,408	4,419	4,658	4,926
Sample 17	10,149	0.49	5,836	4,466	4,501	4,581	5,027
Sample 18	10,568	0.52	6,204	4,315	4,451	4,610	5,048
Sample 19	10,785	0.51	6,428	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396
Sample 20	10,785	0.51	6,428	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396



Comparison of Towns – Livable SF

This shows Livable SF calculations for 20 Needham sample houses comparing the Reduction 1 house size with four neighboring towns:

Sample
House 12:
10K lot

Comparing
Reduction 1
house

Livable SF with proposed FAR Reduction 1							
		Needham		Wellesley	Concord	Lexington	Newton
	Lot Size	RED 1 FAR	SF	100,000sf district		GLA-Basement	SR3
Sample 1	7,000	0.55	4,396	4,126	3,861	4,335	3,886
Sample 2	7,000	0.55	3,939	3,669	2,949	4,278	3,429
Sample 3	7,274	0.54	4,320	3,979	3,324	4,299	3,798
Sample 4	7,353	0.54	4,467	4,105	3,470	4,259	3,961
Sample 5	7,828	0.52	4,772	4,287	3,765	4,456	4,288
Sample 6	8,159	0.51	4,417	3,846	3,404	4,459	3,918
Sample 7	7,353	0.54	4,453	4,091	3,456	4,432	3,947
Sample 8	8,250	0.51	4,562	3,967	3,547	4,407	4,080
Sample 9	9,191	0.48	5,021	4,182	3,988	4,480	4,534
Sample 10	9,801	0.47	5,204	4,206	4,158	4,661	4,722
Sample 11	9,953	0.47	5,255	4,217	4,206	4,608	4,698
Sample 12	10,001	0.46	5,451	4,401	4,401	4,628	4,901
Sample 13	10,001	0.46	5,410	4,360	4,360	4,650	4,860
Sample 14	10,001	0.46	5,565	4,515	4,515	4,615	5,015
Sample 15	10,061	0.46	5,208	4,143	4,157	4,597	4,668
Sample 16	10,045	0.46	5,470	4,408	4,419	4,658	4,926
Sample 17	10,149	0.46	5,554	4,466	4,501	4,581	5,027
Sample 18	10,568	0.45	5,513	4,315	4,451	4,610	5,048
Sample 19	10,785	0.45	5,828	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396
Sample 20	10,785	0.45	5,828	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396

FAR = 0.26 + (2050 / Lot Size)





Comparison of Towns – Livable SF

This shows Livable SF calculations for 20 Needham sample houses comparing the Reduction 2 house size with four neighboring towns:

Sample House 12:
10K lot

Comparing
Reduction 2
house

Livable SF with proposed FAR Reduction 2							
		Needham		Wellesley	Concord	Lexington	Newton
	Lot Size	RED 2 FAR	SF	100,000sf district		GLA-Basement	SR3
Sample 1	7,000	0.48	3,906	4,126	3,861	4,335	3,886
Sample 2	7,000	0.48	3,449	3,669	2,949	4,278	3,429
Sample 3	7,274	0.47	3,824	3,979	3,324	4,299	3,798
Sample 4	7,353	0.47	3,970	4,105	3,470	4,259	3,961
Sample 5	7,828	0.46	4,265	4,287	3,765	4,456	4,288
Sample 6	8,159	0.45	3,904	3,846	3,404	4,459	3,918
Sample 7	7,353	0.47	3,956	4,091	3,456	4,432	3,947
Sample 8	8,250	0.45	4,047	3,967	3,547	4,407	4,080
Sample 9	9,191	0.42	4,488	4,182	3,988	4,480	4,534
Sample 10	9,801	0.41	4,658	4,206	4,158	4,661	4,722
Sample 11	9,953	0.41	4,706	4,217	4,206	4,608	4,698
Sample 12	10,001	0.41	4,901	4,401	4,401	4,628	4,901
Sample 13	10,001	0.41	4,860	4,360	4,360	4,650	4,860
Sample 14	10,001	0.41	5,015	4,515	4,515	4,615	5,015
Sample 15	10,061	0.41	4,657	4,143	4,157	4,597	4,668
Sample 16	10,045	0.41	4,919	4,408	4,419	4,658	4,926
Sample 17	10,149	0.41	5,001	4,466	4,501	4,581	5,027
Sample 18	10,568	0.40	4,951	4,315	4,451	4,610	5,048
Sample 19	10,785	0.40	5,262	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396
Sample 20	10,785	0.40	5,262	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396

FAR = 0.24 + (1700 / Lot Size)





Comparison of Towns – Livable SF

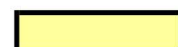
This shows Livable SF calculations for 20 Needham sample houses comparing the Reduction 3 house size with four neighboring towns:

Sample
House 12:
10K lot

Comparing
Reduction 3
house

Livable SF with proposed FAR Reduction 3							
		Needham		Wellesley	Concord	Lexington	Newton
	Lot Size	RED 3 FAR	SF	100,000sf district		GLA-Basement	SR3
Sample 1	7,000	0.42	3,441	4,126	3,861	4,335	3,886
Sample 2	7,000	0.42	2,984	3,669	2,949	4,278	3,429
Sample 3	7,274	0.41	3,354	3,979	3,324	4,299	3,798
Sample 4	7,353	0.41	3,498	4,105	3,470	4,259	3,961
Sample 5	7,828	0.40	3,784	4,287	3,765	4,456	4,288
Sample 6	8,159	0.39	3,415	3,846	3,404	4,459	3,918
Sample 7	7,353	0.41	3,484	4,091	3,456	4,432	3,947
Sample 8	8,250	0.39	3,557	3,967	3,547	4,407	4,080
Sample 9	9,191	0.37	3,979	4,182	3,988	4,480	4,534
Sample 10	9,801	0.36	4,137	4,206	4,158	4,661	4,722
Sample 11	9,953	0.36	4,182	4,217	4,206	4,608	4,698
Sample 12	10,001	0.36	4,376	4,401	4,401	4,628	4,901
Sample 13	10,001	0.36	4,335	4,360	4,360	4,650	4,860
Sample 14	10,001	0.36	4,490	4,515	4,515	4,615	5,015
Sample 15	10,061	0.36	4,131	4,143	4,157	4,597	4,668
Sample 16	10,045	0.36	4,393	4,408	4,419	4,658	4,926
Sample 17	10,149	0.36	4,473	4,466	4,501	4,581	5,027
Sample 18	10,568	0.35	4,415	4,315	4,451	4,610	5,048
Sample 19	10,785	0.35	4,722	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396
Sample 20	10,785	0.35	4,722	4,574	4,762	4,776	5,396

FAR = 0.22 + (1375 / Lot Size)



Upcoming Research – Financial Impact Study of House Reduction Studies:



☐ Purpose:

This study seeks a value analysis to understand how potential changes in the zoning code affect the anticipated selling prices of existing smaller homes. This includes a review of smaller homes that were sold to a developer and torn down as well as smaller homes sold to homeowners who have remained in the current structure.

The intent is to understand the impact to prospective sellers if developers are restricted on the proposed house size they are permitted to build and to what magnitude, if any, that changes the current market value of the house. Additionally, the study seeks a fiscal impact analysis to understand the fiscal impact on the Town of a reduction in permitted house size on municipal tax revenues within the Single Residence B zoning district.

☐ Sample Analysis:

The consultants will provide an analysis of two of the three houses used in the House Reduction Study (Houses 1 & 3), and using two of the three house reduction studies (Reductions 2 & 3), to illustrate what, if any, fiscal impacts noted above might occur.



Open Public Comment

- Please state your name and address for the record.
- Please limit your comments to 3 minutes.
- We commit to speaking respectfully towards one another.
- We will answer any questions that we can.
- The Committee will gather the information heard tonight and will share it back with the Needham community.
- Your feedback will inform the Committee's future work.



Survey Questions:

- Question 1: *Are you concerned about the sizes of houses being built in Needham?*
- Question 2: *Do you think houses should be reduced in size so they are more reasonably scaled to their lot size and general neighborhood scale?*
- Question 3: *What reduction alternative would you prefer?*
- Question 4: *What are your biggest concerns regarding large houses?*

Survey

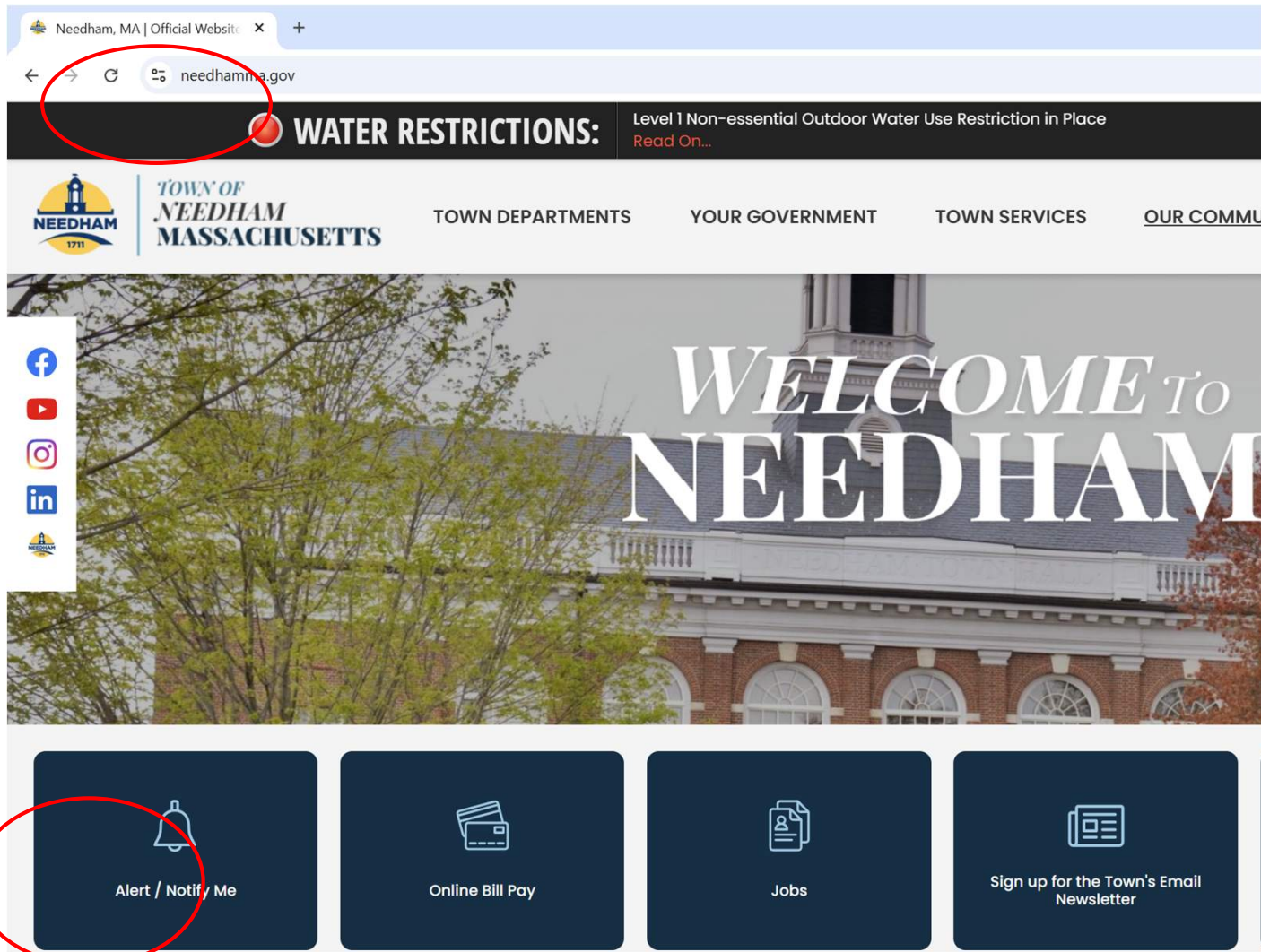


- The LHRC is also conducting a survey to collect feedback from stakeholders on the large house issue.
- The short survey will only take a few minutes to complete and will be open until Monday, September 22nd at 11:59 pm.
- Please go to <https://polco.us/skvh6v> to take the survey.

Scan the QR code below to take the Large House Review Committee's Survey.
You may also access the survey at:
<https://polco.us/skvh6v>



Stay Engaged



- Visit www.needhamma.gov/largehouse2025
- Sign up for Alert/Notify Me
- Email planning@needhamma.gov

Thank you!

Appendix



□ The appendix includes the completion of the research and modeling the committee has undertaken and is provided for a more in-depth understanding of the work of the committee.

D1. Complete house reduction studies of houses #1, #2 and #3

D2. Comparison Study of Needham and Neighboring Towns

D3. Dimensional controls being considered including:

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Lot Coverage

Building Heights

Setbacks

D4. Data Collection of Neighboring Towns (*in progress*)

D1. Reduction Studies – Houses #1,2 & 3:



- Selected three sample houses on varying lot sizes between 7,500 and 10,000 sf
- Prepared three levels of house “bulk” reduction for each sample house
- Adjusted limits for key dimensional controls for each reduction step that included:
 - Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (measuring 1, 2, 3 and G)
 - Lot Coverage
 - Height
- Reduction studies included creating “reduced” house plans and 3D modeling to visualize the various levels of change for each reduction compared to the original sample house
- In general, the studies have looked at both Floor Area Ratio (FAR), with a proposed new definition to count 1,2,3, + Garage, as well as, “Livable” SF, which is the total of marketable area on B,1,2, & 3, excluding garage and basement mechanical spaces

NOTE: Third party consultant, Raymond Design Associates, Inc. (RDA), is providing the computer modeling services.

*Insert three complete Reduction studies
for 9/15 Public Meeting #2*

D2. Town Comparison of Reduction Study – Houses #1, 2 & 3:



□ The following charts reflect the information used to generate these reduction studies. In general, the studies have looked at both Floor Area Ratio (FAR) with a proposed new definition to count 1,2,3, + Garage, as well as, “Livable” SF, which is the total of marketable area on B,1,2, & 3:

- 1. Chart of Three Existing Sample Houses compared to three towns
 - *(Wellesley, Concord and Lexington)*
- 2. Graph of Above Comparison between Needham and three towns
- 3. Chart of 20 Needham Sample Houses compared to four towns
 - *(Wellesley, Concord, Lexington and Newton)*

*Insert full town comparison info charts
for 9/15 Public Meeting #2*

D3. Large House Dimensional Regulations Being Considered: (*SRB District*)



The LHRSC is seeking appropriate methods to assist the town in regulating house “bulk” to achieve appropriately sized houses for the size of the lot. The dimensional controls considered include:

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR):
 1. Change definition to counting 1, 2, 3 + Garage, instead of 1 and 2 only without garage
 2. Change formula to be a sliding scale based on lot size & favoring smaller lots
- Lot Coverage:
 1. Change formula to a sliding scale based on lot size for lots between 5K and 10K sf, to favor smaller lots, then becoming a fixed cap on larger lots
- Height Limits:
 1. Reduce current Building Height limits for pitched roofs, flat roofs, sloping sites and at side setbacks to provide respectful neighborhood house scales adjacent to neighbors and streets
- Setbacks:
 1. Current Side Setbacks to be maintained for plan flexibility on a given lot
 2. Introduce an Average Front Setback (to preserve special neighborhood setback character around town). *Example Streets: Fair Oaks, Highland, Webster, Warren etc.*

Reference material from June 2025

Dimensional Regulations Being Considered:

- Floor Area Ratio – change definition, reduce
- Garage – include in FAR calculation
- Setbacks – front setback (exception rule) for unique neighborhood character if greater than 20'
- Height limit – desire for lower height
- Lot coverage – likely need to reduce
- Design rules – possible design changes, but perhaps not within scope
- Lot size – N/A
- Tree by-law – N/A (coordination with other committee)
- Stormwater/drainage regulation – N/A (coordination with other committee)

4.2.3 Table of Regulations for Rural Residence-Conservation, Single Residence A, Single Residence B, and General Residence Districts, for Buildings and Structures Created Through New Construction on any Lot

Except as otherwise provided in Section 4.2.4 for public, semi-public and institutional uses, no building or structure created through New Construction shall be constructed, altered, or relocated on any lot except in conformance with these regulations:

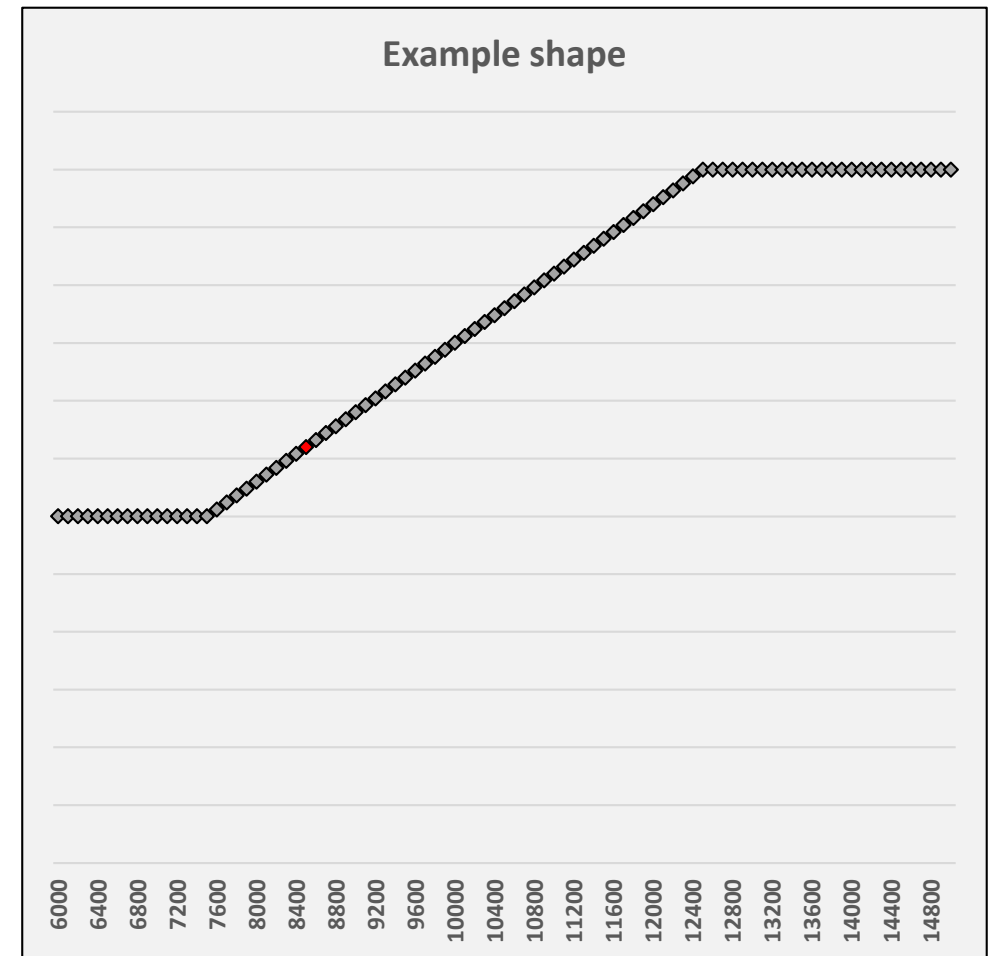
District	Min. Lot Area (sf)	Min. Frontage (ft)	Front Setback (ft)	Side Setback (ft)	Rear Setback (ft)	Max. Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.)	Max. Lot Coverage	Max. Stories	Max. Height (ft)
Rural Residence Conservation	43,560	150	50	25	25	NR	15%	2-1/2	35
Single Residence A	43,560	150	30	25	15	NR	NR	2-1/2	35
Single Residence B	10,000	80	20 (h) (i)	14 (a) (j)	20	.36-.38 (g)	25%-30% (b)	2-1/2	35 (e) (f)
General Residence	10,000	80	20 (h) (i)	14 (a) (j)	20	NR	30%-35% (c)	2-1/2	35 (e) (f)

Reference material from June 2025

Floor Area Ratio (FAR):

- Apparent agreement to count 3rd floor (attic) and garage
- Basement could be counted if it triggers a “greater than 50% exposed” (current requirement to be studied).
- Divided on whether to count basement. Could be a moot point regardless as “shape” of FAR limit is likely to be redone.
- Question: best way to count FAR?
 - Interior space of 5’ or greater is done in several towns. Confirmed to be able to achieve goal.
 - Strong consideration to use Wellesley’s definition (TLAG) which includes 1, 2, 3 and garage (on first floor)
- The main question: where is the limit going to be?
- Example new curve. Includes minimum allowance at low end of lots and maximum allowance at higher end.
- Sliding ratio between 7.5K and 12.5K lot size connects FAR to lot size to provide more parity between smaller and larger lots.

Example showing sliding scale: house sizes related to lot sizes



Reference material from June 2025

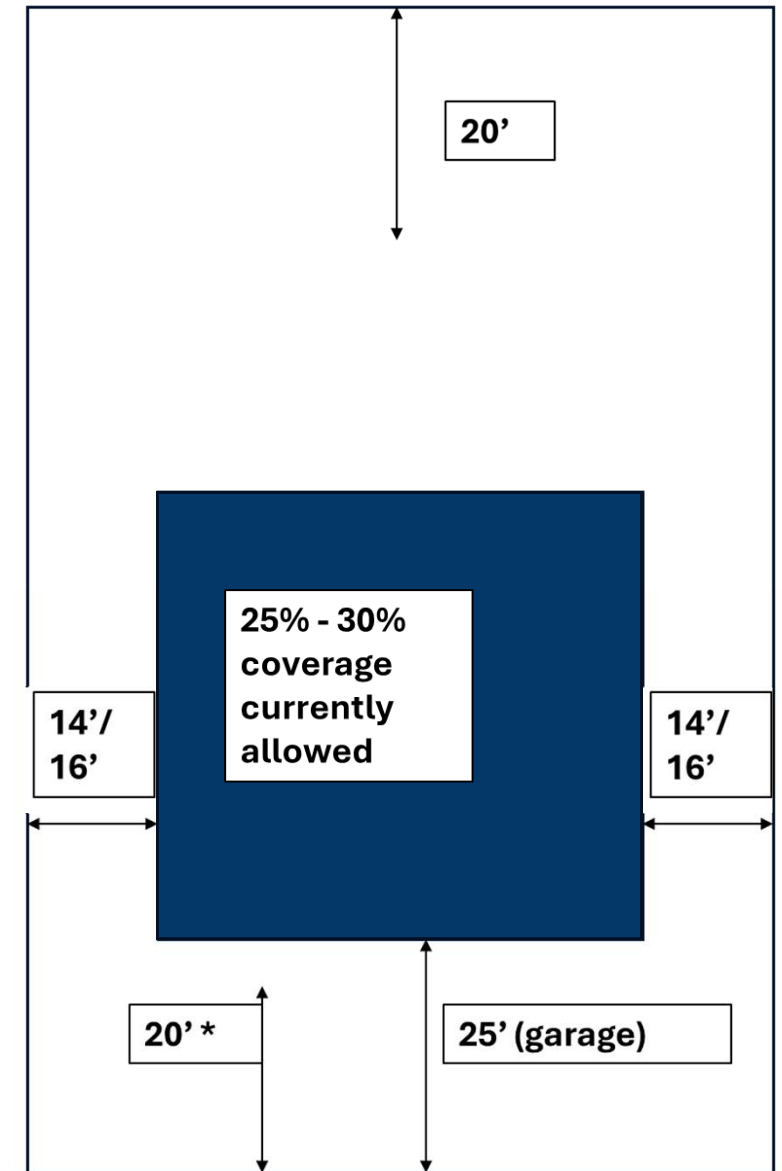
Building Height :

- Height limit: Clear interest in reducing height limit from 35' (current limit).
- Reduction from 35' to 33' or 32' would have little functional impact on a reasonable interior ceiling clearance of the houses. Reducing height to 31'/30' begins to create some functional/design changes that begin to prevent “habitable” third floor spaces.
- May include a separate flat roof height limit and a separate side eave height of buildings along side setbacks to respect view and shadow impacts on neighbor houses.
- Designs: Interest in fixing definition of half story to ensure that sides (at side setbacks) have a 2-story limit and/or sloping roofs.
- Add separate height limit controls for flat roofs.
- Some interest in controlling gables/dormers to reduce size perception of house
- Lot grading height changing/retaining walls: interest in more regulation of manipulation of finished grade height to create taller house. However, can be addressed apart from dimensional regulations.

Reference material from June 2025

Setbacks:

- Side setbacks: Some interest in reducing; potentially tie side setbacks to lot frontage for new construction
- Back setbacks: desire for bigger backyards, but no specific ideas
- Front setbacks: propose an exception rule to support unique neighborhood blocks in town with a consistent setback character when it is greater than the 20' requirement. Add calculation of average front setback based on an average of adjacent house lots within a certain distance. (similar to Wellesley bylaw)
- *Example streets: Fair Oaks, Highland, Webster, Warren*



•*Note: 12'/14' side yard setback for non-conforming lots with frontage below 80 feet.*

Reference material from June 2025

Lot Coverage:

- Some interest in reducing lot coverage given review of smaller lots. The coverage can be coordinated with analysis of a reduction in the FAR requirements. All the examples were close to the current coverage limits: for lots containing < 5,500 sf – 30%; <6,000 sf – 29%; <6,500 sf – 28%; <7,000 sf – 27%; <7,500 sf – 26%; for lots containing at least 7,500 sf – 25%.
- Could be interest in reducing limits, particularly for the smaller lots, but will need to coordinate with houses on medium and larger lots. May also consider reducing limits for lots as they increase above 7,500 up to lots above 10K, 15K and 20K. May be a formula that works in sliding scale and is based on the lot size.
- Options on several proposed limits to be tested in the modeling of reduction studies by a consultant to the committee.

D4. Data Collection of Neighboring Towns *(in progress)*:



- Comparison of large house data from neighboring towns; Wellesley, Concord and Lexington looking at the following:

Large House bylaws

Range of New Construction house sizes

House documentation for a selection of new construction houses built

New construction permit histories

Lessons learned and bylaw amendment considerations

Ideas from Wellesley – *a possible Special Permit process?*

- The current approach is to have firm as-of-right limits for all lots. Wellesley introduces another option – soft limits coupled with more permissive limits under a review process.
 - Working group did not favor the “tiered” approach of Wellesley’s limits - dimensional regulations like FAR should be tied to square footage of lot (similar concept to Concord).
- Wellesley offers a successful example that controlled numbers and sizes of large homes on similar 10K and 15K lot districts – similarities include lot sizes, strong property values, and community support for a LHR process.
- A Wellesley-like approach using a Large House Review process is time intensive, requiring hiring of additional staff and/or establishment of an appointed/elected entity to evaluate new construction.
- A process for evaluation would have to be created. Wellesley offers a blueprint, but there has not yet been a discussion on whether that was seen as desirable for Needham.
 - Could Needham investigate the use of a Special Permit process for homeowners/builders who want to go beyond the tightened house size criteria of an amended LHR bylaw. Having an “out” option is a positive.
 - The downside is the increased review process complexity and need for additional staff and/or volunteers

Ideas from Concord – *a sliding scale of FAR calculation related to lot size?*

- Concord's Floor Area Ratio (FAR) formula is tailored to the size of the lot. This approach allows the refinement of the formula to address differences in smaller vs. larger lots to make corrections to perceived unintended consequences that may favor one size of lot over another.
- A similar approach of a sliding scale is also possible for Lot Coverage. Again, a sliding scale approach for coverage may help to correct the impact of unintended consequences from the current use in Needham of a fixed lot coverage for lots above 7,500 SF after a sliding scale for lots between 5,000 sf and 7,500 sf. Needham could adopt a sliding scale for the smaller lots (from 5,000 to 10,000 sf) and switch to a fixed lot coverage for lots above 10,000 sf. This approach lets smaller lots develop appropriately scaled houses that are slightly proportionally larger for their lots to allow enough ground floor area to accommodate reasonable floor plans for a target program.

*Insert neighboring town data / info
for November Public Meeting #3*



Large House Review (LHR) Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 18, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Artie Crocker Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Bill Paulson Real Estate Broker appointed by the Planning Board
Oscar Mertz Architect appointed by the Planning Board
Joe Matthews At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Moe Handel Design Review Board Member / Design Review Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Ed Quinlan At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Marianne Cooley Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Paul McGovern Developer appointed by the Planning Board
Chris Cotter At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Jeanne McKnight Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Tina Burgos Finance Committee Member / Finance Committee Designee
Rob Dangel At Large appointed by the Planning Board

Staff Present:

Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development
Alex Clee, Assistant Planner

Committee Members Absent:

Nik Ligris Zoning Board of Appeals Member / Zoning Board of Appeals Designee
Heidi Frail Select Board Member / Select Board Designee

1. Welcome and Introductions

Introductions of Committee members present were made.

2. Approval of meeting minutes

Upon motion duly made by Moe Handel and seconded by Bill Paulson, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of August 4, 2025, as amended. By roll call, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Update on RFP & Consultant.

Ms. Newman stated that two proposals were received, and the lowest qualified bidder was RKG. A contract is in the process of being signed. The three house sizes for modeling and a work plan will then be determined.

4. Modeling presentation.

Oscar Mertz reviewed the updated modeling presentation. He explained that the consultants were asked to review three sample houses from Needham houses that have been anonymized and range from 7,500-10,000 s.f. lot sizes. The consultants were then asked to consider three levels of reducing the volume or “bulk” of the house. Each sample house then went through a series of changes, including changes to FAR, lot coverage, and height. Regarding FAR, the current definition is the first and second floors of a house. The proposal from the Committee is to change this to the first, second, and third floors, along with the attic and the garage. This is more in line with what other towns are doing. Regarding height, the Committee discussed reducing this dimensionally from what is currently allowed in Town, 35’, to between 30’-33. Three dimensional models were created to view the changes in the reduction target areas. All three houses have been modeled, and all three steps of reduction have been completed.

The Board reviewed the 3D modeling. The models also include the original building for comparison with the reductions. There was discussion regarding what other towns would do to control the size of the three model houses.

5. Review of spreadsheet prepared by Ed Quinlan comparing Needham to Lexington, Concord & Wellesley allowable built area.

The Committee reviewed the spreadsheet that compares Needham to Lexington, Concord, and Wellesley in terms of allowable built area.

6. Discussion of potential recommendations for dimensional controls.

The Committee reviewed the potential recommendations for the dimensional controls.

There was discussion regarding third floors. It was explained that the proposed dimensional requirements may make third floor space unusable, though this is not the overall intent of the proposal. There are controls in place for living space in a basement and no changes are proposed to this.

Rob Dangel asked about exclusions for lots with environmental restrictions. This could then trigger a secondary process.

There was discussion regarding the Town sending a postcard to residents regarding all of the upcoming meetings on the proposed Articles.

7. Review of Updated Schedule.

The Committee agreed to meet on Monday, August 25, 2025.

Upon motion duly made by Ed Quinlan and seconded by Moe Handel, it was voted to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. By roll call, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude



Large House Review (LHR) Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 25, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Artie Crocker Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Oscar Mertz Architect appointed by the Planning Board
Joe Matthews At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Marianne Cooley Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Paul McGovern Developer appointed by the Planning Board
Chris Cotter At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Jeanne McKnight Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Tina Burgos Finance Committee Member / Finance Committee Designee
Rob Dangel At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Heidi Frail Select Board Member / Select Board Designee

Staff Present:

Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development
Alex Clee, Assistant Planner

Committee Members Absent:

Nik Ligris Zoning Board of Appeals Member / Zoning Board of Appeals Designee
Moe Handel Design Review Board Member / Design Review Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Bill Paulson Real Estate Broker appointed by the Planning Board
Ed Quinlan At Large appointed by the Planning Board

1. Welcome and Introductions

Introductions of Committee members present were made.

2. Modeling presentation.

Oscar Mertz reviewed the updated modeling presentation.

3. Review of spreadsheet prepared by Ed Quinlan and Paul McGovern comparing Needham to Lexington, Concord & Wellesley allowable built area.

The Committee discussed the spreadsheet comparing Needham to Lexington, Concord, and Wellesley in terms of allowable built area. This includes FAR comparisons of 20 houses. The FAR for Needham includes the first floor, second floor, third floor, and the garage. The livable calculation counts all the livable space that is marketable, including approximately 90% of the basement, outside of the mechanical space, but not including the garage. The FAR includes areas above grade. Lexington has a slightly different calculation, in that they include the basement in their FAR calculation. The Committee discussed how to make this a fair comparison between the

towns. Concord considers an FAR which is specific to a certain lot size. The proposal is for Needham to copy this sliding scale instead of making arbitrary decisions. Lexington makes changes to the FAR based on the ranges of the lot sizes. Wellesley creates an arbitrary maximum square footage for each zone which could have lots in a large range of sizes. The calculations for Lexington will be revised prior to the Committee reviewing the spreadsheets again.

It was explained that the intention is to take House 1 (7,000 s.f.) and House 3 (10,000 s.f.) and complete a fiscal impact analysis on the base model, the second, and the third reduction.

4. Discussion of potential recommendations for dimensional controls.

There was discussion regarding creating a range for lot coverage and FAR in order to make sure that houses are built in a size that is appropriate to the size of a lot. As a lot size increases, the FAR should decrease. The Committee discussed potential environmental restrictions in order to make sure that lots are treated appropriately. There was also discussion regarding garage setback sizes from the facades of houses.

The Committee discussed flat roof houses and height/massing concerns. Additional refinements to the Committee's recommendation may be needed regarding flat roofs, sloping sites, side setbacks in terms of eave heights, etc.

5. Discussion: Agenda for September 15 Community meeting and outreach protocol.

It was noted that the Committee will host a community meeting on September 15th. Public outreach includes a flyer that will be presented through the website, social media, and posted at Town buildings. At the Committee's meeting on September 8th, there can be additional discussion regarding topics for the community meeting.

Upon motion duly made by Heidi Frail and seconded by Oscar Mertz, it was voted to adjourn at 8:48 p.m. By roll call, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Alexandra Clee

From: O'Connor, Kathleen <KOConnor@Lasell.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 10:27 AM
To: Planning
Subject: Large House

I have written to and attended at least one large house review committee meeting.

I live on Barret St in a cape. The houses on either side of me were knocked down and replaced with homes 3 times the size of what was knocked down. In both cases, the lots were raised and mostly clear cut of old growth trees. The result of the root system removal, larger roof runoff and raised heights resulted in my sump pumps continuous running. I replace a pump about every 18 months, have paid to connect to storm drain, and installed a generator or will float away if I lose power. The neighbors houses are only 3500 sq ft+. I won't get into the lack of sun in my yard and the resulting mildew on my home and what my electric bill is to run the pumps.

At the end of my street, two new houses are over 6000 +!

As a result of the building craze, my home is now assessed at a significantly higher amount. While I am a senior, I hope to live in Needham for another 15 years. I am told I should be happy that my home value is so great. What good is owning a house that will sell for a million dollars if I can't afford to live in it?

I was dismayed, disappointed and angry when I watched the meeting with realtors and developers. The question regarding how big /small a house could the developers build and still make a profit was infuriating. I assume the job of the planning committee is to look out for the welfare of the community, not ensure that a small group of developers can make money!

Please do something to contain the overly large houses.

Thank you.

Kathleen O'Connor
44 Barrett St