

# CHARLES RIVER

## REGIONAL CHAMBER

March 26th, 2025

Dear Wellesley Town Meeting Members,

On behalf of the Charles River Regional Chamber and the Wellesley business community, we urge a no vote on Article 42, which would severely weaken the Residential Incentive Overlay (RIO) Bylaw.

Since the conception of the RIO Bylaw in 1998, housing prices in Wellesley have more than doubled. This trend has pushed the town's workforce further and further away, shrinking the talent pool available to Wellesley businesses. High housing costs and limited options have also led to staffing shortages in critical sectors such as healthcare, childcare, senior care, and other essential service industries.

Since its 2019 revision, the RIO Bylaw has been essential for counteracting this trend. It has allowed for more housing types, such as apartments and condos, opening up options for Wellesley's workers. This has been achieved without bypassing public review, as special permit requirements remain in place for RIO-designated properties. These developments also contribute to the vibrancy of Wellesley's village centers by increasing foot traffic and supporting local businesses.

Article 42 does not 'reform' the RIO Bylaw; it dismantles it. It slashes the eligible land area for RIO projects by 97%, from 5,248 acres to just 134. Removing a necessary tool for workforce housing during a housing crisis is irresponsible and short-sighted.

For Wellesley's healthcare facilities, childcare centers, grocery stores, and countless other businesses, attracting and retaining employees is directly tied to housing availability. Weakening the RIO Bylaw further limits opportunities for the workforce that keeps Wellesley running. We strongly urge you to vote against Article 42.

Sincerely,

Max Woolf,

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