

Zoning Task Force Walsh Overlay District Frequently Asked Questions

The Zoning Task Force (ZTF) is preparing a draft article to be recommended to the Select Board for adoption at spring Town Meeting which would create a new Overlay District covering the Walsh Property. Below are frequently asked questions regarding the proposed overlay district.

What is zoning and why is it important?

Zoning refers to regulations adopted by a municipality that govern the use, dimensions and related matters (e.g., parking) of buildings located within designated areas of the municipality (“zones”). Zoning is intended to regulate development in a planned and thoughtful manner to help avoid haphazard or inconsistent development and over-building and enhance public health and safety.

What is an overlay district?

An overlay district is an area within an existing zone on which different requirements from and that supersede those in the underlying zone are overlaid. In this case, the proposed Walsh Overlay District “overlays” the Town’s existing residential zone in the area of the Walsh Property.

What is the Walsh Property’s current zoning?

The Walsh Property is currently zoned “residential” and is within the Town’s Water Protection Overlay District. Currently, the zoning bylaw allows only single-family homes, duplexes and auxiliary dwelling units that meet specified setback and water protection requirements to be located within the Walsh Property. The dimensional requirements would significantly limit the number of dwelling units that can be located on the Walsh Property under current zoning regulations.

What are the ZTF’s goals for the Walsh Overlay District?

The ZTF seeks to balance the vision for the Walsh Property articulated by the Walsh Committee and approved by the Town at the 2024 Town Meeting with the Town’s character as a rural, residential community on the Outer Cape. Thus, the proposed bylaw amendment provides for multiple types of housing in addition to those permitted in the residential district and smaller lot sizes and encourages development of affordable and attainable housing. It provides setbacks from Route 6 and adjoining neighborhoods and gradually increases the density of buildings on the Walsh Property further from existing neighborhoods. Taller structures would be located furthest from the boundaries, while smaller buildings would be located closest to existing homes and Route 6. No change to the Water Protection Overlay District is proposed.

What is proposed?

The proposed bylaw amendment would establish an overlay district covering all of the Walsh Property, with 3 subdistricts:

- (1) Medium Density Subdistrict - The medium density subdistrict is intended to permit a mix of types of housing and light intensity commercial uses, with buildings nearer the parcel boundaries being smaller, lower and set back from the abutting neighborhoods, and denser buildings, up to 3 ½ stories, located farther away from the property boundaries. With a special permit, buildings of up to 5 stories for senior housing could be allowed. Certain low-impact commercial uses, such as retail, professional offices and restaurants would also be permitted on the ground floor of buildings.
- (2) Low Density Subdistrict - The low-density subdistrict takes a similar approach to the land on the boundary of the subdistrict, which abuts existing residences, but is intended to include smaller structures with a maximum height of 2 stories. Limited kinds of commercial uses would be permitted only by special permit.
- (3) Recreational Subdistrict – The recreational subdistrict would set aside a large portion of the Walsh Property for active recreation, including both walking trails and potential outdoor or other educational uses by the Truro Central School. This subdistrict would not be subject to development for housing or commercial uses.

In both the medium and low-density subdistricts, buildings abutting existing residentially zoned areas and Route 6 would require a minimum 25-foot setback and landscaping to minimize impacts on the abutting neighborhoods. The required distance between buildings would be reduced to allow for more dwelling units to be developed and several different types of housing not previously provided for in the Truro zoning bylaw, such as multi-family housing, townhouses, bungalow courts and co-living housing, would be permitted.

What is the Zoning Task Force's Charge?

The ZTF's charge, in general, is to review and make recommendations for changes to the Town's Zoning Bylaw and general Bylaws to help effectuate the Town's goals, as set forth in recent planning documents and, working with other Town committees, community organizations and businesses, to help increase affordable and attainable housing in Town, and to modernize and make the bylaws clearer.

How can I participate in the process?

- Hybrid Select Board Meeting on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 5:00 pm – the ZTF is scheduled to brief the Select Board on its progress to date and will provide the February 18, 2025 draft of the proposed bylaw amendment in advance of the meeting.
- The ZTF is holding a hybrid public meeting and listening session at Town Hall on Wednesday, February 26, 2025 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. The ZTF encourages members of the public to attend to obtain an overview of the proposed Walsh Overlay District and to offer suggested changes and to ask questions. The meeting and listening session will also be broadcast live on Truro TV Channel 8 and a recording will be available after the meeting.
- Interested persons are encouraged to submit comments to the ZTF by email to ztf@truro-ma.gov.