



Islington Fire Station



Police Headquarters

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

### **BACKGROUND**

Public facilities make it possible for a municipality to provide services for the public good. Community facilities such as public buildings, infrastructure, utilities, and accompanying services support education, public works, public safety, and general town services, all of which contribute to the quality of life for Westwood inhabitants. Town residents recognize the role of public facilities in supporting a healthy and sustainable community and the need for their continued maintenance. Public Facilities, along with Town Center Revitalization and Traffic, were ranked as the top three planning areas in resident surveys, receiving 40%, 40%, and 38% of survey responses to the question for choosing the most important planning topics. Those areas were similarly echoed by participants of the vision session. Residents overwhelmingly expressed appreciation of the Schools, with 78% of survey responders listing the schools as their favorite thing about living in Westwood followed by the Council on Aging, Library, and the Town's financial stability.

Westwood's commitment to long range financial planning has proved effective in anticipating capital needs and managing costs. Over the last several years Westwood has found creative ways to fund capital projects. New development has successfully increased the commercial tax base and helped fund Town facilities and services. New and renovated public buildings have incorporated accessibility and energy efficiency upgrades but many older town buildings lack these attributes. Recreation facilities such as an indoor recreation building were also desired by residents in both the survey and vision session. These are covered in the Open Space and Recreation section. All other facilities are discussed in this section of the plan.

### **Commission on Disability and advocacy for Universal Design**

The Town has a nine-member Commission on Disability that meets monthly, provides advisory guidance for a variety of issues, and advocates for residents with disabilities and their families. The Commission provides advice and support in the areas of housing, transportation, physical access, and emergency planning. The Town completed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) self-evaluation and transition plan in 1992 which addresses the accessibility needs for the community facilities in this section of the plan. An updated evaluation of accessibility at outdoor recreation facilities was included as part of the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The Commission not only promotes accessible design, a requirement focused on the needs of people with disabilities, but strongly advocates for universal design, a term used throughout this plan. Universal design covers a wider spectrum and more holistic approach of human abilities. It includes design features that exceed the minimum accessibility requirements and are more inclusive to encourage access and enjoyment for all.

### **School Facilities**

Between 2000 and 2010, the Downey and Martha Jones elementary schools underwent renovations and additions, and a new high school was completed in 2005. The School District has determined that facility issues at three additional elementary schools, the Deerfield, Hanlon, and Sheehan, should be prioritized, with the middle school needs to be addressed thereafter.

As documented in a 2015 study, the facility issues in the Deerfield, Hanlon, and Sheehan elementary schools are largely due to age, all more than 65 years<sup>1</sup>. Much of the existing, original plumbing and HVAC piping and components need replacement and the buildings are not fully ADA compliant. Educationally, the buildings lack sufficient suitable space for art programs, small group instruction, and intervention services. Deteriorating conditions and structural limitations will continue to escalate. The buildings need to be modernized for safe and efficient operation, and for energy and accessibility requirements.

School enrollment projections are a contributing factor in the need for the elementary school building project. After a period of declining enrollment, the latest estimates indicate a steady increase in the number of elementary age students entering the Westwood Schools over the next 10 years<sup>2</sup>. The enrollment projections from September 2018 show the K-12 student population increasing from 3,043 students in 2018 to 3,303 in 2028. New facilities are necessary to accommodate today's population and account for the anticipated future growth.

As a result of the 2018 feasibility and assessment process, the School District is presently pursuing funding from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for construction, renovations, or repairs for the elementary schools. In 2017, the MSBA invited Westwood into its eligibility period after reviewing the Town's plans. In May 2018 Town Meeting approved funding a feasibility study. The School District from fall 2019 into 2020 held several community forums to gather input and identify the important criteria for the project. Those conversations will inform the most cost-effective and educationally appropriate path forward, which was submitted to the MSBA in the summer of 2020. In June 2020, the School Building Committee voted to proceed with designing a combined Hanlon-Deerfield school, with a maximum enrollment of 560 students, to be situated on the site of the existing Hanlon School.

The elementary school project process is deliberately long, methodical, and thorough. The timeline is for completed design in 2020, possible construction in 2021, and completion expected in 2023.

Within the next several years, the School Department will start to consider the facility needs at Thurston Middle School. The original section of the building was constructed in 1938 and renovated in stages, most recently with HVAC improvements, but a more comprehensive upgrade will be needed over the next decade.

### **Water Supply and Use**

Westwood's water is supplied through the Dedham-Westwood Water District (DWWD). The DWWD water rates are comparable for the metro Boston area with monthly customer billing.

DWWD annually makes capital improvements such as new and replaced water mains, fire hydrants, water service lines, and water meters. The average daily water demand in 2018 of both communities was 3.70 million gallons. Westwood's portion makes up 42% or 1.55 million gallons daily. Westwood residential water use comprised an estimated 69% of its total.

Past projections of over 7 million gpd peak system wide demand have not quite been realized over the past 15 years with the highest level at 6.9 MGD. The additional supply from Fowl Meadow Well 5 added in 1997, and from the District becoming a partial MWRA member in 2006, has DWWD well positioned to meet peak demands. The District continues to be concerned with increases in sodium and chloride levels in Fowl Meadow Well 5 and the other wells along University Avenue. DWWD continues to encourage MassDOT to reduce the amount of sodium and chloride applied to its highways which end up in the nearby wells.

DWWD continues to encourage water conservation measures through grants and partnerships to manage demand and maintain regulatory compliance. The District offers rebates and provides incentives to residents to purchase water efficient washing machines and water conserving toilets. Complimentary rain sensors, low flow showerheads, and aerators are distributed. Concerns of the District include the adequacy of future water supply, the management of seasonal demands, difficulty in securing new supply sources, and the impact of increased regulatory restrictions.

### **Public Works Roadways**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has a pavement management and sign inventory plan that every year generates significant roadway and neighborhood enhancements. The work is funded through the annual state Chapter 90 Program. In 2019, the Town approved a Road Improvement Bond for paving, curbing, and sidewalk improvements on Route 109 from North to Nahatan Street. Another Road Improvement Bond for sidewalk enhancements, safety improvements at crosswalks, and pavement preservation techniques applied throughout town is proposed for FY2021. Pedestrian Infrastructure improvements such as crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike paths were listed as the most important facility priority receiving 62% of the survey responses. Pedestrian improvements and walkability were also highlighted at the vision session and the open houses. Improving traffic flow was identified as a top priority in all public input. These objectives are all discussed in the transportation section.

### **Public Works Fleet and Equipment**

The vehicle fleet replacement program has been funded through the Town's capital program over the past several years and has kept the Town's fleet on track for a 10 to 12-year replacement schedule. Two to three new vehicles and equipment are ordered annually. Replacements and cost estimates are currently forecast ten years in advance.

### **Cemetery**

The Cemetery Division of DPW completed a master plan in 2015 and constructed the expansion area identified in that plan the following year. That new section could reach capacity in ten years, but development and construction of the next phase should be completed well before then. Westwood Cemetery averages 60 burials per year and approximately 50 graves are purchased each year.

### **Sewer**

The Town's Sewer Master Plan has been completed after many years and future efforts are to maintain the system. The Sewer Division operates an on-going Inflow and Infiltration program along with a Sewer Pump Station maintenance program. These capital programs continually ensure the stability of the system and its eleven pump stations.

### **Carby Street DPW Facility**

The Carby Street Municipal Building was constructed in 2004 and meets universal design standards. It contains DPW administrative staff, the Department of Community and Economic Development, and other staff. The approximately 1,000 square foot DPW employee facility located behind the Municipal Building is a 50-year-old, dilapidated Cape house with one bathroom, no shower, no locker room, and no air conditioning. This building does not adequately support the needs of the staff of 25 and does not provide separate restroom facilities for men and women. There are 35 vehicles and pieces of equipment stored on the Carby site. Most of the equipment is housed in three garages totaling 11,000 square feet and one other structure. Two of the garages are over 50 years old, and the other was built in 2008. Due to lack of space, some vehicles such as the dump trucks are stored outside, subject to the weather, which can reduce their life expectancy.

### **Trash and Recycling**

The Town continues to provide weekly curbside pick-up for trash and bi-weekly for recycling, but recycling contamination is a continuing problem and a significant cost factor. The Town began providing single stream recycling in 2012. Due to contaminated material such as plastic bags and food waste on recycled items, the contractor, Waste Management, bills the Town every month a contamination fee which varies by the amount of contamination. The Town needs to continue to educate residents and has contracted with a company to provide residents updated information and help them identify what is recyclable and what is not. The hiring of a part time recycling coordinator would also help with both education and enforcement.

### **Police Facilities**

Safety and low crime rate was selected as the residents' top reason for living in Westwood in 80% of survey responses and is clearly an important factor in choosing to live in Westwood. A new police facility was constructed and opened in 2018. The new police headquarters features universal design; training space doubling as community meeting space, adequate storage for equipment, modern facilities for the handling of detainees, and a combined (police, fire and EMS) communications and dispatch center that processes over 35,000 calls annually. Evidence is now stored and handled using industry best practices. At 19,000 square feet the new facility is adequately sized for anticipated growth, therefore there is no capital building need for the police department for the foreseeable future.

### **Fire Facilities**

The fire department has over 40 personnel that provide fire suppression, ambulance service, specialized search and rescue, fire prevention and code enforcement inspection, training, fire investigation, public education, and emergency management. A new 12,000 square foot Fire Station 2 at 300 Washington Street was constructed and opened in late 2017. The new facility replaced a small outdated two bay garage with a state-of-the-art three bay firehouse that supports current operational and emergency response needs. Fire Station 1 on High Street serves a dual function as the main fire station and the department administrative offices including Fire

Prevention, Emergency Medical Services, and the Training Division. The building was originally designed to function with a half dozen personnel, but the department’s daily staffing has nearly doubled reducing operational efficiency. It was constructed in 1948 and underwent a renovation in 1975<sup>3</sup>. The station is 10,000 square feet; has apparatus storage, gym, and a support division offices in the basement; administrative offices, apparatus bays, living facilities on the ground level; and dormitories on the second floor. The site has limited room for expansion to meet current operational needs for work areas, offices, and storage. A 2016 Slab Evaluation Study and 2019 Update found structural and mechanical concerns such as concrete cracking of the apparatus bay floor, water damage throughout, corroded floor drains, and outdated and non-code compliant utilities<sup>4</sup>.

**Library & Human Services**

Westwood’s public libraries consist of the Main Library on High Street and the Islington Branch Library on Washington Street. The Main Library was opened in 2013 complete with public meeting space, study group areas, computer workstations, and various physical and on-line collections. The Islington Branch Library, historically known as Wentworth Hall, is currently in the process of being relocated from its original location on the east side of Washington Street to the west side of the street as a part of the project to revitalize Islington Center. Once relocated, it will be renovated, and an addition constructed. In addition to library services, the facility will include first floor offices for the Youth and Family Services Department and a lower level multi-functional community room available for recreational programs, public meetings, and community functions. This project will continue through 2020 when it will also accommodate the uses and activities formerly held at the Islington Community Center (ICC) at the corner of East and Washington Street, which will be demolished.

**Town Hall**

Westwood’s Town Hall on High Street is a 10,455 square foot building constructed in 1910. Its three floors accommodate various municipal offices such as the finance department, Town Administrator’s office, veteran services, Town Clerk’s office, and a second-floor meeting room. It is the primary contact for the public with Westwood’s government. The building requires significant renovations to fully meet ADA requirements as it does not have an elevator. Town offices have outgrown the space and the HVAC system needs repair. A 2016 needs assessment and replacement analysis examined the current site and outlined future needs.

**Senior Center**

The Council on Aging building is located on Nahatan Street and was constructed in 1998. The facility is approximately 5,000 square feet located near the Middle and High Schools. It has universal design and is convenient to use. However, more handicap parking spaces are needed as well as updates to the building’s interior and more space. The Council on Aging offers over twenty health classes such as exercise, yoga and tai chi, creative activities

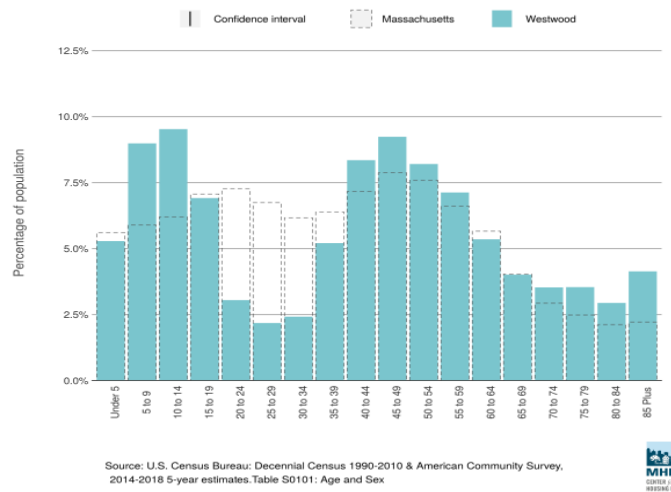


Figure x: Age distribution of population Westwood v. State, 2010.

such as quilting and knitting, educational programs, and book clubs. Annually, ten holiday lunches are held but each limited to 80 seniors because of seating capacity. The Council on Aging believes twice the number of seniors would attend if more space were provided.

Over the last few years, the number of residents participating in programs at the Center has grown by more than 40% with over 3,000 seniors attending monthly programs or participating in outreach and transportation services. This is consistent with population data from the U.S. Census Bureau that shows Westwood's senior population is increasing at a higher rate than the statewide average (Figure X). As Westwood's population ages more room for programing and activities will be especially important.

### **Network Infrastructure and Information Technology**

The School and Town Information Technology departments maintain separate networks that are interconnected. Each of the schools and all Town buildings are connected by a fiber backbone (INET) centered in the Fire Station basement. It was installed by Comcast in 2003 and maintained by them as a condition of their cable license with the Town. Currently the Town network has a 1G bandwidth, while the school network was upgraded to 10G several years ago.

The condition of the network Infrastructure within each Town building varies with the age of the building. Buildings with limited Ethernet connections were upgraded in 2012. Public Wi-Fi, which is not connected to the Town network, is available in most Town buildings. The need for network infrastructure to support building systems such as lighting, HVAC, cameras, and security has stretched the network to its limits in many buildings.

Changes in technology and especially use in utility systems require increased bandwidth. New construction requires expansion of the network. Buildings need to be evaluated and upgraded to accommodate the increased demand. Increasing the Town's network speed to 10G would allow for improved Wi-Fi connectivity.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary goal for community facilities planning is to keep pace with emerging needs to assure that Westwood's governmental services continue to provide high quality public services.

**Objective 1:** Public facilities are safe and secure.

**Objective 2:** Facility long-range planning is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

**Objective 3:** Resources and facilities meet universal design standards.

**Objective 4:** Public facilities are energy efficient.

### **STRATEGIC APPROACH**

The Community Facilities section focuses on Town services and facilities by identifying and analyzing existing and forecasted needs for these facilities and services. The objectives listed above should be constantly considered when improving, replacing, or maintaining any Town facility. The goal is to make all users of the Town's facilities and resources feel safe, welcomed, and well served. The facilities should be adequate to enable Town services to be provided and maintained at the high level desired by all residents and visitors.

### **IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS**

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES FINAL DRAFT – 10-21-2020

The following actions are prioritized under topic categories related to the above overarching goals and objectives followed by an informal priority order. A formal implementation schedule can be found in the implementation matrix section.

To implement public facility capital building needs:

- CF1. Prioritize the renovation and expansion of Town Hall to satisfy office space needs, upgrade the network infrastructure, improve heating and cooling, install an elevator and other upgrades to meet ADA and universal design standards, and improve energy efficiency.
- CF2. Complete the processes for designing and seeking local and state funding for an elementary school building project that addresses the facility and student needs at the Sheehan, Hanlon, and Deerfield Schools.
- CF3. Continue to address the facilities needs at the High School, Thurston Middle School, Martha Jones School and Downey School, focusing on the aging Thurston facility, through the annual and long-range capital planning process.
- CF4. Prioritize incorporating renewable energy sources such as solar photovoltaics at all town properties.
- CF5. Conduct a space needs assessment at the Westwood Senior Center and develop a timeline for expansion to address the growing needs of the Town's increasing elderly population.
- CF6. Following the relocation and renovation of the Islington Branch Library (historic Wentworth Hall) and its expansion into a community center, optimize the space for Branch Library services including learning, individual and small group collaborative study, and for a multi-purpose public gathering space for the Youth and Family Services and Recreation Departments.
- CF7. Investigate parking expansion options or additional shared parking arrangements for the main library.
- CF8. Address deficiencies at Fire Station 1 in the short term by relocating personnel and equipment, providing temporary storage space, securing additional temporary office space, and upgrading to universal design standards.
- CF9. Develop a long-range plan to renovate, expand, or replace Fire Station 1.
- CF10. Expand the number of electric Town vehicles and charging stations at municipal properties to encourage public use.

To implement policies and planning for community facility improvement:

- CF11. Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure improvements through a Sidewalk Prioritization Plan and pursue funding for sidewalks and universal design improvements at road crossings as further described in the transportation section.
- CF12. Evaluate the feasibility of developing a new multi-purpose indoor recreation community center to serve the community's growing need for dedicated recreation space and programming such as basketball courts, an indoor track, and full size gymnasium for residents of all ages as described in the Open Space & Recreation Section.

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES FINAL DRAFT – 10-21-2020**

- CF13. Implement the self-evaluation and transition plan to achieve universal design standards for all municipal facilities and school buildings, prioritizing public meeting and function spaces.
- CF14. Involve the Commission on Disability in the Planning Board's review process to make recommendations related to accessibility, universal design, and support for people with disabilities.
- CF15. Incorporate meeting space and multi-purpose function space including kitchens in redevelopment and new construction projects to provide for community meetings, social functions, and events.
- CF16. Assess and evaluate all public buildings, particularly the schools and public meeting halls, for ample security and safety measures, and implement needed improvements.
- CF17. Evaluate interest and opportunity areas for community gardens.
- CF18. Perform education, outreach, and enforcement for proper recycling through existing resources or consider hiring a recycling coordinator.
- CF19. Investigate having a metal recycling facility and a reuse area for furniture and other items.

To improve communication:

- CF20. Improve the Town's network by upgrading to 10G connectivity to increase network speed, replace the network core switch, all network node switches, and all servers, and add more Ethernet connections to accommodate increased technology needs.
- CF21. Implement electronic permitting for all Town departments, boards, and commissions to allow residents, businesses, contractors, and visitors to conduct online and paper free business to achieve greater efficiency, coordination, recordkeeping, and transparency.
- CF22. Develop practices and policies, and use digital meeting management software so that all materials and resources from all board, commission, and committee public meetings and all public projects are easily available for viewing on the Town's website with universal design features such as contrast, enhanced fonts, and magnification.
- CF23. Expand the contract with Westwood Media Center to record, televise, and stream online additional Town board, commission, and committee meetings.
- CF24. Devote enough staff time and support to keep the Town's website and electronic communications updated for all town departments.

To maintain and improve public works facilities:

- CF25. Produce a comprehensive plan to upgrade the DPW facilities to adequately house and maintain the DPW fleet and provide adequate staff facilities with gender and disability accommodations.
- CF26. Pursue designs to further expand Westwood Cemetery.
- CF27. Deliver water that satisfies all state and federal water quality criteria by operating and maintaining DWWD facilities through an effective risk management and safety program to assure safe and unrestricted water service to every customer.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES FINAL DRAFT – 10-21-2020

CF28. Maintain a water rate structure that will support capital improvements and effective operation and maintenance of the District's water system.

CF29. Complete the 2019 DWWD Comprehensive Planning Study and implement relevant recommendations.

To implement policy for facility maintenance, improvement, and replacement:

CF30. Require all municipal redevelopment and construction projects to incorporate sustainable best practices and universal design, and maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy as described in more detail in the Sustainability Section.

CF31. Regularly update long-term operation and preventative maintenance plans for all Town facilities and structures to improve regular maintenance and prolong the life of facilities.

CF32. Design new municipal buildings and renovations to be representative of local history and compatible with surrounding buildings.

CF33. Establish a municipal facilities committee to regularly review capital building projects and financing.

CF34. Encourage wireless carriers to pursue upgrades and fill communications gaps.

### Resources

Capital Needs Study for Westwood Public Schools Phase V – Master Plan, prepared by SMMA of Cambridge, dated June 17, 2015.

Evaluation prepared by Weston & Sampson, prepared for Fire Chief William Scoble, RE: Structural Evaluation of Apparatus Slab Draft, dated January 6, 2019 (18 pages). A 2019 updated assessment by Weston & Sampson is currently underway and report not yet issued.

Town of Westwood, Massachusetts Fire and Ambulance Services Study, prepared by Kent Greene, David Phares, Todd Leduc, dated June 2013 (80 pages).

Municipal Capital Needs Assessment and Replacement Reserve Analysis, prepared for Town of Westwood, prepared by RECAP Real Estate Advisors and On-Site Insight, dated December 21, 2016.

Dedham-Westwood Water District Annual Water Quality Report for 2018 and 2019 (8 pages) #dwwd3297090 and #3073000.

A Preliminary Vision, Goals and Objectives, Report prepared by Community Circle and Barrett Planning Group, dated June 19, 2019.

Town of Westwood Comprehensive Plan Community Survey, Survey Monkey, Spring 2019.

SMMA Phase V - Master Plan Capital Needs Study. Westwood Public Schools, June 17, 2015.

Annual Water Quality Report for 2018. Dedham-Westwood Water District.

Action Plan FY20 - Westwood Public Library.

Engineering Study for Westwood Fire Station 1, Weston and McKim.

**ENDNOTES**

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- <sup>1</sup> Capital Needs Study for Westwood Public Schools Phase V – Master Plan, prepared by SMMA of Cambridge, dated June 17, 2015.
- <sup>2</sup> MSBA Enrollment Projection – Westwood, September 2018, Provided by School Department, 10 Pages.
- <sup>3</sup> Town of Westwood, Massachusetts Fire and Ambulance Services Study, prepared by Kent Greene, David Phares, Todd Leduc, dated June 2013 (80 pages).
- <sup>4</sup> Evaluation prepared by Weston & Sampson, prepared for Fire Chief William Scoble, RE: Structural Evaluation of Apparatus Slab Draft, dated January 6, 2019 (18 pages). A 2019 updated assessment by Weston & Sampson is currently underway and report not yet prepared.

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