



Needham Senior Center Site Feasibility Study

Needham, Massachusetts

BH+A Project No. 2961.00

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the site feasibility study is to provide an impartial assessment comparing the three potential sites for a new Needham senior center. Each location has unique possibilities, benefits, and challenges. Our goal is to identify the key elements and associated considerations. This report and the public presentations aim to help the Town and its residents to understand the different attributes at each site and to make an informed site selection.

The Town of Needham Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) has engaged BH+A to study three pre-selected locations to determine the feasibility of each as a suitable location to construct a future senior center. The Board of Selectmen previously voted to focus on the following locations:

- Greene's Field located at the corner of Pickering Street and Great Plain Highland Avenue,
- Rosemary Hill located at Rosemary Street off of Highland Avenue, and
- Ridge Hill located at 463 Charles River Street, all in Needham.

The current senior center occupies approximately 6,400 square feet in the basement of the Stephen Palmer House located at 83 Pickering Street in Needham. The space is inadequate and is regarded as a detriment to the quantity and quality of programs and services available. The Needham Council on Aging (COA) is charged with serving Needham's senior citizens and their families. Some of the services and programs provided by the COA include outreach and counseling services, advocacy, transportation, daily meals, creative and social classes, education programs and special events.

In addition to the PPBC and the COA, the Senior Center Exploratory Committee (SCEC) which is comprised of a committee of volunteers oversees this study. The SCEC conducted extensive research of other senior centers, surveyed town residents, and ultimately recommended the three sites evaluated in this study. Representatives from the PPBC, the COA, the SCEC, and other Town departments provided assistance and review for the report.

METHODOLOGY

The study starts with the senior center program as compiled by the SCEC. After consulting with COA and SCEC, we fine tune the program with help from the senior center staff and arrive at a 20,000 square feet facility. This serves as the common denominator for the study of the three sites. We then established a matrix of site evaluation criteria and review each site based on key elements such as zoning, parking, site conditions, access, permitting, utility, and constructability. Meetings with the SCEC, the PPBC and various Town departments helped with verifying assumptions and possibilities. BH+A also made a public informational presentation on April 29, 2010 to Needham residents. The Site Data Matrix herein summarizes the findings in a side by side comparison. The slides from the presentation can be found in the Appendix. As one of many evaluation criteria, preliminary project costs are included for comparison purposes.

PPBC Commentary

As noted above, the purpose of this feasibility study was to provide the facts necessary to enable others to make a senior center site selection decision. As such, the PPBC believes that the documentation provided will form the basis for the SCEC and Selectmen to make an informed decision. We believe that the study is complete and complies with the scope of work requested of BH+A. As a result, the PPBC has not made any conclusions or statement of preferences with regard to any of the sites considered.

SENIOR CENTER PROGRAM

The program document consists of five columns as follows: the program from the previous Ridge Hill Study dated June 2007, the Needham Senior Center Exploratory Committee's (SCEC) "Minimum" scheme, the Needham SCEC "Preferred" scheme, BH+A's interpretation of the SCEC "Preferred" scheme, and BH+A's recommendation at reaching 20,000 square feet as requested by the SCEC.

Upon beginning this study, BH+A was given the program defined by the SCEC. BH+A was instructed that the SCEC program was the result of meetings with Senior Center staff and represented what was felt to be an accurate understanding of the Council on Aging's space needs for a new facility. As part of this study, BH+A evaluated the SCEC program to determine that it was "in the right ballpark," with the SCEC target of a 20,000 gross square foot facility. In order to accomplish this, BH+A analyzed the program through the filter of its experience in designing senior centers and based on conversations with the staff of the senior center and observation of activities at the current facility located in the Stephen Palmer House. It was understood that the result would not be an absolutely final program from which the senior center is to be built, as changing needs and opportunities can and often do arise as the final design is shaped.

That said, the program BH+A arrived at is very similar to the program produced by the SCEC, and BH+A appreciates and validates the hard work done by the Council on Aging and SCEC in arriving at the program.

Following is an explanation of areas where BH+A found differences with the SCEC program.

Lobby / Reception: The SCEC programs did not itemize these areas, but they have been reinserted as these spaces fulfill important and distinct functions.

Administrative Offices: Square footage was added to the Reception area, and the spaces that will be in the front open workspace portion of the office were itemized. Adequate area is indicated for a large reception desk with space for one to two volunteers, two open workstations for use by interns/volunteers, a workstation for the administrative assistant, a table to be used for collating and various tasks, and a workstation for the Trip Coordinator. The sizes of the Administrative offices themselves have also been adjusted according to BH+A's experience in designing administrative offices. A medical/examination room and a meeting room for counseling sessions have also been added. The intent is to provide a meeting room to be used primarily by the SHINE volunteers but located in a way that makes it available for use by any of the staff when not already in use.

Program Spaces: With respect to the "Preferred" scheme, BH+A agreed that eight multi-purpose Program Spaces would both accommodate the existing activity calendar of the senior center and allow room for expansion of program offerings into areas of interest requested by users of the Senior Center in polling done by the Council on Aging. Slight adjustments were made to the size of these spaces based on anticipated occupancy with the understanding that program participation would likely increase in a new facility. BH+A adjusted the size of the Game Area to match the numbers arrived at in the Ridge Hill Study. This gives space for two regulation size pool tables, a ping pong table, all with adequate clearance around them, and an area for tables and chairs for anyone who is waiting to play or wishes to watch. .

The large Multi-Purpose Room is shown as one space, while it would be planned as a large room divided by an operable partition. This would allow for half of the room to be used as a dining room on a daily basis, and the other half to be used for large programs. On the occasion that there is a program that hosts numbers in the hundreds (reported to occur roughly twice per month currently), the dining room tables would be moved and the partition would be opened to yield a single 3,000 square foot space. The storage room for the Multi-Purpose Room is sized to reflect storage of the dining tables and chairs on these occasions.

In order to arrive at the "20,000 Square Feet" scheme, one multi-purpose room and the woodworking shop are dropped from the program.

Food Service: BH+A itemized the spaces that comprise the kitchen area, and arrived at a higher total than previously shown. The majority of senior centers in Massachusetts serve meals that are provided by a food service company. These meals are typically delivered frozen and reheated shortly before mealtime. Recent changes in other senior centers indicate that meals prepared from scratch on-premises are preferred and result in both an increase in the number of residents participating in important nutritional and social programs and in the amount of room required in senior center kitchens for meal preparation. The Director of the Needham Senior Center requested a kitchen that would allow the flexibility to change to this type of meals program if the opportunity arises.

Restrooms: The restrooms have been itemized and sized to give comfortable circulation space.

Support Spaces: BH+A arrived at a higher total than what SCEC showed because storage is always reported to be a valuable resource at senior centers due to the high number of useful donations and the varied nature of programs (and related equipment) offered at such facilities.

Additional Requirements: At the bottom of the program document are spaces that would be required if site conditions necessitate a building that is two levels instead of a single level. As this is a likely scenario, these spaces have been accounted for in arriving at the 20,000 square foot number as requested by the Needham SCEC.

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PROGRAM COMPARISON

	Catlin	SCEC	SCEC	NSS	
	<i>Ridge Hill</i>	<i>minimum</i>	<i>preferred</i>	<i>preferred</i>	<i>20,000 sf</i>
	June 2007	Jan 2010	Jan 2010	March 2010	March 2010
Lobby/Reception					
Lobby / Reception / Waiting	500	w/trip coordinator		500	500
Open Storage for Coats	90	w/storage for program rooms		100	90
Subtotal	590	0	0	600	590
Administrative Offices					
Reception	90			100	100
Executive Director	160	150	175	200	150
Associate Director	120	150	150	150	100
Volunteer / Transportation Coord.	120	150	200	120	100
Trip Coord. / Reception, etc.		400	500	65	65
Social Work Supervisor	130	150	150	200	100
Outreach and Social Workers (2)	175	200	300	175	150
General Staff	550				
Part-time admin. Assistant				65	65
Volunteer desks (2) & table				200	200
SHINE Director		200	300	150	150
SHINE volunteer				120	100
Small Meeting Room / Counseling	300	200	200	200	200
Health / Other Services	120	200	300	120	100
Copy / Supplies	85	85	100	85	100
Coat Closet				10	10
Subtotal	1,850	1,885	2,375	1,960	1,690
Program Spaces					
Boutique / Gift Shop	100	100	150	150	100
Multi-Purpose Room	1,585	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Multi-Purpose Room 2	2,085				
Lounge / Library	895	500	700	500	500
Reading Area	300				
Large Game Area	900	1,500	1,500	900	900
(1) Program Space: Fitness Studio	1,070	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
(3) Program Space: Art Studio	650	650	650	650	650
(4) Program Space	690	650	750	650	650
(2) Program Space: Computers	510	650	650	500	500
(5) Program Space		650	750	650	500
(6) Program Space		650	650	650	500
(7) Program Space		500	600	500	500
(8) Program / main conf rm (20)		400	400	400	
Conference (20)	450	250	250	250	400
Library/Media Room	300	500	500	500	300
Screen Porch	300				
Music Room	710				
Drama / Black Box	610				
Woodworking	960			1,000	
Pottery	800				
Potting / Indoor Gardening	800				
Subtotal	13,715	11,000	11,550	11,300	9,500

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	June 2007	Jan 2010	Jan 2010	March 2010	March 2010
Food Service					
Kitchen	425	700	900	700	500
Office				100	100
Pantry Storage	175			150	100
Loading / Receiving	85			50	100
Subtotal	685	700	900	1,000	800
Restrooms					
Womens	180			220	220
Mens	165			220	220
Companion Unisex Toilet	60			60	60
Companion Toilet with Shower	70				
Mens Changing Rm w/Shower	275				
Womens Changing Rm w/Shower	275				
Subtotal	1,025	0	0	500	500
Support Spaces					
Mechanical / Electrical / Sprinkler	465	465	465	500	450
Storage for Program Rooms		1,650	1,650		
Multi-Purpose Room Storage	500			500	400
Classroom Storage	75			75	100
Health Equipment Storage	800			400	250
Game Room Storage	70			100	70
General Storage, 1st Floor	1,200	w/storage for program rooms		400	400
Exterior Maintenance Storage	50	50	50	50	50
Storage for Outdoor Furniture	500			500	500
Miscellaneous Storage	250	200	200	500	200
Custodian, 1st Floor	40	w/storage for program rooms		100	40
Subtotal	3,950	2,365	2,365	3,125	2,460
Total Net Square Feet	21,815	15,950	17,190	18,485	15,540
Grossing Factor	1.26	1.30	1.30	1.20	1.20
Total Program Gross Area	27,487	20,735	22,347	22,184	18,650

Additional Requirements for two-story building

Open Stair	300			300	300
Mens, 2nd Floor	135			125	125
Womens, 2nd Floor	145			125	125
Elevator				100	100
Elevator Machine	50	150	150	100	100
General Storage, 2nd Floor	50			100	50
Custodian, 2nd Floor	30			50	30
Fire Stairs (2)				300	300
Total Net Square Feet	710	150	150	1,200	1,130
Grossing Factor	1.26	1.30	1.30	1.20	1
Area required for 2nd floor	895	195	195	1,440	1,350
Total Gross Area for 2 Story Building				23,624	20,000