

*The Tolles-Parsons Center Building Project*

**BUILDING PROGRAM REVIEW**

**and**

**BENCHMARK STUDY ON DESIGN**

*Senior Center Building Committee  
Wellesley, MA*

*June 17, 2009*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Town of Wellesley strives to provide support and activities which enable and enhance the quality of living for all residents. The Town has developed and funds programs and services targeted to specific user groups, from the very young through the school years and into adulthood. Of these, *adulthood* is possibly the most complex and multi-faceted, as it is defined by many phases, transitions and challenges particularly for those adults ages 55+ (*seniors*). Enabling and enhancing a vibrant, engaged and healthy lifestyle in our senior adult population is critical to the quality of life of our entire community.

### I. **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The Town of Wellesley is currently home to over 7100 people over the age 55, comprising almost 29% of the population.\* The demographics are as follows:

AGE RANGE 2009	NUMBER OF RESIDENTS <sup>†</sup>
45 - 49	2317
50 - 54	2024
55 - 59	1779
60 - 64	1595
65 - 75	1867
75 - 85	1333
85+	597
<b>Total 55+</b>	<b>7171</b>

\*Based on a Town population of 24,883 (excludes college students)

<sup>†</sup>Does not include Mt. St. Vincent's (157) or Newton-Wellesley Alzheimer Center (95) residents

It is anticipated that the size of the senior adult population in Wellesley will potentially grow over the next several decades, as evidenced by the population of 4341 in the age range of 45-54. Currently, approximately 17% of senior adults in Wellesley participate in Council on Aging programs and services. Data indicate that this percentage increases with a dedicated senior center to approximately 20 - 25%.

### II. **CURRENT SERVICE DELIVERY**

Support and activities for the senior adult population (age 55+) is managed by the Wellesley Council on Aging (COA), a Town department. The COA manages an operating budget of approximately \$210,000 per year which includes the following: three full-time and one part-time employees (70%); rental expenses (7%); bus transportation services (15%); and programming (3%). The Town leases office and function space in the Wellesley Community Center (WCC), a nonprofit, privately held and managed facility. Programs and support services are offered on a limited basis and subject to space availability. Currently, the COA has one room in the basement of the WCC that is dedicated for senior programs.

However, the effective delivery of senior services has been limited in the current facility: Presently, the COA cannot run concurrent activities due to lack of guaranteed and dedicated meeting space. In addition, the temporary availability of each space requires significant setup and takedown work for each event. This limits the number, timing and type of programs offered. Additionally, the space limits spontaneous social interaction, a key component of a strong senior center. There is not a central location for meeting or socialization before or after scheduled activities. The COA has one under-sized room (360 square feet)

designated for programs with limited accessibility and has the option to utilize other rooms in the Community Center when available.

To address these limitations, the Town of Wellesley has initiated the development of a free-standing center dedicated to providing the necessary programs and services to Wellesley's senior adult population under the management of the COA.

### **III. BUILDING PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS**

To provide specifications for design development, two studies have been conducted:

#### **A. Building Program Review** - includes the following:

- A detailed summary of the activities and services currently provided, the anticipated number of participants and the types of spaces needed to enable them;
- A summary of potential activities in anticipation of growth in offerings and in the rates of participation;
- The specification of the number, type, size and adjacencies of each space to create an inventory of physical spaces;
- The inventory of spaces is used to develop the comprehensive floor plan.

#### **B. Benchmark Study on Design** - A descriptive summary of information collected from site visits focusing exclusively on the design, adjacencies and use of spaces. The objective of this study is to compile information on best-practices and designs adopted by neighboring senior centers and incorporate as much as possible into our design.

## BUILDING PROGRAM REVIEW

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### I. ACQUIRING INFORMATION

In order to assess the delivery of senior services in Wellesley, information was compiled from multiple sources: current activities and participation rates, surveys, community forums, and site visits. The Building Program Plan proposed below is based on these sources.

### II. BUILDING PROGRAM PLAN

#### A. *Vision and Goals*

The *mission* of the Wellesley Council on Aging is to serve as a supportive family resource as emerging needs of Wellesley residents become more complex; and to advocate for and provide, in a cost-effective manner, a safe, congenial environment where seniors may participate in social, educational, and cultural programs reflective of their needs and interests.

The *vision* of the Tolles-Parsons Center is to enable and enhance a vibrant, engaged and healthy lifestyle in the senior adult population, opportunities for interpersonal connections and increasing overall well-being.

The *goals* of the Tolles-Parsons Center are to:

- Provide the adequate size and type of spaces necessary to enable a sense of place --- to gather, connect, socialize, learn, exercise, and maintain healthy, socially engaged lifestyles;
- Effectively deliver and expand programs to meet the needs and interests of adult seniors;
- Engage and encourage participation;
- Provide flexible and comfortable spaces which are accessible and conducive to multiple activities;
- Foster intergenerational participation;
- Promote "aging in place" by supplementing home life with social opportunities and related support at Town center.

#### B. *Building Program Strategy*

The development of the Building Program Strategy has been initiated and will continue in tandem with design development as well as through the first year of operation. Generally, the Building Program Strategy development is as follows:

1. Review current calendar of programs and activities, quantifying participation rates and interest levels. Much of this review has been completed and is outlined in the *General Activities* (Table 1).
2. Conduct interviews with the staff from other Senior Centers and visit neighboring facilities to learn about successful activities, anticipate participation rates and review space requirements. A summary of initial findings was used to develop the list of *Expansion Programs* (Table 2). This work will continue throughout the design development period.
3. Conduct focus groups and surveys to compile information from current senior adults in Wellesley about areas of interest. This collection of data has been completed and incorporated in the listing of *Expansion Activities*.
4. Develop a floor plan which has the flexibility to accommodate the current activities as well as Expansion Activities. To enable flexibility, the following "tools" will be utilized:
  - Adjacencies which enable spaces to be combined or segmented as much as possible. In the case of smaller meeting areas, adjacencies which facilitate use by multiple user groups;

- The use of easily maneuvered partitions to create larger or smaller spaces depending on the need;
- Easily moveable and readily stored tables/chairs to enable quick set-up and break-down of spaces for multiple uses.

### **III. BUILDING PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

For the purposes of this review, current activities have been organized by the type of space utilized. There are five categories of spaces necessary to accommodate all activities: scheduled activities, meeting space, dining/food prep facilities, office/administration, informal gathering space. Some of these spaces must be dedicated and specialized while others will be designed for maximum flexibility. *Table 1* provides a listing of the General Program, including the current and expected participation rates.

#### **A. Scheduled Activities**

Scheduled Activities are those which are posted in advance, often held on a weekly basis. In brief, the Scheduled Activities require the following spaces:

- **Main Hall** - This is the largest space in the facility and is designed for maximum flexibility. The room can be partitioned into two to three spaces further providing flexibility in usage and scheduling. One of the spaces will be equipped as a media room (television, sound system). Storage for a portion of tables and chairs is required. All can be used as separate classroom when needed.
- **Activity Rooms**
  - Activity Room #1* - Adjacent to the dining room, this space is designed for maximum flexibility. Sized to accommodate large movement activities (fitness, yoga, balance, dancing, Tai Chi) and separated from the Dining Room by a moveable partition to enable a large space as needed.
  - Activity Rooms #2 and #3* - Flexible space with folding tables. These are the primary spaces for bridge and other cards games, lecture classes, and seminars. At least one classroom needs a computer/television monitor set-up.
  - Arts and Crafts Room* - Flexible space with folding tables, a sink, counter space, room for sewing machines and storage. This is the primary space for scheduled art and craft activities with the necessary storage. When needed it can be converted to serve as a part of the Main Hall.

#### **B. Meeting Space**

Meeting spaces are highly utilized by multiple groups, individuals and service providers. A minimum of two meetings spaces is specified:

- Large meeting room (capacity of 12)
- Small meeting room (capacity of 4)

#### **C. Dining/Food Preparation Facilities**

A major component of a vibrant center is the lunch program. Currently, the COA serves approximately 10 to 15 lunches per day, prepared by an outside contract service. The Benchmark Review revealed that many centers serve upwards of 30 - 50 people per day with the lunch service providing the major draw into other center activities (see Benchmark Review). In each of these centers, the adjacent kitchen incorporated commercial-grade equipment. Therefore, the following spaces are specified:

- Dining Room - contiguous to kitchen; this area will be set up for lunches as a rule, but can be rearranged as needed.

- Commercial-grade Kitchen - Enabling daily on-site food preparation and service
- Storage - Sufficient spaces for pantry, paper goods and miscellaneous serving/table articles.
- Kitchenette/hospitality centers - Small serveries for coffee/tea preparation and related prepackaged snacks.

**D. Office/Administration**

The office and administrative complex has two primary functions:

- 1) to provide management and administrative spaces for conducting center business; and
- 2) to provide space for social services, including information and referrals concerning issues of health, housing, health insurance, in-home assistance, and legal matters.

The Building Program for the office/administrative spaces is comprised of the following:

- 1st Floor:
- 2 private offices
    - Director, 1 full-time employee + capacity for 3 guests
    - Outreach Coordinator, 1 full-time employee + capacity for 2 guests
  - 2 open work stations
    - Activities Coordinator, part-time employee coordinating the schedule and facility usage
    - Program and Office Assistant, full-time employee
  - 1 Reception Area with 2 work stations
    - Customer service and reception, volunteer positions
    - Greeting and directing
  - 1 copy/file room/kitchenette
  - 1 shared office/health office (possibly connected to a companion restroom)
    - as a health office and
    - by SHINE, AARP (tax consultation) and other scheduled meetings
- 2nd Floor:
- 2 private offices
    - Volunteer coordinator, 1 part-time employee
    - Veteran's Affairs, 1 part-time employee
  - 1 Meeting Room, capacity for 12

**E. Informal Gathering Space**

A major goal of the center will be to facilitate informal gatherings and to foster interpersonal connections. The size, location and design of informal gathering space will enable the achievement of this goal. Three spaces have been specified for this purpose:

- Lounge - a living room atmosphere with a fireplace, with a seating capacity of up to six possibly transitioning to a "working lounge," a comfortable sitting area with tables for working, reading and talking, with access to a self-service coffee/tea stand
- Sitting areas - primarily to provide spaces to sit throughout the building; includes chairs/benches in the vestibule, the entry (1st floor), and the landing (2nd floor); located near kitchenette/hospitality areas.

Table 1. GENERAL ACTIVITIES: Capacity and Space Requirements

Note: This listing does not include activities held off-site, day trips, outdoor fitness or other activities which do not require interior space.

ACTIVITY	CURRENT	EXPECTED	SPACE
Art For Fun	12	12	Arts and Crafts Room
Bears + (craft)	14	20-25	Arts and Crafts Room
Fine Arts	12	12	Arts and Crafts Room
Advanced Bridge	12	20	Activity Room
Beginner Bridge	15	30	Activity Room
Bingo	10 to 15	20	Activity Room
Book Discussion	18 to 20	30	Activity Room or Lounge
Creative Writing	10	20	Activity Room
German	10	15-18	Activity Room
Healthy Eating	10 to 12	15-20	Activity Room
Investment Club	10	20	Activity Room
Keep Well Clinic	6 to 8	20+	Activity Room
Mah Jongg	4 to 8	10 to 20	Activity Room
Men's Group	15	30+	Activity Room
Spanish	10 to 18	25+	Activity Room
Weight Watchers	15	30+	Activity Room
COA Board meetings	15	15	Activity Room or Meeting Room
ITAT meetings	12	12	Activity Room or Meeting Room
Presentations / guest speaker	varies	10 - 100+	Activity Room or Main Hall
Friendship Circle	25	25	Activity Room
Opera Appreciation	18	40	Activity Room
Travel Programs (monthly)	10 to 20	20 to 40	Activity Room
Holiday Party	125	150	Main Hall
Movies	10 to 60	60+	Main Hall
Socials	100+	100+	Main Hall
Wellesley At Home _meetings	50-100	75-125	Main Hall
Balance & Flexibility	25	40 to 50	Main Hall or Activity Room
Chair Yoga	20	30-40	Main Hall or Activity Room
Hatha Yoga	---	30	Main Hall or Activity Room
Line Dancing	10 to 15	20-40	Main Hall or Activity Room
Tai Chi	? (rec)	30-50	Main Hall or Activity Room
Yoga	18	18	Main Hall or Activity Room
FWSN board meetings	4	6	Meeting Room
Office Hours/ Sen. Brown	varies		Meeting Room
Computer Instruction (1 to 1)	varies		Shared Area
Outreach Meetings	varies		Shared Area
SHINE counseling			Shared Area

**IV. ACTIVITY EXPANSION**

In anticipation of growth in participation and flexibility of space, a list of potential activities has been reviewed. The review included input from current users in the form of surveys and focus groups. Further, the *Benchmark Study* provided information on which activities and activities have met with success and active participation at other senior centers. Table 2 provides a listing of the potential expansion activities under consideration.

ACTIVITY	EXPECTED	SPACE
Crafts	15-30	Arts and Crafts Room
Gardening	25+	Arts and Crafts Room/Garden
Additional Language Class	25+	Activity Room
Board Games	20-30	Activity Room
Canasta	10 to15	Activity Room
Card Games / Poker	20-25	Activity Room
Chess / Backgammon	10 to 15	Activity Room
Cribbage	10 to 15	Activity Room
Geneology	20+	Activity Room
Mind Games	30-50	Activity Room
Trivia	20-30	Activity Room
Classroom Support Groups	10-20+	Activity Room
Play Reading	20+	Activity Room
Travel Club		Activity Room
Knitting	10 to 20	Activity Room
Needlepoint	10 to 20	Activity Room
Quilting	10 to 20	Activity Room
Podiatry Clinic	20	Health office or Activity Room
Puzzle	ongoing	Lounge (puzzle left at workstation)
Discussion Groups/Current Events	30+	Lounge or Activity Room
Jewelry Making	15-30	Activity Room
Technology	30-50	Activity Room
Wii	50-75	Activity Room
Cooking Classes	25+	Main Hall
Men's Breakfast	30-50	Main Hall
Weekend Meals	25+	Main Hall
Ball Room Dancing	10 to 30	Main Hall or Activity Room
Band / Chorus		Main Hall or Activity Room
Chair Volleyball	25+	Main Hall or Activity Room
Chi Gong	25-50	Main Hall or Activity Room
Cultural Events	50+	Main Hall or Activity Room
Police Academy		Main Hall or Activity Room
Self Defense	25-50	Main Hall or Activity Room
Sports Fan Clubs	10 to 25+	Main Hall or Activity Room
Billiards	10 to 25	Basement
Traveling Zoo / Pet Therapy		Basement

Table 2. *ACTIVITY EXPANSION - List of Potential Activities, Capacity and Space Requirements*

Note: This listing does not include activities held off-site, day trips, outdoor fitness or other activities which do not require interior space.

**V. INVENTORY OF SPACES**

Based on the number of spaces, the expected usage and capacity requirements and the optimal adjacencies, the following specifications for the size of each space has been determined. Due to the size of the site, the building will be a two-story facility with each floor approximately 6,200 square feet in size.

<b>SPACE</b>	<b>CAPACITY</b>	<b>SQUARE FOOTAGE</b>
<b>1ST FLOOR:</b>		
Activity Room #1	50	622
Dining Room	50	808
Kitchen	---	925
Lounge	8	214
Offices		
<i>Director</i>	<i>1 + 3 guests</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Outreach Coordinator</i>	<i>1 + 2 guests</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Work Station (2)</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Open area</i>
<i>Reception (2)</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Open area</i>
<i>Copy/file room</i>	---	<i>60</i>
Shared Room/Health Room	---	140
Companion Bathroom	1 HC w/companion	44
Restrooms - Women	2 stalls	88
Restrooms - Men	1 stalls/2 urinals	78
<b>2ND FLOOR:</b>		
Main Hall total, including CR1 and CR2	140	2,670
<i>Main Hall</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>1,193</i>
<i>Activity Room #1</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>1,025</i>
<i>Activity Room #2 (Arts and Crafts)</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>540</i>
Meeting Room	12	253
Offices		
<i>Volunteer Coordinator</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Veteran's Office</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>107</i>
Restrooms - Women	2 stalls/1 HC	120
Restrooms - Men	1 HC/2 urinals	91

Table 3: Inventory of Spaces

## BENCHMARK STUDY ON DESIGN

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### I. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the *Benchmark Study* is to identify and incorporate those elements of design which have been demonstrated to be effective and efficient in comparable centers, including the size, number and adjacencies of spaces. An overview of the centers included in this review are provided in *Table 5*.

### II. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The key learnings from the *Benchmark Study* impact the overall design of the center including the size and location of specific spaces.

#### A. *Entry and Reception*

The Entry and Reception areas establish the overall tone and atmosphere of the center.

Overwhelmingly, new centers are designed with an open and welcoming reception, encouraging people to enter and feel comfortable. Seating immediately adjacent to the entry in the design of a living room or lounge provides a rest spot and a place to make connections as people come and go (Hopkinton, Marshfield). Brookline has a central staircase as the focal point, with the reception more of a waiting area for the bus.

A staffed reception desk provides a source of information and direction, as well as a physical connection with the administrative offices.

#### B. *Hallways*

All hallways and doorways must be wide enough to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs comfortably. Seating in the form of chairs or benches placed throughout the building provide necessary rest stops. Marshfield had benches along long hallways; Brookline had small tables with comfortable chairs set into corners.

#### C. *Main Hall*

In virtually all centers, the Main Hall provides the major space for large group activities and for fitness classes. The ability to partition the space into two or three spaces is essential for maximum flexibility. Materials for partitions and ceilings in all spaces were chosen to minimize sound transmission. Because of the large capacity, many centers utilize the Main Hall for movies (requiring blackout curtains).

#### D. *Activity Rooms*

All centers had a room used primarily for arts and crafts. The space provides the appropriate space for tabletop work and significant supplies, including sewing machines and art supplies. These activities often require access to a sink, plus ample storage for supplies. The room is designed with the flexibility to move tables and chairs for other activities as well. Ideally, this space is located to maximize natural light with a northern exposure.

General Classrooms provide the appropriate space for scheduled lectures, bridge or other games. They are equipped with projection systems and television/internet access. Easy to move/store card tables and chairs make this a very flexible space. A classroom dedicated to a "computer center" is becoming less frequent. Brookline is considering phasing out the computer room; in Hopkinton it provided mostly one-on-one instruction. Further, computer training is an existing service provided at the Wellesley Free Library.

#### E. *Informal Gathering Areas*

Of all the spaces reviewed, the *informal gathering areas* provide the most diverse array of options. Because the Community Center where the COA currently offers services and programs does not have

any informal gathering areas, options were carefully reviewed. Most centers have a combination of a living room-like area near the reception and another distinct room with comfortable seating. For example, Hopkinton has incorporated a living room area with a fireplace in the reception area while further down the hall is a room with comfortable seating often used for book groups and poetry readings. The living room areas range from a waiting-room atmosphere to a cozy space where the knitting group could meet uninterrupted.

The Building Program specifies a living room space in the reception area, as well as a more extended "working living room" in anticipation of an active, engaged and computer-savvy population.

***F. Dining Area/Kitchen***

In all the centers visited, the lunch program provides a major draw into the center's activities. Options range from serving meals prepared by an outside service (Marshfield, Milford) to a staffed full-service kitchen (Hopkinton). Meals are provided at a charge of \$2 - \$4 each. Table-service and, in some cases, kitchen staff is provided by volunteers.

Ideally, the dining area is set-up with tables and chairs at all times, thus minimizing the need for daily set-up and break-down. However, most centers utilized the dining area for multiple purposes.

The kitchen size and equipment is not only based on whether or not meals are prepared on site, but also on the need to prepare plates (counter-space) and distribute (pass-through). Many centers visited had a kitchen equipped with commercial-grade appliances. Brookline has the square footage and capacity to upgrade the kitchen to a full commercial kitchen, though currently it is used as a catering kitchen.

***F. Office and Administration***

Centers differed widely on the extent of access to office and administration spaces: Some have offices in a completely separate area (Hopkinton, Milford) and some have a much more open plan with offices adjacent to the reception area (Marshfield).

All centers stressed the need for effective intra-office communication and therefore, the floor plan should be conducive to easy and regular communication. It is important for the Director's office in particular to be integral to the center, at the hub of activity. Therefore, the Program specifies the Director's office and necessary administration to be adjacent to the reception area. While the site limitations may necessitate that some offices be on the second floor, careful attention to communications is important.

***F. Restrooms***

Access and availability of restrooms was carefully assessed as they can require a significant amount of square footage.

In one-story centers, an important consideration was the distance between the restrooms and how far users would have to walk to access them. To accommodate, many centers have restrooms on both ends of the facility with one close to the entrance.

An alternative found in Milford and Marshfield was the following: A single, handicapped-accessible, unisex, companion bathroom close to the entrance. This enabled them to put the multi-unit restrooms farther back in the building. This configuration also placed the handicapped-accessible restroom in a high traffic area.

**Table 5. Benchmark Study Overview**

Detailed summaries for each center are available. This table provides a snapshot of some of the key observations and comparative data.

LOCATION	FACILITY SIZE	SENIOR POPULATION	PARTICIPATION	MAJOR OBSERVATIONS
Brookline	28,000 sq. ft*	11,870	150 per day	Three story + basement facility in a fairly urban location with no parking. Located in an area of dense senior housing, more than two-thirds of participants walk to the center (60% of Brookline's seniors live within a 1 mile radius). A central staircase created a hub connecting the floors and opened-up the multi-level space. The Main Hall and kitchen facilities were on the third floor, with ready access to the stairs and 2 elevators (one privately funded). First floor had large lounge area with self serve coffee station and 20 tables for reading, cards, gathering. Also offers Adult Day Program.
Duxbury	12,500 sq ft*	358	160 per day	Two-story facility including a dining room with capacity for 150. Lunch service during the day provides the major central event, drawing up to 40 people per day. Also offers Day Program.
Franklin	16,000 sq ft	4,200	150 per day	Welcoming and open reception with fireplace; Main Hall divided into three multi-purpose rooms; health office highly utilized; solarium and outdoor garden. Rooms initially designated for fitness were later found to be too small and therefore Fitness classes are now in the Main Hall (enabling 50+ participants). Commercial kitchen with breakfast and lunch prepared on site; Health room; well-utilized Game room.
Hopkinton	16,300 sq ft	1,400	<i>not available</i>	High participation rate driven by a very successful lunch program where all meals created on site; atmosphere very welcoming. Particular attention to how they used Main Hall space and the location of offices (separate and distinct from activity centers); Active greenhouse managed by volunteers. Vibrant volunteer group
Marshfield	12,400 sq ft	4,600	100 per day	Design and atmosphere very similar to what is planned for Wellesley; overall space is similar size. Particular attention on effective adjacencies and size of rooms. Main hall had two moveable partitions; one area set up for dining. Companion bathroom as enter center.
Mashpee	10,900 sq ft	4,300	<i>not available</i>	Diverse course offerings ranging from fitness, quilting, woodworking, lifetime learning classes (through Cape Cod Community College), lunches (up to 30 per day), tax and Medicare advisory services.
Milford	16,000 sq ft	4,400	100 per day	Two story, although second floor not utilized except for fitness room; Office area completely separate from activity areas; Main hall in three partition-able sections with the center having a stage. Lunch service was minimal; most utilized rooms were game room and classrooms.
<b>WELLESLEY</b>	<b>12,400 sq ft</b>	<b>7,171</b>		

\*These centers are multi-use. Brookline houses privately run Day-Care and Senior Fitness facilities; Duxbury has additional functions in the same building.