

# [PFS] Public Facilities & Services



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# Public Facilities & Services

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# 7

The Public Facilities and Services Element of the Master Plan aims to serve as a guide for decision-making regarding the Town's public buildings, infrastructure, and services. The ability to provide adequate services to community members requires both short- and long-term planning and actions. Effective capital planning and asset management policies are often challenged by limited revenue and government capacity. Prioritizing short- and long-term investment needs can help the Town meet the expectations of the community for public services.

## Key Findings

- Reuse opportunities exist at 4 West Main Street (the Old Town Hall site), which the Town can reacquire in May 2022.
- The Town is planning for the replacement of its fire station at a new location, creating a redevelopment opportunity at the site of the existing fire station.
- The availability of parking can sometimes be a concern at the Northborough Free Library, particularly when programming is taking place.
- There is no direct access to the Northborough Free Library from Main Street.
- Additional flexible meeting and activity spaces are desired by members of the community, including at the Northborough Free Library or at a new community center.
- The Senior Center is a popular destination, but with the age characteristics of the Town trending older, considerations should be made to ensure this facility grows to accommodate increasing demand.
- Northborough's schools are cherished and supported by the community; the Peaslee School and Melican Middle School are aging and will require upgrades in the coming years.
- To accommodate future growth, the Town may need to increase its permitted wastewater treatment capacity at the Westerly Wastewater Treatment Plan in the Town of Marlborough.

- The Town was awarded Green Community designation by the State in December 2018, which offers funding for municipal energy efficiency and conservation projects.

## Baseline Conditions Analysis

The municipal services that Northborough provides are fairly typical of Massachusetts towns. Many local government services qualify as “essential” regardless of whether the state mandates them. The Town’s services are listed in **Table 7-1**.

**Table 7-1 Northborough’s Public Services**

Department	Location	Department	Location
Accounting	63 Main Street	NEDP- Extended Day Programs	63 Main Street
Administration	63 Main Street	Police/EOC	211 Main Street
Assessors	63 Main Street	Public Works	63 Main Street
Board of Selectmen	63 Main Street	Recreation	63 Main Street
Building	63 Main Street	School Department	53 Parkerville Road, Southborough
Cable Access Television	79 Bartlett Street	Senior Center	119 Bearfoot Road
Animal Control	-	Town Clerk	63 Main Street
Economic Development	63 Main Street	Treasurer/Collector	63 Main Street
Engineering	63 Main Street	Veteran’s Agent	63 Main Street
Family & Youth Services	63 Main Street		
Fire Department	11 Pierce Street		
Library	34 Main Street		
Health Department	63 Main Street		
MIS/GIS	63 Main Street		
Planning	63 Main Street		

Source: Town of Northborough official website

### Town Hall

The Northborough Town Hall at 63 Main Street occupies the former location of the Northborough High School built in 1930. This facility no longer meets the Town’s needs. For example, there is an inadequate amount of space to store the required hard copies of municipal documents such as maps and building plans. The Town is looking at expansion options that include renovating the current structure or locating to a different building.

Prior to moving to 63 Main Street, the Town's offices were at 4 West Main Street in a building constructed in 1867. During renovations in 1985, after the Town already vacated the space, a fire destroyed the building. A private investor subsequently replicated the façade of the historic structure in a new building, which is commonly referred to as the Old Town Hall site. The Town has the right to repurchase 4 West Main Street in May 2022 for \$10,000. The Town's repurchase right is one of the conditions established by the 1982 Town Meeting vote that authorized the sale of the property.

## Police Department

The Northborough Police Department has 29 full time staff, including one chief, one lieutenant, five sergeants, one detective sergeant, 12 patrol officers, two detectives, one administrative assistant, one communications supervisor, five dispatchers, and one part-time custodian. The department currently includes the following units:

- Administrative & Community Services
- Patrol
- Detective
- Communications/Dispatch

The Police Department has a number of community initiatives, including D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education); the Are You OK? (RUOK) Program, a free and daily telephone call to check in the welfare of senior citizens and shut-ins; and the Office Phil Program, a personal safety program offered in Kindergarten through Grade 3. The Police Department also supports a number of community events.

Built in 1989, the Police Department building is a wood frame structure with three levels and six holding facilities. A new roof was installed in 2017, though the rest of the building needs renovations to keep up with technology driven demands as well as maintaining a state-of-the-art facility that accommodates best practices in multiple functional areas. Based on current demands, the Police Department is at its physical limits within the building and is expected to outgrow its footprint within the next several years.

In terms of its vehicle and equipment fleet, the Police Department manages 13 vehicles, four bicycles, a back-up generator for its headquarters, and miscellaneous emergency response equipment. The department has an annual capital plan for vehicle replacement.

Overall, the Police Department has the resources it requires to be able to meet the current need for services. In 2016, the Police Department provided 22,391 instances of police service, which included 10,578 self-initiated actions by officers such as traffic stops.

Anticipated future needs include hiring an additional investigator, one School Resource Officer for the elementary and middle schools, and an additional communications personnel. The department is in the formative stages of instituting a mental health response practitioner for crisis interventions.

## Fire Department

Northborough's Fire Department currently has 22 career firefighters (full time) and 10 call firefighters (part time/on-call). It has one fire station, built in 1974. A new fire station has been proposed and is currently in the conceptual design stage. The Northborough Fire Station Building Committee is overseeing this effort. The preferred location at current – as voted on by the committee in January 2019 – is 61-65 West Main Street (with the inclusion of 10 Monroe Street).

The Fire Department currently manages the following fleet vehicles and equipment:

- Three engines;
- One ladder;
- One rescue;
- Three ambulances;
- Two forestry vehicles;
- Three general use light-duty trucks;
- One hazardous materials trailer;
- One all hazards trailers;
- One open space protection unit;
- One dive/rescue boat/ice rescue boat and trailer;
- One fixed diesel generator; and
- Various portable generators of varying capacities.

In 2017, the Fire Department responded to 2,321 Incidents, 1,297 inspections (i.e., mandatory inspections, fire safety inspections, oil burner inspections, propane inspections, fire detector/carbon monoxide inspections and various other inspections) and issued 1,103 permits. There are no major access issues in terms of the department's ability to respond to incidents or perform inspections.

## Northborough Free Library

The Northborough Free Library was originally built in 1894 on land donated by Cyrus Gale Jr. to accommodate a growing collection. The building has been modernized since and is currently in overall good condition. Major interior renovations were performed in the 1960s and an addition was built in 1975. Further expansion was completed in 2009 to bring the building to 26,000 sq. ft. The 2009 addition included updating the building's mechanical equipment including all utilities, plumbing, heating, and HVAC, as well as data cabling and wiring for advanced technologies. With respect to potential constraints/opportunities for improvement at this building, Library representatives expressed an interest in working with the Town to provide access through the front door of the original library located on Main Street. Further, depending on the time of day and the number of programs or meeting taking place, adequate parking can become an issue.

The Library operates during the hours of Monday 12:00 to 8:30 PM; Tuesday and Wednesday 9:30 AM to 8:30 PM; and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM. It has the equivalent of 10 full time employees, which includes part-time staff. In 2017, 172 volunteers worked approximately 1,942 hours at the Library.

The Library belongs to the Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing Library Network, joining in 1985. In 2017, excluding digital subscriptions and downloadable books and databases, the Library had the following resources in circulation:

- Printed Books: 138,052
- Printed magazines: 3,052
- Audios (music and audiobooks): 13,380
- Miscellaneous (passes, kits): 3,222

In addition to these holdings and circulation items, the Library also provides public access to computers and internet and loans out internet hotspots. Usage statistics from 2017 include:

- Meeting room and study room use: 1,053
- Number of registered borrowers: 10,558
- Number of library visits: 126,892
- Interlibrary loads received: 20,449
- Interlibrary loads provided: 13,693
- Number of wireless sessions: 10,257

Many groups use the Library for its freely available meeting spaces. Currently, there is a meeting room, a conference room, a children's program room, and two study rooms. There is a growing demand for such spaces and there may be an opportunity to expand them within the existing building in the future as the size of library collections nationwide are expected to decrease alongside increases in access to electronic books and resources. Relatedly, during the process of developing this plan, community members expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of designating a new community center.

The Library and the Friends of the Library provide programming on assorted topics. In 2017, 691 programs were held with an attendance of 16,680 persons. These programs are targeted to youth and adults, including those with physical, mobility, and transportation needs. In April 2017, the Library initiated a monthly Memory Café for those with dementia and other cognitive challenges and their caregivers. A part-time Outreach Services Coordinator is currently working with partners to provide outreach services to those who are unable to get to the Library.

## Council on Aging/Senior Center

The Northborough Council on Aging (COA)/Senior Center building, located at 119 Bearfoot Road, opened in 2010 with 14,000 sq. ft. of space. It replaced a smaller, aging Senior Center that was only 2,700 sq. ft. The current building is located on over 4 acres of land, some of which is dedicated conservation and recreation space. Located about 2 miles north of Town Hall, the Senior Center is fully accessible and served by over 100 parking spaces and an appropriate number of handicap parking spaces according to Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design. The architectural design incorporates bright airy spaces and sweeping views of the patio, pond, and woods to support a positive user experience. The building is in good condition.

Staff at the Senior Center include a Bistro Manager (the Bistro @119), Front Desk Coordinator, Program Coordinators, and a Computer Instructor that are paid through revenues collected at the facility. Nearly 100 volunteers perform office work, front desk reception, register people for classes, lead activities, and prepare/serve food.

The COA offers a range of programming that promotes health and wellness. Examples of this programming include a wellness clinic, free blood pressure and hearing clinics, and a low vision support group; various classes and workshops focused on topics such as origami, photography, traditional rug hooking, and jewelry making; and fitness programs, among others. Relatedly, Northborough has begun discussions about supporting elderly-friendly communities as part of the larger MetroWest Moves program. This regional program encourages people to engage in healthy eating and active living.

## School District

Northborough residents have traditionally supported their public schools and worked hard to ensure that children in the Town receive an exceptional educational experience. The Town, through the Northborough School Department, operates four public elementary schools (Grades K through 5) and one middle school (Grades 6 through 8). The Algonquin Regional High School (Grades 9 through 12) is also located in Town. As of October 2, 2017, over 1,600 students from Northborough were enrolled in the Town's five public schools with an additional 873 students enrolled at the high school (representing 59 percent of all students enrolled at the high school).

All 142 teachers in the Town's public schools and all 107 at the regional high school are highly qualified and licensed in Teaching Assignment. The District Leadership and Administration includes the School Committee, the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, the Office of Student Support Services, the Business Department, the Office of Human Resources, and the building principals. The Northborough School Department operates the buildings in which the elementary and middle schools reside, including:

- Lincoln Street Elementary (Lincoln Street School);
- Marguerite E. Peaslee Elementary (Peaslee School);
- Fannie E. Proctor Elementary (Proctor School);
- Marion E. Zeh Elementary (Zeh School); and

- Robert E. Melican Middle School (Melican Middle School).

The Northborough-Southborough Regional School District operates the Algonquin Regional High School, which has the following fiscal year 2018-2023 proposed capital improvements:

- Small performance theater sound system/hearing impaired;
- Entry access, security alarm and infrastructure repairs;
- Main boiler heating system repair;
- Eye wash infrastructure improvement;
- Art Department photo lab sink;
- CCTV surveillance system upgrade;
- Main computer room UPS upgrade;
- HVAC replacement;
- Redundant domestic hot water boiler;
- Outward Bound course design change; and
- Phone system upgrade.

Since 1995, the Lincoln Street, Proctor, and Zeh Schools and the Algonquin Regional High School have all undergone significant renovations. The Peaslee School (a 1960's-built twin of the Lincoln Street School) and the Melican Middle School are due for similar upgrades, which will be costly and require coordination with and approval by the Massachusetts School Building Authority to qualify for partial reimbursement of design/construction costs. The specific timeframes for these projects have not been decided. Otherwise, as reported by representatives of the Northborough School Department, given the current funding streams and projected enrollments, the District can meet current demands and anticipated future needs.

## Public Works

The Department of Public Works is staffed by 19 full-time employees plus seven part-time seasonal employees across six divisions responsible for the maintenance of Northborough's infrastructure and public facilities. The divisions within the Department, along with their associated staff, include:

- **Administration:** Public Works Director, Assistant Director, and two Administrative Assistants
- **Highway:** Highway Superintendent, Mechanic, two Highway Supervisors, six Heavy Equipment Operators, and one Light Equipment Operator
- **Parks:** (Maintained by the Highway Division)
- **Cemetery:** (Maintained by the Highway Division)
- **Water:** Water/Sewer Supervisor



- **Sewer:** Three Water/Sewer Operators

The Department of Public Works maintains the following fleet vehicles and equipment:

- Street sweepers
- Skid steer
- Stump grinder
- Loader
- Wing mower
- Backhoes
- Excavators
- Utility tractor
- Variety of trailers
- Pipe jetter
- One-ton dump truck with plow and hot box
- One-ton dump trucks with plows
- Brush chipper with chip truck
- One-ton pick-up trucks with plows
- 40,000-lbs. gross vehicle weight dump trucks with spreaders and plows
- Valve turner
- Sidewalk plows
- Roadside tractor

The Administration Division is responsible for providing continuous coordination to all other divisions within the Department to ensure that all the functions of the Department are carried out completely and efficiently. The Public Works Director is also the Tree Warden. The offices of the Department of Public Works are located in the Town Hall at 63 Main Street.

The Highway Division is responsible for all repairs, street openings, new construction of public ways, sidewalk construction and repair, drainage, snow removal, and other matters having to do with the proper maintenance and development of the Town's road system. The Parks Division maintains and develops public playgrounds and parks; these employees generally fall within the Highway Department. The public burial grounds of the Town are maintained and operated by the Cemetery Division – whose employees also fall within the Highway Division. The Town's Highway Garage is located at 190 Main Street

The Water and Sewer Divisions are operated as enterprise funds allowing the cost of services to be recovered through user service fees. Approximately 80 percent of the Town receives water from the public water supply system. The Groundwater Advisory Committee, made up of five members, aims to protect, preserve, and maintain the existing and potential groundwater supply and groundwater recharge areas. The Town's Water/Sewer Garage is located at 200 School Street.

Northborough's drinking water supply, purchased from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), comes from the Quabbin Reservoir (65 miles west of the City of Boston) and the Wachusett Reservoir (35 miles west of the City of Boston). The Town has four municipal water supply wells that are all off-line and for emergency use only. The Northborough Water Division distributes the water and manages approximately 63 miles of distribution pipeline, 575 hydrants, and about 4,168 accounts as of calendar year 2016. Routine maintenance includes flushing portions of the system and performing annual leak detection. The Town recently conducted a Town-wide initiative to replace all water meters to enhance meter reading productivity.

Northborough's sewage and wastewater collection system consists of 30 miles of pipe and nine pump stations that service approximately 30 percent of the Town's population. The pump stations discharge to the Westerly Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Town of Marlborough, which has a permit capacity of 2.9 million gallons per day (mgpd). In 1970, the Town of Northborough entered into the first of two twenty-year agreements with Marlborough for 800,000 gpd. While Northborough's sewer network has grown since the first agreement, the Town's capacity at the Marlborough Westerly Plant has not changed. To service the entire Town of Northborough, the Town would need 1.5 million gallons of sewer capacity per day, which is 700,000 gallons more than they are permitted. Accordingly, the Town's wastewater treatment capacity needs to increase to serve the community's needs and to support economic growth.

The Town holds and complies with a Municipal Separate Stormwater Systems (MS4) General Permit that regulates water pollution by stormwater runoff. A public storm drain network including approximately 1,453 catch basins. Stormwater catch basins are cleaned on an annual basis. In addition to maintaining compliance, the Town strives to provide public education on stormwater pollution and proper handling of hazardous materials.

The Town hires a third-party vendor for curbside trash (or municipal solid waste) pick-up and recycling services, which are offered to residents only. Residents must participate in the Pay-As-You-Throw trash program to receive recycling collection. This program requires residents to pay for trash bags, thereby providing an incentive to recycle more. Trash is picked up weekly, while recycling is provided on a bi-weekly basis. Once a year, the Town holds a "Take It or Leave It Day" in the Spring at the Highway Garage for residents to dispose of household goods, cardboard, metal, hard plastics, and Styrofoam for recycling. In the Fall, the Town hosts a Hazardous Waste Day and accepts drop-offs for a nominal fee. Yard waste is accepted at the Highway Garage for no fee. Since the Pay-As-You-Throw program began in January 2003, trash tonnage has fallen from about 4,600 tons per year to a steadier 2,000 tons since the middle of 2015.

The primary needs of the Department as identified by the Public Works Director are:

- The implementation of the first year of physical improvements associated with the sanitary sewer inflow and infiltration elimination program (FY2018 budget);
- Improvements to the sanitary sewer pump stations (FY2018 budget);
- The renovation and expansion of the Highway Garage (FY2018 budget);
- The Water/Sewer Garage Addition Study/Design (FY2018 budget);
- The expansion of wastewater treatment capacity to support future growth and development; and
- A need to meet current and anticipated demands at the Cemetery (the Town will reach capacity in 25 years – 1,500 plots remain).

To guide its ongoing activities and services, the Department of Public Works has a six-year capital plan that is updated every year, a Water and Sewer System Master Plan, a Pavement Management Plan, a Guardrail and Culvert Inventory and Assessment, and an Equipment Fleet Maintenance Plan.

## Department of Health

The Northborough Health Department develops and implements programs to protect citizens from infectious diseases and environmental health hazards. Like other parts of Massachusetts, there is some substance abuse/opioid issues, underage drinking, and vaping. Of particular concern is the demand for mental health professionals and programs, which currently outweighs available resources. Students at all four local elementary schools, the middle school, and the regional high school have shown high levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and self-destructive behaviors. There is a program in place to help students transition back to a school environment after psychiatric hospitalization, but there is a backlog of patients waiting to speak with mental health clinicians. A strong sense of community supported by the Town's schools, Town Departments, clergy, and volunteer community organizations has been integral to helping Northborough through these and other troubling issues.

## Sustainability/Resiliency

Northborough was awarded Green Community designation in December 2018 under the State's Green Community Designation and Grant Program. Program participants pledge to establish renewable energy development standards and expedited application and permitting procedures, establish an energy use baseline for municipal buildings and facilities and cut associated energy use through the adoption and implementation of an Energy Reduction Plan, purchase fuel-efficient vehicles, and adopt stricter energy consumption codes for buildings (i.e., the Massachusetts' Board of Building Regulations and Standards Stretch Code [780 CMR 115.AA]). Through designation, the Town is eligible for nearly \$150,000 in grant funding to reduce its energy consumption and associated emissions.

Other sustainability accomplishments of the Town include:

- The provision of informational material on energy and water conservation to residents encouraging them to make smarter, more sustainable consumption choices;
- Municipal energy efficiency projects such as the phased retrofitting of light fixtures at the Police Department with LEDs and the replacement of the boiler at the Zeh School with a more efficient model;
- The new addition to the Lincoln Street School which emphasized low-emitting materials, energy efficiency, water efficiency, pedestrian/bike/human powered transportation, stormwater management, and recycling in its design;
- The installation of a geothermal system that heats and cools the Senior Center; and
- The institution of policy that encourages the municipality to use and purchase recycled and environmentally preferable products and services.

## Resiliency

From 2017 to 2018, a select group Town staff were engaged in an update to the Town's hazard mitigation plan. The most significant hazards identified during this planning process were flooding, severe snowstorms/ice storms/Nor'easters, hurricanes, and severe thunderstorms/wind/tornadoes. The *Hazard Mitigation Plan Update* also identified how

changing climate conditions will impact these hazards. Consistent with State projections, Northborough expects precipitation to increase 6 to 14 percent by mid-century with an increased frequency of flooding. Snowfall will gradually be reduced as temperatures rise. Hurricanes may become more frequent and associated flooding is expected to increase by mid-century. The increase in temperatures is also expected to continue to spur more severe weather including thunderstorms and damaging wind. The *Hazard Mitigation Plan Update* provides a range of mitigation actions to address infrastructure, preparedness actions, education, and local planning activities.

In support of the Town's efforts to guard against natural disasters, specifically those affiliated with climate change, the Town was awarded a planning grant in April 2019 through the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program. This grant will go toward the completion of a community-based workshop process that will identify key climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities, and strengths, as well as develop and prioritize adaptation actions/projects. Once this planning phase is complete, the Town will be eligible for action grant funding to implement priority on-the-ground projects.

## Public Facilities & Services Goals

G1

**Develop plans to improve key public facilities and infrastructure to support the Town's operations and to meet the community's current and future needs.**

G2

**Ensure Town departments have the capital assets and staffing necessary to meet the needs of the community today and tomorrow.**

G3

**Incorporate sustainable development and renewable energy into municipal buildings and amenities.**

G4

**Continue to support an excellent educational system.**

## Public Facilities & Services Recommendations

**Goal 1: Develop plans to improve key public facilities and infrastructure to support the Town's operations and to meet the community's current and future needs.**

**PFS1-1** Identify the need and potential grants for expanding water/sewer infrastructure.

**PFS1-2** Gauge the quality of municipal services and identify opportunities for improvement.

**PFS1-3** Participate in the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to begin the process of improving the Town's key infrastructure for climate change resiliency.

**PFS1-4** Include future growth projections into updates of existing Town plans.

**Goal 1: Develop plans to improve key public facilities and infrastructure to support the Town's operations and to meet the community's current and future needs. (Continued)**

- PFS1-5** Develop specific plans to reuse, repurpose, or share space at municipal buildings.
- PFS1-6** Continue to improve the timeliness of content and ease of use of the Town's website, and expand access to information by including modernized social media platforms.

**Goal 2: Ensure Town departments have the capital assets and staffing necessary to meet the needs of the community today and tomorrow.**

- PFS2-1** Maintain and publicize emergency response plans to prepare the Town and its residents for a range of disasters, man-made and natural.
- PFS2-2** Consider modernizing the Town-wide communication network over time, as needed.
- PFS2-3** Periodically reevaluate staffing and facilities to ensure adequate levels to support the Town's administration and services.

**Goal 3: Incorporate sustainable development and renewable energy into municipal buildings and amenities.**

- PFS3-1** Leverage the Town's Green Community Designation to obtain financial and technical support from the State to perform additional energy-related initiatives and consider the creation of a sustainability committee.
- PFS3-2** Install solar photovoltaic panels at municipal facilities, where and when possible. Update the solar feasibility study for the Town's school buildings.
- PFS3-3** Inventory the Town's greenhouse gas emissions to identify and quantify the sources of such emissions and to begin the process of reducing them.

**Goal 4: Continue to support an excellent educational system.**

- PFS4-1** In conjunction with the School Department, and in line with other Public Facilities and Services and Housing goals, compile and analyze enrollment projections from the New England School Development Council, U.S. Census data, other sources, etc.
- PFS4-2** Conduct a feasibility study of usage and grade span configuration to identify an educational model that supports teaching and learning and aligns with projected enrollments and strategic planning goals for the schools and Town.
- PFS4-3** Continue to support effective and positive collaboration between the School Department and Town to identify future needs, plan for and fund projects related to the school district's capital improvement plan, strategic plan, and operating budget.
- PFS4-4** In conjunction with PFS3-2, continue to explore the feasibility of incorporating energy conservation and efficiencies at school buildings and sites.
- PFS4-5** Continue to lobby the State for adequate funding from the Special Education Circuit Breaker and regional school transportation funding programs.