

## Insights in Dedham Today for Community Facilities and Services

A community facility is any town-owned asset that has been developed for a public purpose and provides community services, such as school facilities and also includes non-building facilities such as parks, playgrounds, and cemeteries. Well-designed and well-maintained facilities contribute to Dedham's quality of life and contribute to the attractiveness of the town as a place to live and do business.

Community services include municipal services and utilities such as public safety, public health, housing, recreation, public water, sewer, or municipal light service, and partner organization and contracted services such as solid waste and recycling or street maintenance. Dedham's ability to provide adequate facilities and services depends on effective capital planning, a commitment to implementation, sound asset management policies, and availability of revenue for local government operations.

### CFS1 Maintaining and managing town-owned facilities

Each of the town's public facilities must be maintained on a regular basis to protect the public's investment in them and provide dependable and equitable service delivery to all residents, including those in future generations. The town has a facilities manager that is responsible for overseeing the maintenance of all town and school properties. The hiring of a facilities manager was an outcome of the previous town master plan. The town facilities include new and recently renovated buildings. However, the majority of facilities have not been recently renovated, such as the Dunn Public Works Facility built in the 1960s or the Dolan Recreation Center built in 1989. All facilities, particularly aging

assets, require regular renewal and investment to avoid a backlog of deferred maintenance and facilities issues. Facility improvements and investments should be consistent with the sustainability and resilience goals and actions identified in the town's Climate Action Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan.

### CFS2 Public education and schools

Dedham prides itself on investing considerable resources in its public education system. The town operates its own school system, with approximately 2,556 students enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year. According to the most recent data available from the Massachusetts Department of Education, Dedham spent an average of \$20,291 per student in fiscal year 2018. The Dedham Public School District (DPS) includes seven school facilities. With the exception of the new ECEC, Dedham Middle School and Avery Elementary School, all Dedham Public School buildings are more than half a century old and have not undergone major renovations or reconstruction in the past 30 years. Dedham Public Schools are currently in the process of updating the Long Term Facilities Master Plan and identifying the best next steps in the improvement, renovation, or replacement of school facilities in Dedham.

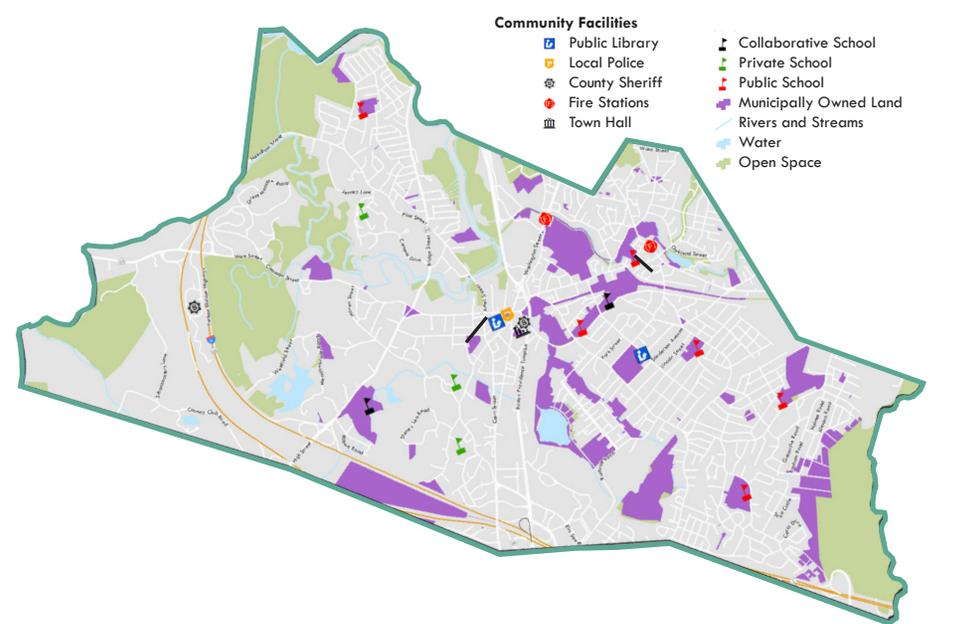
### CFS3 Capital improvement plan

The Town maintains a Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to guide improvements to the Town's buildings, equipment, infrastructure, and vehicle replacement. All departmental capital funding requests are annually submitted to the Finance and Warrant Committee for review ahead of Town Meeting. In the Fall of 2016, the town completed a Facility Condition Assessment for

all school and town owned buildings and developed a Preventive Maintenance program that could be integrated into the town's work order system. The assessment identified \$10,228,775 in deficiency repairs that need to be addressed over the next 20 years. The town incorporates these recommendations for repairs into the CIP based on needs that have risen to the highest priority during the past year.

### CFS4 Recent facility investments

Over the past decade, the Town of Dedham has made significant investments in its public facilities and infrastructure, including renovations to the Ames Building, construction of the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), and most recently, the groundbreaking of a new consolidated public safety building. During the Summer 2020 Town Meeting, the Facilities Department was approved to move forward with \$1,283,000 for the following four capital projects during FY21 - replacement of the pool HVAC, replacement of the Dolan Center roof, the DPW generator receiver and feeders, and the DPW fire alarm system. The town has a AAA Bond Rating and a special fund for capital improvements, known as the Robin Reyes Special Purpose Stabilization Fund. Some master plan survey participants expressed that a new high school and a multi-generational community center would be great new additions to the town's current assets.



## Draft Goals and Strategies Community Facilities and Services

### CFS1 Goal 1: Improve capital planning and investment processes to anticipate future funding and financing needs and communicate transparently to residents

Benchmarks and priorities that can be established in advance and agreed upon would be useful in guiding capital investments and asset management anticipating that funds will need to be allocated amongst competing projects in a fair, equitable, and transparent manner.

**Strategy 1.1:** Define benchmarks/level of service standards for town facilities, services, and infrastructure based on comparable communities

**Strategy 1.2:** Develop, adopt, and use a priority setting framework to guide capital investment and asset management

**Strategy 1.3:** Create a capital improvement plan with a process for sustainably funding future projects to avoid overrides and piecemeal planning

**Strategy 1.4:** Improve community awareness of key revenue and budget issues

**Strategy 1.5:** Implement the goals and recommendations outlined in the 2020 Dedham Public Schools Master Plan

**Strategy 1.6:** Prioritize capital improvements consistent with the other goals within this section and the master plan more generally

**Strategy 1.7:** Identify private parcels in strategic locations relative to the provision of town facilities and services and a process to consider acquisition options if identified properties become available

### CFS2 Goal 2: Improve the transparency of town asset management decisions with clear policies to guide maintenance, upgrades, and disposition processes and decisions

Service needs and demand for municipal buildings change over time, often leaving municipalities with obsolete or unused properties in their assets inventory. These properties can present maintenance challenges, opportunities for upgrades or changes of use, or opportunities to raise funds for other capital improvements to meet a determined public benefit through a disposition process. Dedham should establish policies to guide the identification and disposition of surplus municipal property, land or buildings, including tax-title properties.

**Strategy 2.1:** Develop asset management policies

**Strategy 2.2:** Incorporate community values and goals in decisions on location, design, and operation of facilities

**Strategy 2.3:** Build the capacity of underrepresented citizens, including communities of color, and provide resources to increase their involvement in decision making and town processes

**Strategy 2.4:** Provide proactive communication and transparency about town policies, processes, and plans

**Strategy 2.5:** Improve equitable access to town resources and meetings through proactive and transparent communications, easy-to-access information, and materials translated in most commonly spoken languages

### CFS3 Goal 3: Strengthen Dedham public facilities, infrastructure, and assets to better respond to future needs and risks using best available data to advance sustainability, resilience, innovation, livability, and equity

The Town should ensure that capital improvements (such as municipal buildings, transportation, stormwater systems, park improvements, etc.) incorporate design standards that support the environment, reduce energy use, mitigate climate change impacts, and strengthen resiliency consistent with the goals and actions identified in the Climate Action Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan. Additionally, capital improvements should prioritize improving livability and equity for residents.

**Strategy 3.1:** Use a data driven approach to identify and better understand disparities between Dedham's diverse population and assess the equity impacts of public programs and projects

**Strategy 3.2:** Consider maintenance, replacement, rehabilitation or reuse of existing facilities to meet community needs before planning for major investments in new facilities

**Strategy 3.3:** Prioritize infrastructure and capital improvements that support the goals of the Town's recently completed Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, including strategies to reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions, increase municipal renewable resources, ensure new construction meets net zero energy building standards, and convert Dedham's vehicle fleet to electric or hybrid, where possible

**Strategy 3.4:** Design new public facilities that are oriented towards and accessible by transit and non-motorized modes of travel and improve connections to existing public facilities

**Strategy 3.5:** Ensure that municipal facilities and public spaces enhance Dedham's historic character and provide cultural enrichment

### CFS4 Goal 4: Proactively assess funding needs and dedicate staff to pursue external funding, grants, and resources

Dedham's public facilities needs do not have to be supported solely by the town budget. Where possible, the Town should identify and seek alternative funding strategies for capital improvements. External funding and financing sources, namely grants and low interest loans, are available to fund a variety of facilities needs, although they may be competitive and require

time and effort to pursue. Currently, Dedham is at a disadvantage competing for particular public funds since it does not participate in the Community Protection Act. Changes to town policies that would optimize the ability to pursue external funds should be prioritized.

**Strategy 4.1:** Explore new and long-term funding tools to enable increased investments in capital improvement projects and services

**Strategy 4.2:** Encourage public-private partnerships to finance infrastructure and public facilities which fulfill mutual interests of the public and private sectors

**Strategy 4.3:** Hire a full-time or shared grants administrator that could serve Dedham and neighboring municipalities on a part-time basis

**Strategy 4.4:** Explore joint-use partnerships with private entities to pay for some or all of the costs of capital improvements or new facilities that provide a public benefit and/or support a specific town or community function

### CFS5 Goal 5: Expand town services to advance equity and invest in resources and programs that support residents and their families and strengthen the relationships between residents

The town should ensure that all residents have the access, support, and ability to participate in the full range of town services provided, and regularly review the services provided to adapt to the evolving needs of

the community. Procedures for this type of assessment should be established. Currently, among the services provided in the town and surrounding area, social services for families in need appear to be lacking. New town services or facilities such as teen programming or a youth center could help address such a service need.

**Strategy 5.1:** Strengthen trust and communication between the town services and the community by providing diverse and inclusive opportunities for all residents to participate in planning and town government

**Strategy 5.2:** Encourage businesses to work with local workforce training and education organizations to connect Dedham residents and workers to high quality jobs at a range of skill levels

**Strategy 5.3:** Increase coordination and resource sharing between organizations and service providers with a focus on ensuring that all children and families who could benefit from social, emotional, and academic enrichment are aware of resources and programs offered in Dedham

**Strategy 5.4:** Explore the potential for partnerships with neighboring municipalities to expand town services or to explore the regionalization of services or resources that could be efficiently shared