

8. Public Services and Facilities

Introduction

The public services and facilities element of a master plan should serve as a guide for decision-making about the public buildings, infrastructure, utilities and services provided by a local government. The adequacy of municipal and school facilities—which affects the ability of municipal employees to serve the community—is largely determined by three factors:

- ▶ The form, size and organization of the community’s local government;
- ▶ The community’s land use patterns, demographics and infrastructure; and
- ▶ The expectations of residents and businesses for types and levels of services, and the ability of the Town to meet those expectations.

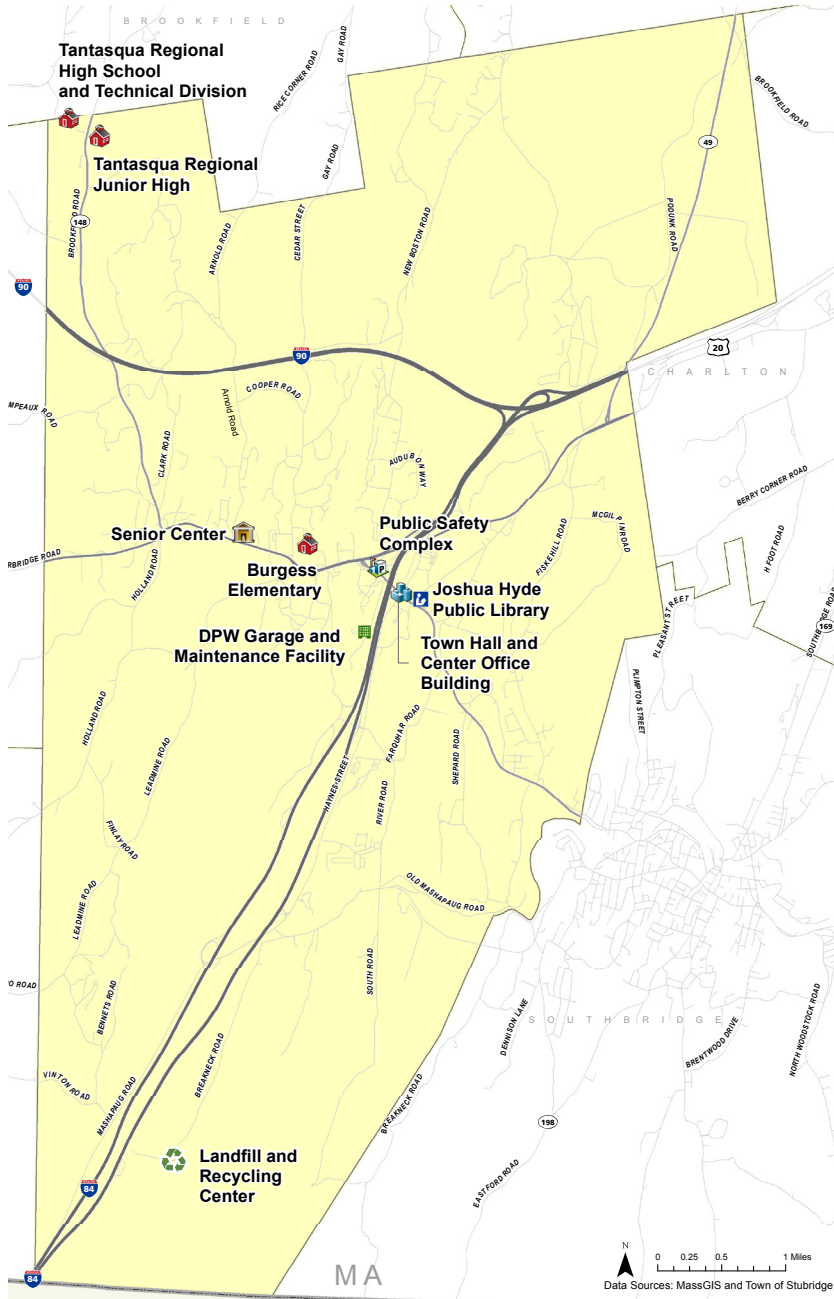
A Town’s ability to provide adequate services to the community requires both short- and long-term planning. Effective capital planning and asset management policies are often challenged by limited revenue for government operations, which can put long-term investment at risk. Prioritizing and setting goals for short- and long-term investment needs can help a Town ensure that it meets the community’s expectations for municipal services.

This chapter will include an analysis of the adequacy of the following public services and facilities in Sturbridge. The services and facilities listed below are among the key issues that were identified by Town officials and residents through interviews, a survey, a public meeting and input from the Public Services and Facilities Focus Group. (Figure 8.1 shows some of the major public facilities in town.)

- ▶ Government administration/Town Hall
- ▶ Public safety
- ▶ Public works
- ▶ Water, wastewater, and roads
- ▶ Solid waste and recycling
- ▶ Board of Health
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Library
- ▶ Senior services
- ▶ Parks and recreation

A municipal facility is any municipal property that has been improved for public purposes, such as a town hall, park, library, fire station or school. It also includes municipal utilities such as water or sewer service.

Figure 8.1 Major Municipal Facilities



This chapter incorporates information from past Town studies, including the American with Disabilities Act Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (ADA study) that was done in 2008.¹ Completed by the Center for Working and Living in Worcester, the ADA study identified barriers to accessibility in all town buildings. It also included cost estimates for improvements or upgrades needed to make each building accessible.

In addition, the Town's FY 2010–2015 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has been reviewed for this chapter. Many of the capital needs cited by Sturbridge department heads—though not necessarily all of them—can be found in the CIP, which was recommended by the Capital Planning Committee (CPC).

The CPC uses a 10-factor rating system to rate capital requests. Each factor is rated on a 0–10 scale, meaning each request can receive a rating of up to 100. The factors include: public safety and health, infrastructure needs, quantity of use, efficiency of services, legal requirements, public support, personnel impact, service impacts, budgetary constraints and administrative needs. The requested items are divided into three categories in the CIP: those funded as part of the Town Meeting warrant, those funded as part of department budgets, and those funded by a debt issuance.²

Public Services and Facilities Goals

- ▶ Establish efficiency and cost-effectiveness as a guiding principle for delivery of public services.
- ▶ Ensure that the Town can meet its infrastructure and service needs as growth and demand increases.
- ▶ Given the often conflicting demands, establish priorities for building and facility upgrades and replacement.
- ▶ Work to ensure that municipal staffing levels are adequate as the Town grows and service demands increase.
- ▶ Lead by example in municipal facilities and operations, fostering partnerships, communication, and sustainability principles through its investments and initiatives.

Municipal Services

The Town of Sturbridge provides municipal services that are fairly typical of many cities and towns across the Commonwealth. Specifically, the Town provides many services that are not required by law, including recreation programs, a senior center, a public library and solid waste disposal services. Table 8.1 shows the municipal services in Sturbridge.

1 2008 Annual Town Report

2 Capital Improvement Plan FY 10–15,
http://www.town.sturbridge.ma.us/Public_Documents/sturbridgema_reports/102341393.0/FY10%20Capital%20Plan%20Final.pdf

Table 8.1 Sturbridge's Municipal Services

Administration and Finance	Public Safety	Public Works
Town Administrator	Police Department	Public Works
Board of Selectmen	Fire Department	• Wastewater
Finance	Inspectional Services	• Water
Town Assessor	Board of Health	• Highway
Town Clerk	Human Services	• Town Recycling Center & Landfill
Town Accountant	Council on Aging	Tree Warden
Land Use	Veterans Agent	Culture and Recreation
Planning	Health Agent	Recreation
Conservation	Education	Library
Zoning Board of Appeals	Regional School District	Trails Committee
Open Space Committee		
Community Preservation Committee		
Design Review Committee		
Historical Commission		
Economic Development Committee		
Housing Partnership		

Source: Town of Sturbridge website and 2009 Annual Town Report.

Public Schools

Sturbridge is a part of the Tantasqua Regional/School Union 61 Districts, which also includes the nearby towns of Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland and Wales.³ Each of the towns has an elementary school for pre-kindergarten through grade 6. Burgess Elementary School, the largest of the five elementary schools, is in Sturbridge. Starting in grade 7, the towns send their students to regional schools. Specifically, students attend Tantasqua Regional Junior High for grades 7 and 8 and Tantasqua Regional High School for grades 9 through 12. Both regional schools are located in Fiskdale, which is located in the northwestern corner of Sturbridge. The regional school district also offers a career and technical education through the high school technical division.

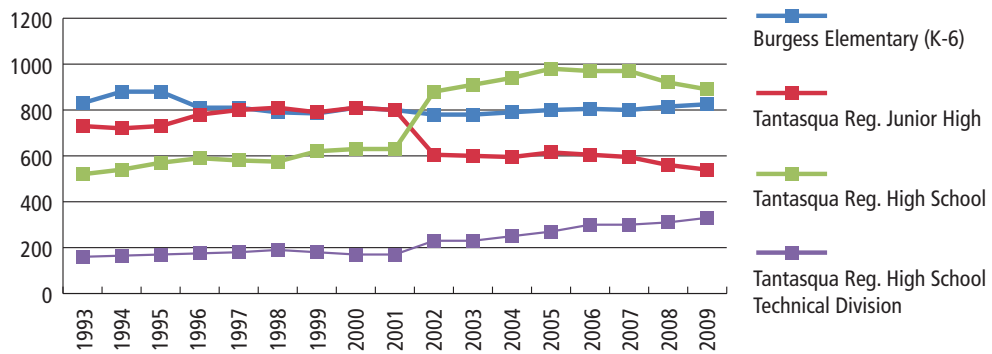
Sturbridge officials, residents and other stakeholders point to the public schools as a major strength of the community. The schools have been—and continue to be—a focus of capital investment in the area. For example, a new regional high school opened in 2002, and the Burgess Elementary School is undergoing a renovation project, which will be described in more detail below.

³ Tantasqua and Union 61 website, <http://www.tantasqua.org/>

School Enrollment

At Burgess Elementary, K-6 enrollment declined in the mid- to late-1990s, hitting a low of 756 students in 1999 as shown in Figure 8.2. Since about 2000, the student population at Burgess has moderately climbed, reaching 833 students in the most recent 2009–2010 school year. (These enrollment numbers do not include part-time preschool students. There were 87 preschool students in 2009–2010.) Enrollment for grades K-6 is expected to stay stable in the near future.

Figure 8.2 School Enrollment 1993–2009



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

At the regional level, enrollment at Tantasqua Regional Junior High increased through the 1990s, which is in line with the growth in the 5 to 17-year-old population between 1990 and 2000. Enrollment then fell by 25 percent in 2002 when grade nine moved to the new regional high school. (This large drop in enrollment is shown in Figure 8.2.) Since then, the junior high school has continued to see its student population largely decline. That decline has been approximately 11 percent between 2002 and 2009. During the 2009–2010 school year, 538 students attended the junior high. That included approximately 240 students from Sturbridge, as shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Student Enrollment

School	2008	2009	2010**
Burgess Elementary (K-6)	824	833	827
Tantasqua Regional Junior High	554	538	NA
Sturbridge students*	268	240	NA
Tantasqua Regional High School	930	896	843
Sturbridge students	432	421	405***
Tantasqua Regional High School Technical Division	315	348	367
Sturbridge students	83	92	NA

Source: Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 annual reports, principals of Burgess Elementary and the Regional High School
 *Sturbridge enrollments are as of October of 2008 and 2009.
 **Projected enrollments as of July 16, 2010.
 ***Based on projection that approximately 48% will come from Sturbridge.

Like the junior high, Tantasqua Regional High School (excluding the Technical Division that will be discussed later) saw its enrollment steadily increase in the 1990s. In 2002, enrollment jumped 32 percent—661 students to 873 students—with the addition of grade 9. While enrollment continued to increase for a few more years thereafter, it has fallen in the last several years. There were 896 students in the 2009–2010 school year. That included approximately 421 students from Sturbridge. Over the next 10 years, student projections show a small but steady decline in enrollment at both the regional high school and junior high school.

In addition to Tantasqua Regional High School, Sturbridge’s high school-age children have the opportunity to participate in the Technical Division program at the high school. The program, which is fully integrated with the academic program, offers vocational training in computer technology, carpentry, computer-aided design/drafting, culinary arts, manufacturing, electrical technology and applied health.⁴ Students must apply to the program. Over the last 15 or more years, student enrollment at the Technical Division has gradually increased, growing from 153 students in 1993 to 348 in 2009 as shown in Figure 8.2. That is a 127 percent increase over 16 years. Projected enrollment for the 2010–2011 school year is 367 students.

School Staffing

Table 8.3 shows the number of teachers as well as the teacher-student ratio at the public schools for the 2009–2010 school year. It indicates that all of the schools except the Technical Division at the Regional High School had lower teacher-student ratios than the statewide average. While the Technical Division’s overall ratio appears high, the administrative assistant there has stated that the junior and senior level classes have ratios closer to 15 to 1. In addition, the Regional High School Principal does not expect to need any additional staff in the next decade.

The same is true for Burgess Elementary, according to the school’s Principal. Currently, there are 85 professional staff and 40 support staff at the elementary school, and the average classroom size is 19 to 20 students.

Table 8.3 School Staffing (2009–2010)

	Number of Teachers	Student/Teacher Ratio
Burgess Elementary	69	13.3 to 1
Tantasqua Regional Junior High	50	10.7 to 1
Tantasqua Regional High School	80	11.3 to 1
Tantasqua Regional High School Technical Division	16	22.5 to 1
Regional District (excluding elementary schools)	145	12.3 to 1
State	69,909	13.7 to 1

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
*Number of teachers has been rounded.

School Facilities

Both the Tantasqua Junior and Senior High School facilities are in good condition.⁵ The junior high school opened in 1975, and the new high school building was dedicated in 2002.⁶ There is a detailed maintenance and capital plan for the schools that address their current and future needs. In addition, the Regional High School Principal does not anticipate having any additional space needs in the next 10 years.

The Town of Sturbridge is in the process of constructing a renovation and addition to the 1972 Burgess Elementary School building. The \$34 million project broke ground in September 2010 and will be completed in the spring of 2013.⁷ The building improvements will allow the elementary school to move to full-day kindergarten. The project will also include sustainable building practices aimed at increasing its energy and water efficiency and improving its environmental performance under the Massachusetts Collaborative for High Performance Schools Criteria (MA – CHPS).⁸ For example, rainwater will be collected for the flushing of toilets, reducing interior water use.

The Tantasqua Regional School District is planning to install photovoltaics on the rooftops of its two regional schools.⁹ It is expected to be the largest photovoltaic array of any school district in the state. An independent company would buy and install the solar cells, with the produced electricity then being sold to the school district at a discounted rate. In general, the school district follows an energy management plan that is helping reduce energy costs.

Public Safety

Public safety and security services are among the most fundamental services provided by a municipality. These include police, fire and ambulance services. Like many municipalities in the Commonwealth, the Town of Sturbridge maintains its own Police and Fire departments. The two departments share a complex at 346 Main Street on the east side of Interstate 84.

Police¹⁰

The Police Department provides police protection services, is responsible for emergency management functions, and maintains a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week emergency police and fire dispatch center. It also offers a number of other services, including home safety surveys, self defense personal empowerment courses and a student police academy.

The Police Department employs 18 full-time police officers. They include a Chief of Police, two Lieutenants, three Sergeants, and 12 patrolmen. The other permanent staff at the department includes

5 Daniel Durgin, Tantasqua Regional School District Superintendent

6 Tantasqua and Union 61 website, <http://www.tantasqua.org/>

7 Burgess Elementary School Principal Daniel Carlson, Town of Sturbridge, 2009 Annual Town Report

8 Charlie Blanchard, Burgess Elementary School Building Committee, Burgess Elementary School MA-CHPS scorecard

9 Chris Tanguay, "Tantasqua looks to Sun," Southbridge Evening News, June 13, 2010.

10 Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, Town of Sturbridge website, Police Chief Thomas Ford, Police administrative assistant Melissa Rozzen, Massachusetts Crime Reporting Unit www.ucrstats.com, ADA study

four full-time and three part-time civilian dispatchers and one full-time administrative assistant. In addition, there is one part-time animal control officer.

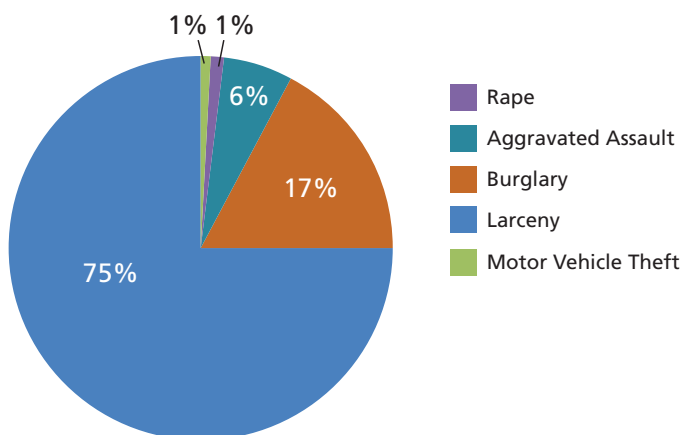
These staffing levels need to be bolstered by three to four new full-time positions now and six additional positions in the next decade, according to the Police Chief. (No additional Police positions have been included in the Fiscal 2011 budget.) The Police Department, working with the school administration, has applied for a federal grant to fund and fill the position of a full-time school resource officer in the schools. Currently, responding to incidents at the schools have been tying up officers on nearly a daily occurrence, taking them away from other duties.

In addition, adding a second dispatcher to two of the Dispatch Center shifts would also help address the issue of increasing call volumes. In 2009, the Police Department received 31,448 calls for service, which is a 2 percent increase over the previous year. Traffic complaints and accidents with property damage were among the major categories of calls received.

There were 139 Part 1 crimes (including violent and property crimes) reported to the Police Department in 2009, which is down from 141 in 2008 and 188 in 2007. Approximately 94 percent of the crimes were property crimes such as larceny and burglary. The remaining 6 percent were violent crimes such as rape and aggravated assault. As shown in Figure 8.3, larceny was the most common Part 1 crime reported in 2009.

In terms of vehicular equipment, the Police Department has nine marked cruisers, one sports utility vehicle, one motorcycle, one jet ski, one utility terrain vehicle, and one unmarked vehicle each for the Chief, Lieutenants and Detective. The oldest vehicle with the most miles is replaced every three years. The cruisers, which are being designed to be fuel efficient, are rotated on a 2-3-2 basis, meaning two in the first year, three in the second year, and two in the following year.

Figure 8.3 2009 Crimes in Sturbridge



Source: Sturbridge Police Department

Fire¹¹

The Fire Department provides the community with fire protection and emergency medical services, with full paramedic service having been added in 2007. Other services include fire prevention activities, inspections and investigation of fire causes. The department employs one Fire Chief/EMT, one full-time and one part time Captain/EMT, eight full-time firefighters/EMTs (four are paramedics), and 15 to 18 part-time on-call firefighters/EMTs. The Fire Chief has indicated a need for three additional full-time personnel in the next 10 years to allow there to be a minimum of three people staffing the station at all times. Currently, the station is staffed by four full-time personnel on weekdays, two full-time personnel on weeknights, and one full or part-time person over the weekend, according to a captain.

Given the staffing levels, the station sometimes goes unstaffed on nights and weekends due to a lack of people available to respond for coverage when the on-duty personnel go out on a call. With the addition of paramedic level services, there has also been an increase in calls for ambulances manned by three people, including a second EMT to assist the paramedic, according to the Fire Chief. In 2009, there were a total of 1,161 ambulance calls (a 10 percent increase over the previous year) and 372 fire or rescue-related calls (a 28 percent decrease).

The Fire Department operates four engines, one ladder truck, one tanker/pumper, one forest fire truck, two ambulances, one utility vehicle and one Fire Department Car, which is used by the Chief. The ambulances are rotated every five years, with the other vehicles being replaced as needed. In 2010, the Fire Department replaced a 1986 engine as well as a tanker/pumper. In the next 10 years, the Fire Chief anticipates needing to replace one engine from 1974, one ladder from 1976 and both ambulances.

Public Safety Complex



Public Safety Complex Cell used for Records Storage

As mentioned above, the Police and Fire departments occupy the same Public Safety Complex. Constructed in 1987, the building has three levels. Dispatch and administrative offices are on the main or ground level, training rooms are on the middle level (below the main level), and the Fire Department is on the lower level (below the middle level). Due to the growth and changes in the Police and Fire departments as well as the community in the last two decades, it is anticipated that the Public Safety Complex will need significant upgrades. This is particularly true given that both the Police and Fire Chiefs project needing to add staff in the next 10 years.

11 Town of Sturbridge website, Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, Fire Chief Leonard Senecal, Captain/Fire Inspector John Marinelli, ADA study

Currently, the Public Safety Complex has a number of space, security and accessibility problems, which have been identified by the Police and Fire chiefs. For example, office space is tight, records storage is inadequate, and parking space is limited. Radio communications systems and area surveillance cameras need to be upgraded as does other technology throughout the complex. There lacks any public or “in custody” interview rooms in the facility, and there is no restroom near the dispatch area. In addition, the Fire Department needs a storage area for its Hazmat supplies and materials, and the Police garage needs to be expanded. Some space needs could be met if an elevator were added to make the attic more useful; it is currently used for storage. Throughout the complex, the HVAC system and outdated lighting also need to be upgraded.



Police Dispatch Center

Additionally, the Town’s ADA study identified a host of improvements that were needed to make the facility fully accessible. Totalling more than \$115,000 in estimated costs, those improvements included lowering the front desk counter, creating an accessible route of travel (such as an internal lift) between the main and mid-floor levels, and making the toilet/sink fixtures in the cells compliant.

Public Works

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for the administration and operations of the Highway, Landfill, Water and Wastewater departments and the Tree Warden.¹² Other responsibilities include maintenance duties related to the Town cemeteries and the Recreation Department. The Department currently has 11 full-time employees.¹³ There could be a need for more employees if new fields are built and additional roads are accepted by the Town. In recent years, requests have been made to provide for a third crew to assist in these efforts.

The DPW’s Garage and Maintenance Facility is located on New Boston Road Extension. Constructed in 1970, the facility houses the DPW’s equipment, supplies and vehicles. As the DPW has grown, however, its need for more space has become pressing. The DPW Director has indicated that the building needs to be expanded in the next five years.

Many needed upgrades to the facility have also been identified.¹⁴ Office and meeting space is inadequate, the roof needs repair or replacement, and a backup generator and second sweeper are needed. In addition, equipment and other supplies need to be replaced such as the equipment lift, underground

¹² Town of Sturbridge 2009 Annual Town Report

¹³ DPW Director Greg Morse

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Zoning Board of Appeals member Maryann Thorpe and Detective Mark Saloio, ADA study

oil and gas storage tanks, and the lighting system. A new facility to store town buses and an overhead material handling system should also be considered. In terms of ADA compliance, the facility only requires minor improvements as most of the areas are not for public use.

*Water*¹⁵

The Town of Sturbridge provides public water service to most of the suburban residential, commercial and industrial zones. Approximately 51 percent of the public water used is in residential areas. In total, the public water system serves 1,696 customers (water service connections) or roughly 4,616 people. The number of service connections has increased from 1,554 customers in 2008 to 1,654 customers in 2009. Figure 8.4 shows the location of public water mains, water tanks, wells and hydrants.

The Town contracts out its water operations to Veolia Water, which staffs the Sturbridge Water Treatment Plant and is responsible for maintenance of all Water Department facilities, equipment and distribution system. The treatment plant has an average daily flow capacity of 1.6 million gallons and a storage capacity of 2.3 million gallons.

In 2009, the plant treated and supplied an average of 683,000 gallons of water daily, which totaled more than 292 million gallons from three active wells. (There is an additional reserve well that is inactive.) That was less water than was supplied the previous year; in 2008, an average of 720,000 gallons of water was supplied daily. This decrease in 2009 was due in part to the large amount of rain that fell that year.

The Town is in the process of constructing a new well, Well #4 off of Shattuck Road. The project was awarded to Waterline Industries Corp. in December 2009. The new well is expected to come online in 2011.

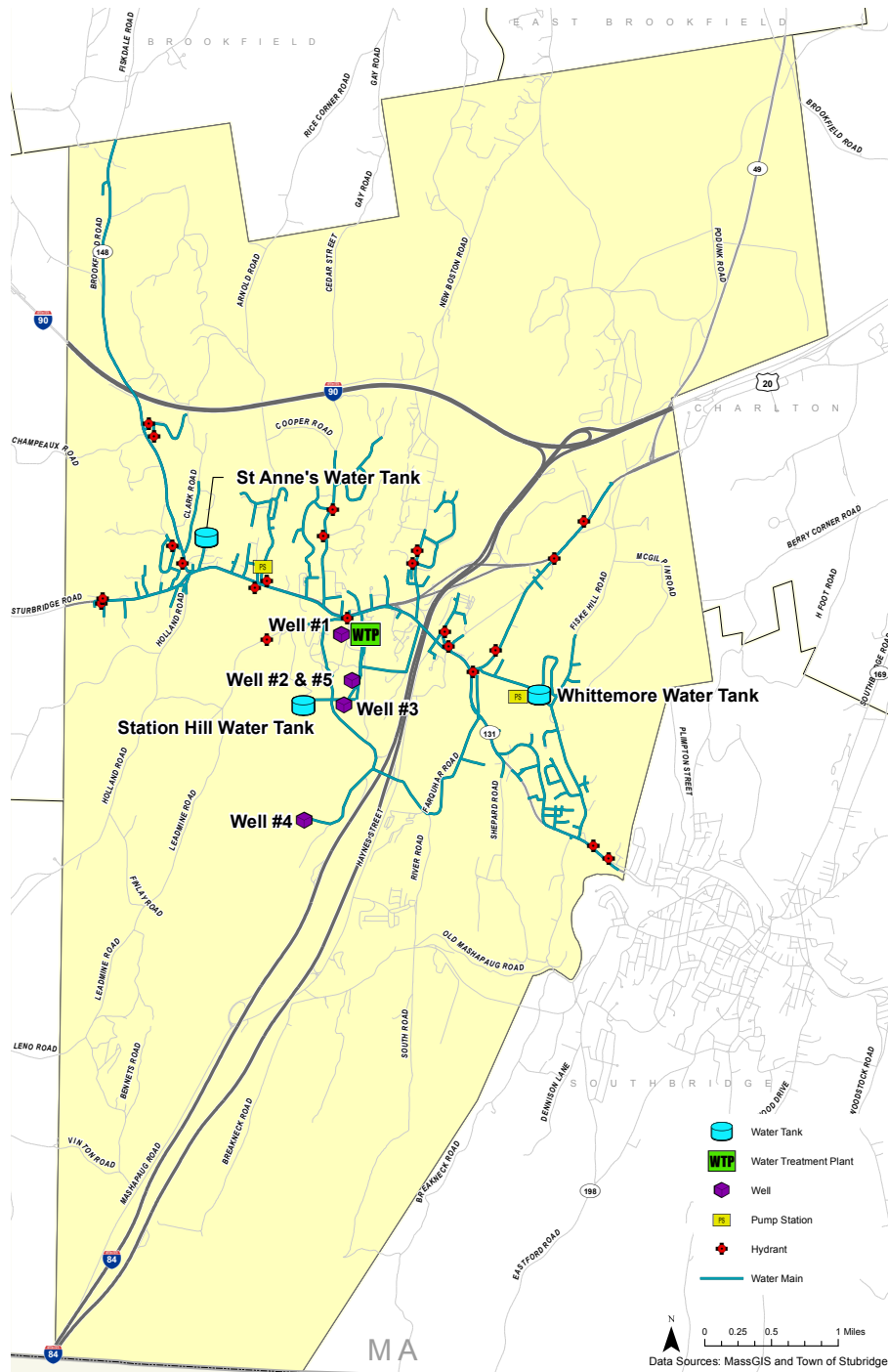
Of the other wells, Well #3 and #5 are in good shape, but Well #1 on WaterWorks Drive has been found to be under the influence of surface water due to its proximity to the stream from Cedar Pond. There has been a pilot study of that well, which is active but under consent order.

The DPW director has indicated that the water booster site on Whittemore Road needs to be overhauled in the next two years. The hydropneumatic tank and booster pump are outdated and need to be replaced. The three storage tanks in town, on the other hand, are in relatively good shape. Only one tank needs its interior repainted in the next five years.

Elsewhere in town, there has not been a lot of demand for the expansion of public water, largely due to areas being sparsely populated, according to the DPW director. At this time, there is no comprehensive study underway that addresses long-term water supply needs.

¹⁵ Town of Sturbridge website, Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, Veolia Water Project Manager Shane Moody, DPW Director Greg Morse, Sturbridge Water Department's 2009 Public Water Supply Verification

Figure 8.4 Sturbridge Water System



Wastewater¹⁶

Most commercial, industrial and suburban residential zones in Sturbridge and around Big Alum and Cedar lakes are on the Town's public sewer system. The system serves 2,022 customers (sewer connections), which is an increase of 155 customers since 2008. Roughly 45 percent of households in town are on public sewer. Figure 8.5 shows the location of public sewer mains in Sturbridge.

A private contractor, Veolia Water Northeast LLC, operates the Town's wastewater facilities, including staffing the Sturbridge Water Pollution Control Facility on New Boston Road Extension. That facility can handle an average daily flow of 750,000 gallons of wastewater. In 2009, the facility treated an average of 662,000 gallons a day, which was an 11 percent decrease from the previous year (743,000 gallons a day). The total amount of wastewater treated and discharged into the Quinebaug River was 242 million gallons in 2009 compared to 272 million gallons in 2008. (Periodically, when the Town's wastewater flow exceeds the facility's average daily design flow, a portion of the wastewater is diverted to the Southbridge sewer system along with the gravity sewage flow from the south side of Fiske Hill, and then treated at the Southbridge Wastewater Treatment Facility.¹⁷ This occurs through an Intermunicipal Agreement between the towns of Sturbridge and Southbridge.)

The majority of the wastewater treated at Sturbridge's facility has been from residential or public sources, as shown in Figure 8.6. Wastewater from private septic systems and leachate from the landfill are also treated at the facility.

Sturbridge is upgrading and expanding the wastewater treatment plant following recommendations of a 2008 Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan by Tighe and Bond Engineers. The Management Plan indicated that Sturbridge would need a treatment plant with a capacity of 1.4 million gallon per day in order to meet future flow demands. Town Meeting approved a \$20 million debt issuance for the project in 2008, and the project has since been awarded to R.H. White. The new treatment plant is expected to be completed in 2012. It will utilize new treatment technologies, including "Bio-Mag," which increases the amount of wastewater that can be treated in its tanks, and "Co Mag," which removes phosphorous from wastewater. If completed on time, the new treatment plant is expected to be the first of its kind in North America.

In terms of service, the Town has been debating the expansion of public sewer service along the Route 15 corridor—a two to four-mile stretch—in the next 10 years. There is a Special Use district in the area where Planned Unit Business Developments are allowed by special permit. See the Land Use and Community Character chapter for more discussion regarding Rt. 15.

¹⁶ Town of Sturbridge website, Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, Veolia Water Project Manager Shane Moody, DPW Director Greg Morse

¹⁷ Sturbridge Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, Tighe and Bond, April 2008

Figure 8.5 Sturbridge Sewer System

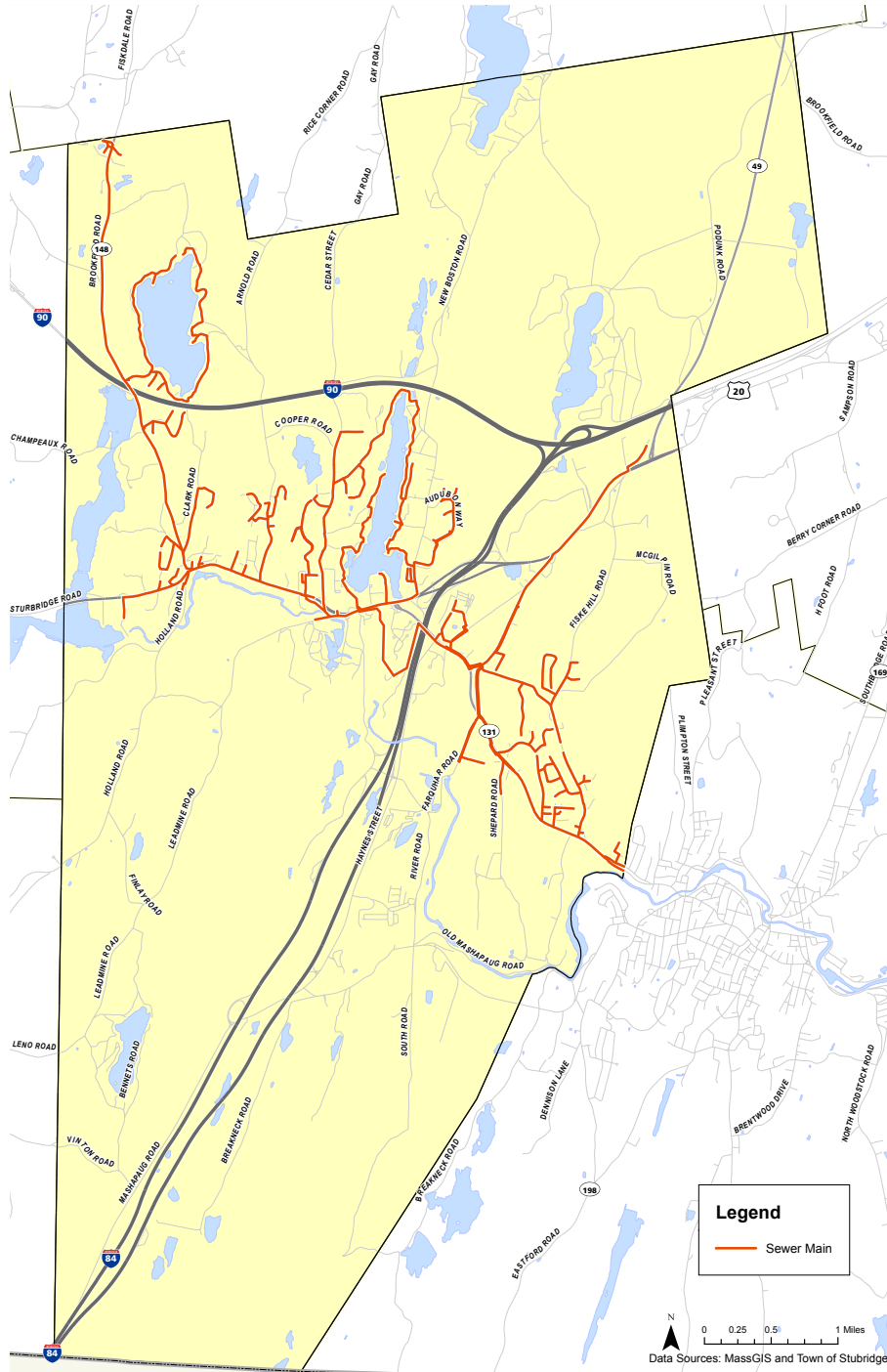
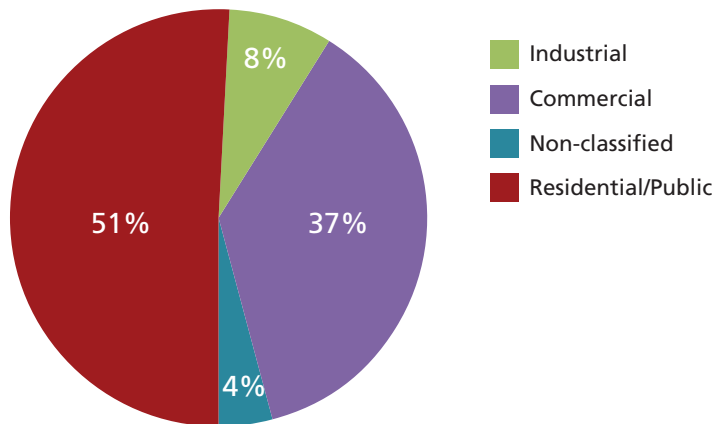


Figure 8.6 2009 Wastewater Flow Sources

Source: Town of Sturbridge 2009 Annual Report

Roads¹⁸

There are approximately 75 miles of public roads and 10 miles of private roads in Sturbridge. For several years, the Town has conducted an annual rating of the conditions of these roads in order to help determine which ones need to be repaired. In addition to road condition, secondary considerations include vehicle trips per day. The DPW repairs approximately four to five miles of roads each year. The condition of the roads overall has generally decreased due to a combination of roadwork and winter weather conditions. As a result, funding to maintain and repair roads will remain a challenge.

Solid Waste and Recycling¹⁹

The Town of Sturbridge owns and operates a Recycling Center and Landfill at the end of Breakneck Road. The operations are overseen by the Health Agent and Board of Health, which licenses the private waste haulers who provide curbside trash pickup to residents of Sturbridge for a fee. The Recycling Center is open from 7 AM to 2:45 PM Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and is managed by a recycling manager with the help of three recycling assistants.

To use the Recycling Center, residents must have a resident permit sticker, which is free and must be renewed each year. (A second permit is \$20.) Residents can dispose of most household waste for free, but they must remove certain items from their trash, including cans, glass, paper, plastic, styrofoam, metals, clothing and yard waste. For an additional fee, other items such as tires, propane tanks, computer monitors, appliances and demolition debris can be dropped off. The Recycling Center also has a “Take It or Leave It” shed where residents can leave items that they think other people will want.

¹⁸ DPW Director Greg Morse

¹⁹ Town of Sturbridge website, Recycling Manager John Booth

Approximately 63 to 67 percent of everything that is brought to the Recycling Center and Landfill is recycled, according to the recycling manager. The remainder, about five tons of household waste a week, ends up buried and covered in the landfill. Half of the landfill reached capacity and was capped in 2009. The remaining landfill area is projected to have capacity for 10 to 20 more years. When it is eventually closed and capped, the recycling center is expected to continue operating, and there could be a need for a future transfer station.

In the last few years, there has been about a 10 percent increase in the number of people recycling at the Town facility, according to the recycling manager. That includes people who have private curbside trash pickup but use the facility solely for recycling. In 2009, the Board of Health issued 2,480 permits for the Recycling Center to 1,594 households.

There has been some discussion in the past about the need to ascertain the overall cost effectiveness of the Recycling Center and Landfill. The Town needs to improve its tracking of the amount of trash that is being handled at the Recycling Center and Landfill versus private collections, which in turn will allow the Town to gain a better understanding of its recycling rates. In order to do so, the Town should consider a number of alternatives to determine the best approach for managing its solid waste in the future. These would include:

- ▶ Town wide trash collection with mandatory recycling
- ▶ Single stream recycling
- ▶ Pay as you throw trash collection programs

If more people continue recycling or the Recycling Center is opened up to businesses—only Sturbridge households can use it now—additional staff would likely be needed. The Board of Health has indicated the need to upgrade and expand the facility over the next five years. In addition to personnel, this would include the purchase of new storage containers, a second bailing machine and a chipper. Electric power would also need to be upgraded.

Town Hall and Center Office Building²⁰

Town Hall is located on Main Street in the Sturbridge Common Historic District. A two-story brick building, Town Hall has long served as Sturbridge's principal government office building, housing all of the Town's municipal offices.

The Town Hall building as well as the Center Office Building on Main Street have just been renovated to ease overcrowding, address structural and accessibility issues and provide additional community meeting space. The \$4.3 million project also improved the appearance of the two buildings, which are both listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Improvements to Town Hall included a new elevator compliant with state and federal accessibility requirements. The project did not incorporate many green building or sustainable practices, largely due to cost constraints, according to the project architect.

Municipal offices moved into the renovated buildings in August 2010. Town Hall now houses the offices of the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen, Finance Department, Assessor and Town Clerk. Offices related to land use, including the Planning Department, Conservation Commission, Building Inspector, and the Recreation Department, as well as the Board of Health and Veteran's Agent moved across the street to the Center Office Building. Previously, the 1852 two-story Center Office Building had long been vacant, though it had been used as a school and police station in years past.

Library²¹



Joshua Hyde Library

Joshua Hyde Library, a Town department, is located on Main Street near Town Hall. Built in 1897 and expanded in 1989, it was named in honor of a farmer and lifelong Sturbridge resident whose son George Hyde donated \$20,000 toward the library's construction. Today, the library is governed by an elected 9-member Board of Trustees, with responsibilities for library management and services delegated to a Library Director. Besides the director, there are 15 employees, four of which are full time. Volunteers also assist as needed.

The library, which is part of the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System, is open Monday through Saturday throughout the year (48 total hours), with additional Sunday hours from mid-October to mid-May (51.5 total hours). It has approximately 52,000 total volumes. Circulation of books, DVDs, CDs and magazines has steadily climbed in recent years, reaching 138,800 items in 2009. This represented a 5 percent increase over the previous year and was the highest circulation to date. Attendance, which has also increased, was 81,000 in 2009.

The library building has three levels, with the circulation area being on the main level. There is a meeting room on the basement level and a children's department on the middle level. In addition to books and other materials in circulation, the library offers story time, passes to several area museums, and a summer reading program. It also has seven computers for public use, including two laptops. An additional computer is expected to be added soon.

In 2007, the Library Trustees completed a Long Range Plan, which evaluated the library's level of service and identified issues that need to be addressed. The plan had been to apply for a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in 2011 to study the possible expansion of the library, but the trustees decided to hold off due to the inability of the library to meet state requirements for dedicated parking, according to the Library Director. (To receive state funding, library projects must provide parking that "meets or exceeds the standard of one parking space for every 400 square feet of

21 Town of Sturbridge website, 2008 Long Range Plan for Joshua Hyde Library, Library Director Becky Plimpton, Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, ADA study

building;” applicants can alternatively show that the “appropriate local boards have approved an alternative parking plan.”²² Currently, there is no dedicated parking for the Joshua Hyde Library.) The trustees might apply for a state planning grant in the future.

For now, the Library Director has identified a number of space and staffing needs:

- ▶ Additional staff is needed to adequately cover the three floors in the building. Currently, there are times when only two employees are working in the library—two people must be at checkout upstairs—leaving no one to cover the children’s department downstairs.
- ▶ More space is needed for the Children’s Department and for meetings. Currently, children’s programs are held in the meeting room, which means such programs cannot be held at the same time as meetings.
- ▶ Parking is an issue as there is no dedicated parking for the library. Patrons either use on-street parking, which is shared with the church next door, or they park in the Town Hall lot across the street.
- ▶ A larger space is needed for the library’s public use computers. There is not enough room to put all of the computers in one area, so only four are located together. The others are spread out. (Two of those are laptops, which are only given out for public use when they are requested.)
- ▶ Shelf space is virtually full, so more shelving could be needed in the future. At the very least, existing shelves must be reorganized.
- ▶ The library has limited seating, with there being only three tables for patrons to use. There is also no private study area.

In terms of accessibility, the library largely complies with ADA standards. The Town’s ADA study only identified a few modifications needed to make the building fully accessible. For example, the main entrance vestibule does not provide enough clearance between doors, and the circulation desk counter does not comply with maximum height clearance requirements. The cost of improvements is estimated at approximately \$9,225.

²² Board of Library Commissioners Regulations, <http://mblc.state.ma.us/grants/construction/program/605cmr6.pdf>

Parks and Recreation Facilities²³

Sturbridge has a Recreation Department that operates the Town Recreation Area at Cedar Lake and coordinates all activities on the Town Common. Staffed by a part-time Recreation Coordinator, the Department offers a variety of programs to residents of all ages. Programs include girls softball, a youth summer recreation program, and adult summer tennis and basketball leagues. During the summer, the Department also presents a concert series on the Town Common.

The many activities occur on recreational fields or facilities throughout Sturbridge. These include a baseball field at Turners Club, two Town Barn fields, basketball and tennis courts at Cedar Lake Recreation Area, and multiple fields at the public schools. The Turners Club and Town Barn baseball fields are under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Committee. The other ball fields are on School Committee property and are maintained by the schools. The Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining the Town's fields and facilities, though the Department of Public Works provides the physical labor. (This split in field jurisdiction between the School Committee and Recreation Department has led to difficulties in coordinating field usage and planning for future field needs.)

Several of the fields and recreational facilities in town require improvements. At the Cedar Lake Recreation Area, the tennis and basketball courts need to be reconstructed, and more parking is needed. There is also a growing need for additional field space in Sturbridge as more children continue to participate in sports. Adding fields has become a priority among residents.

In 2007, Sturbridge created a Field Study Subcommittee to examine the field situation in town and propose changes to address identified needs. Recommendations included creating a playground area near the Town Barn fields, changing Turner's Field from a baseball to a softball field, and turning two baseball fields at Burgess Elementary School into one regulation baseball field and a small T-ball field. According to the Subcommittee's 2007 report, if all of the proposed changes were made, the Town would still need to add six new fields.

Recently, the Recreation Committee selected a designer to develop plans for the construction of new fields on the Shepard property on Route 15 and behind the DPW garage facility. If these new fields are built, the Recreation Coordinator anticipates there being a need for additional maintenance staff. Changing the Coordinator position into one that is full-time or adding paid staff would also increase the Recreation Department's ability to handle day-to-day responsibilities as well as any new responsibilities resulting from the creation of new fields.

23 Town of Sturbridge website, Recreation Coordinator Lynne Girouard, Recreation Committee, 2007 Sturbridge Field Study Committee report

Senior Center/Council on Aging²⁴

The Senior Center and Council on Aging office is located at 480 Main Street in Fiskdale and open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Staff includes a full-time Director, a part-time secretary, a part-time Community Resources Coordinator, two part-time custodians and a fitness instructor, who is partially grant-funded. Other instructors work on a contractual basis.

A wide range of services and programs are offered at the Senior Center or by the Council on Aging, including recreation programs, health services, nutrition and fitness programs, meals, referral counseling, medical transportation and support groups. Residents who drop in at the Senior Center can also use computers, play pool or cards, watch television or socialize.



Senior Center

The Senior Center itself, which was constructed in the 1800s and renovated in the late 1990s, has three floors, all of which are served by an elevator. On the main level, there are three offices, a dining area, bathrooms and gallery-style kitchen, which is primarily used to store items and warm and distribute food that is prepared off site.

The building is in fairly good condition, though some modifications are required to bring the building into ADA compliance. According to the ADA study, approximately \$56,000 in improvements are needed, including modifications to parking spaces, the ramp into the building, the interior public stairwell and the basement area. Beyond ADA issues, other minor repairs are needed such as painting of the window frames.

Given the current and expected growth in the senior population, the Council on Aging Director has indicated a need for a new, larger senior center. (Any expansion would displace parking spaces, which are already at a premium.) A few years ago, there had been discussion about the possibility of conducting a feasibility study, but one was never completed, and efforts to explore the idea of a new senior center stopped. This was largely due to the fact that the Town had decided to move forward with the Town Hall/Center Office Building and Burgess Elementary School projects. The need for more space at the senior center remains, particularly if any regular programs are to be added in the future. Currently, there is no room to add another regular program, such as an exercise class, without precluding special events like health clinics.

²⁴ Town of Sturbridge website, Town of Sturbridge 2008 and 2009 Annual Town Reports, Senior Center Director Barbara Search, ADA study

An additional part-time staff member would also allow for the addition of regular evening classes, as a staff member must be on site during any programs or classes. Currently, only special events such as speakers are scheduled in the evening during the summer.

Overall Staffing Needs

Additional departments have staffing needs and recommendations have been made in other plan chapters regarding new staff (i.e. Economic Development Director—see Chapter 4 on Economic Conditions). For example, issues have been raised about Veteran’s Services where the Director of Veteran’s Services and Agent is essentially “on call” and the office is open only a couple of evenings a week. The Building Inspector position has been reduced to half time. The Board of Health, Assessor’s Office and the Planning Department are other examples where staffing is deemed to be inadequate and a number of departments, boards, and commissions have limited administrative assistance. Other department staffing needs, notably Police and Fire, are often determined by national standards.

An overall examination of staffing needs should be undertaken across town government. A municipal management consultant should be engaged to study long-term needs. As the Town continues to grow, demand for services is likely to increase which puts more stress on existing staffing and resources.

Form of Government

Sturbridge has a fairly centralized government that includes a Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen and Open Town Meeting. Under the Open Town Meeting form of government, all of the Town’s registered voters can set the Town’s budget, appropriate money for capital projects and adopt local bylaws. This body of voters, who attend and make decisions at Town Meetings, is Sturbridge’s legislative branch. The Town’s elected five-member Board of Selectmen is the executive branch. This Board of Selectmen appoints the Town Administrator, who is the chief administrative officer of the Town.

In addition, Sturbridge has a mix of paid professional staff as well as volunteer committees. Table 8.4 provides information about the various boards, committees and commissions in Sturbridge.

Table 8.4 Boards, Committees and Commissions

	# Members	Elected/Appointed	Term
Agricultural Commission	5	Appointed	3
Board of Assessors	3	Elected	3
Board of Health	3	Elected	3
Board of Selectmen	5	Elected	3
Burgess Elementary School Building Committee	14	Appointed	Indefinite
Community Preservation Committee	9	Appointed	3
Conservation Commission	5	Appointed	3
Council on Aging	9	Appointed	3
Cultural Council	5	Appointed	3
Design Review Committee	5	Appointed	5
Economic Development Committee	5	Appointed	Indefinite
Energy Advisory Committee	7	Appointed	Indefinite
Finance Committee	9	Appointed	3
Historical Commission	5	Appointed	3
Housing Partnership	5	Appointed	3
Lakes Advisory Committee	15	Appointed	Indefinite
Library Trustees	9	Elected	3
Local Emergency Planning Committee	15	Appointed	Indefinite
Open Space Committee	5	Appointed	Indefinite
Personnel Committee	5	Appointed	3
Planning Board	7	Appointed	5
Recreation Committee	5	Elected	3
Recreational Trail Master Plan Committee	9	Appointed	Indefinite
School Committee (Sturbridge)	5	Elected	3
School Committee (Regional)	Variable	Elected	3
Street Light Committee	3	Appointed	3
Tourist Association	7	Appointed	3
Town Hall/Center Office Building Committee	14	Appointed	Indefinite
Traffic Safety Committee	5	Appointed	3
Trails Committee	5	Appointed	Indefinite
Tree Warden Advisory Committee	5	Appointed	3
Zoning Board of Appeals	7	5 elected, 2 appointed	3

Source: Sturbridge Town Charter, Town of Sturbridge website, Board of Selectmen Secretary Judy Knowles

As the Town has seen its population grow, particularly in the last decade, there has been some discussion about whether a different form of government—particularly a Representative Town Meeting—could better serve the needs of the community. Potential changes in the form of government and government operations were also identified as opportunities during the public meeting on the Master Plan and in related surveys.

The Town Charter requires the Board of Selectmen to form a committee every five years to study the “working of town government.” The committee can recommend procedures for revising the charter. Only a charter commission elected under Massachusetts General Laws, however, can propose changes to the form of government, according to Sturbridge’s charter. Such a commission could analyze the potential advantages and disadvantages of changing to a Representative Town Meeting form of government. State law also allows communities to adopt, revise or amend their charters by a special act of the State Legislature with approval by the Governor.

Recommendations

- ▶ Establish a Building Committee to comprehensively review short- and long-term needs of other Town buildings. As the Town continues to grow, the demand for services and facilities will continue to grow from residents, businesses, and visitors. Overall, it appears that many municipal facilities are facing problems associated with the combination of being extended beyond their capacity coupled with a degradation of the physical condition of the buildings. Several department heads indicated that they anticipate the need to improve or expand existing facilities in order to meet staffing or service needs over the next five to ten years. The total fiscal impact of these improvements have not been fully analyzed and understood, and it is unlikely that they can all occur concurrently. A comprehensive building survey could more directly assess what improvements are needed, when they are needed and how much they are estimated to cost. This will help the Town prioritize the improvements, budget for the work, and seek supplemental sources of funding such as grant money. The recommendations and priorities identified in the ADA study can be folded into this effort.
- ▶ Similarly, the anticipated growth of the Town is likely to create a need for additional staff to provide necessary services for residents, businesses, and visitors. It would be useful to predict with more certainty the level of staffing that may be required for the various town departments over the next five to ten years so that those fiscal needs can be identified. A number of departments are short-staffed and there is a need to create new positions, most notably an Economic Development Director. The Town should engage a municipal management consultant to assess long-term staffing needs for the Town.
- ▶ Some facility needs are more apparent and immediate. Upgrade and expand the Public Safety Building and the DPW Garage and Maintenance Facility so that both buildings can meet current and future needs of the Town. As a first step, it is recommended that the Town hire an architect to study the facilities and evaluate how they can be best upgraded. The recommendations in the ADA study should be incorporated into any facility improvements.

- ▶ The Library Trustees prepared a Long Range Plan in 2007. It assesses the current state of facilities and services, and it outlines the steps that need to be taken to achieve community goals into the future. The plan serves as a good model for other departments.
- ▶ Establish a Sustainability Task Force that is charged with developing sustainability principles or guidelines that can be incorporated into Town operations, policies and regulations and applied to Town projects (including new or renovated municipal facilities). These principles should include energy and water conservation, green building materials, use of alternative energy sources and minimizing waste. See also the Energy and Sustainability chapter.
- ▶ Conduct a study that looks at alternative strategies for solid waste management in Sturbridge. Such a study should assess the overall cost effectiveness of each option.
- ▶ Promote recycling, expand recycling services to include businesses and begin to develop plans to expand the recycling center. Alternative waste disposal options should also be studied in light of the eventual capping of the landfill.
- ▶ Conduct a parking study at the library in order to determine how the required dedicated parking standards can be met before submitting an application for grant money for library expansion and improvements.
- ▶ The Town is currently updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). A 2007 Field Study Subcommittee report made recommendations as to specific field needs. The Recreation Committee also is looking at plans for new fields. The new OSRP should consolidate all these plans and prioritize recommendations for field improvements, new facilities, and coordination of maintenance efforts.
- ▶ Explore options for consolidating/streamlining local boards/committees to clarify the responsibilities of each and identify potential overlaps in responsibility, particularly with respect to open space, trails, and recreation.
- ▶ Develop long-term strategic visions for each department, board, and commission, possibly through external staff or consulting support. Continually seek ways to collaborate with non-government agencies and other towns to provide government, utility, cultural, and human services.
- ▶ Explore options for digitizing records/files as storage is an issue facing several departments, especially given some of the new public records and open meeting requirements.
- ▶ Encourage Department heads to utilize the capabilities of the Town's Virtual Town Hall website and to keep their pages up to date so as to provide residents with current information about town services.