



Ward Park Senior Center Proposal

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Where will the new Senior Center be located at Ward Park? Is it on the football field?

The Senior Center WILL NOT be located on the football field in any way. The precise location of the Senior Center will be accessible via the New Street entrance off Granger Boulevard. The footprint of the building itself will be limited to the immediate area next to the clubhouse/storage facility. The reality is that the total footprint of the proposed senior center will use less than 3% of the entire park space. Furthermore, the senior center will be open during their normal day time hours and will not impact the use of the park in the evening.

Why Ward Park? Aren't there better locations for a Senior Center?

Over the past several years, serious consideration was given to both city owned property as well as privately owned developments. In fact, a city-wide Request for Proposals (RFP) was sent out by former Mayor Nancy Stevens in December 2011. Of the proposals received for both private and city owned parcels, the sites given the most consideration were:

- West Meeting House (86 Pleasant Street)
- Old Registry of Motor Vehicles (525 Maple Street)
- Bigelow School (57 Orchard Street)

Each location had its advantages and disadvantages. However, the most important consideration was the cost to the taxpayer. The Pleasant and Maple Street locations would have had costs in excess of \$8 million, which includes a \$1 million price tag just to purchase each of the properties.

Bigelow School was given strong consideration because the city already owns the building. However, Bigelow School is also home to the Assabet Valley Collaborative which provides vital educational support services to Marlborough as well as other communities in our region. Instead of displacing these students, the city worked with the organization to secure a 25 year lease of the facility. This lease agreement, which was approved by the City Council in 2012, will net the city nearly \$5 million over the next 25 years and will help pay nearly **70% of the cost** of constructing the new senior center.

Having a Senior Center at Ward Park presents a unique opportunity to breathe new life into an area in need of attention and upgrades. Chief among Ward Park's many advantages is that it will allow our seniors to be more physically active by utilizing the existing track and field space during the day time.

Few of the alternative sites considered for a senior center would have allowed the opportunity for more expansive, outdoor programming for our senior community.

Will Ward Park provide for sufficient parking to accommodate a Senior Center?

Yes. Preliminary estimates are that the intended location will allow for 70+ parking spaces. 63 spaces are currently available.

How will the Senior Center impact the youth sport and athletic organizations that are currently utilizing Ward Park for practices and games?

Marlborough American Youth Football (AYF) was notified last fall regarding this proposal at Ward Park. The City has been working closely with AYF to both ensure their needs are met and their season faces minimal disruption when this plan moves forward. Our intent is to ensure that the Ward Park football/lacrosse field will continue to be utilized by all its existing users.

How will a Senior Center affect traffic in the immediate neighborhood?

As opposed to having the Senior Center located at Bigelow School, our proposed location will have a main access point off Granger Boulevard thereby minimizing traffic access through Orchard, Hayden, Water Terrace, and Water Street.

In 2002, the City of Marlborough conducted a Senior Center Feasibility Study. Why isn't that plan being put into place?

The study in question has sat idle for more than a decade. Although it provides a good foundation as to what types of activities we could have in a new senior center, its conclusions are simply outdated and expensive. It is important to keep in mind that the 2002 study called for a 26,000 square foot senior center. Our current proposal calls for a more adaptable building half that size.

Recent senior centers in our region built in the last decade have not exceeded 14,300 square feet. Furthermore, the only facilities that accommodate seniors that have exceeded this size are combined with community centers. Facilities recently built in Natick and Ashland are nearly identical in size to the 2002 proposal but instead serve an entire community as opposed to just the senior population.

Applying criteria from the 2002 feasibility study given today's needs would be inappropriate. Times change, needs change, costs have skyrocketed, and the very size of the proposed building will not accommodate many of the functions originally envisioned in the 2002 report. Our goal is to construct a modern facility that reflects the interests of today's senior community while reaching those goals in a fiscally prudent manner.

How will a Senior Center benefit the Ward Park neighborhood?

Ward Park has enormous potential to be a recreational jewel in the very center of our city. However, the reality is the park itself has been beset by increasing amounts of graffiti and vandalism. Frequent visitors to the Park have contacted the Mayor's office regarding obscene graffiti on the basketball courts as well as the stone wall entrance off Granger Boulevard. To immediately address this problem and clean up

Ward Park, Mayor Vigeant enlisted the help of work crews in the Community Work Program (CWP) from the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office. Several crews spent nearly 30 working hours cleaning up the park during the 2012 summer and fall months, removing substantial amounts of brush, trash, and graffiti.

More recently, the portable ice rink at Ward Park has been the subject of nightly vandalism and destruction that continually delayed its opening. A Senior Center will bring more people on a regular basis to the park itself, thereby increasing pedestrian traffic and serving as a deterrent to those individuals who have degraded it. It is important to note that the existing portable ice rink can remain in Ward Park even with the addition of a senior center.

How will a new building at Ward Park affect the water table and sewer capacity?

The new building will include a foundation or sub-drain to manage water that would otherwise infiltrate the foundation to the structure. The sub-drain will provide ancillary benefits to the area immediately surrounding the proposed building by pulling the groundwater table down to the elevation of the sub-drain thereby minimizing the saturated surface conditions in the immediate area that dominate the lower portions of the park during wet weather periods.

What types of improvements will be made to the football field as a result of a Senior Center? How are the two issues related?

The football field has been and will continue to be an integral part of Ward Park. Any plans to upgrade the field will also include the design and installation of sub-drains. As with the sub-drain for the senior center, a sub-drain system for the field will have similar benefits to those mentioned above and will increase the period of time throughout the year that the field will be usable.

It's important to emphasize that the senior center should be considered part of the recreational opportunities proposed for Ward Park. Recreation in a community the size of Marlborough should not strictly be limited to the youth. A senior center at Ward Park will bring new opportunities that serve a population which does not always have the same access to athletic fields and track spaces as others do.