

Community Center FAQs

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CENTER? WHY DOES LINCOLN NEED ONE?

What Is a Community Center?

At its most basic, a community center is a facility shared by a combination of town departments and organizations that provide community services. In Lincoln, the Community Center will be occupied by the Council on Aging (COA), the Parks and Recreation Department (PRD), and the community groups who collaborate with them such as the Lincoln Preschool, LEAP, and Magic Garden. In its essence, a community center is a “community home.” It is a place where all residents can gather to form and nurture relationships and have shared experiences that encourage a sense of connectedness and belonging. It is where we can enrich our lives by learning new skills, getting to know other residents we might not otherwise meet, access important social services, and participate in activities to stay healthy, active, independent and engaged.

What Committees Have Studied the Community Center?

Four committees have studied or are studying a community center, answering questions such as: Does Lincoln needs a community center? What programs and services should be offered in it? How big it should be? Where it should be? and How should it be designed? These committees include the Community Center Feasibility Committee (2012), the Community Center Study Committee (2015), the Campus Master Planning Committee (2016) and now the Community Center Preliminary Planning and Design Committee (CCPPDC). Each committee employed either professional community planners or architects.

Why Does Lincoln Need a Community Center Now?

These committees have found that the COA is in urgent need of a new facility for a range of reasons and that the Pods used by the PRD and community groups need significant renovation for safety, accessibility, and basic upkeep. Leaving these two departments in their facilities as they currently are is not an option. Sharing space will save the cost of constructing or renovating about 5000 square feet. This also provides the opportunity to combine programming through collaboration to create a true community center that will enhance the quality of life for all Lincoln residents for decades to come.

WHERE SHOULD THE COMMUNITY CENTER BE?

Why Ballfield Road?

Both the 2012 Community Center Feasibility Committee and the 2015 Community Center Study Committee examined, in great detail, a host of sites using criteria that included locations, adaptability of existing structures, financial costs, access, circulation and parking, and other considerations. Sites considered included Ballfield Road (both the Hartwell Campus and Smith School), South Lincoln (both Lincoln Station Commuter Lot and the DPW site), the Pierce House, The Groves (now the Commons), First Parish Church Stone Church, Farrington Memorial, Lincoln Woods/Wells Road, and Bemis Hall.

However, the PRD's need to be close to the schools makes Ballfield Road the obvious choice. Choosing any other site would entail renovating the Pods for PRD and building a separate senior center for the COA. Beyond the cost of renovating separate facilities, none of the other sites were economically or logistically preferable to building a community center on Ballfield Road.

In 2017, both the Community Center Preliminary Planning and Design Committee (CCPPDC) and the School Building Committee, after looking at all the data collected over the years by various committees, voted to locate the community center on the Hartwell Campus on Ballfield Road.

Will the Ballfield Road Site Include a Second Road off Lincoln Road?

This is still being studied by the Community Center Preliminary Planning and Design Committee. However, the Campus Master Planning Committee (2016) determined that a second access to the campus was not needed to accommodate traffic, so none of the building schemes require a second road.

What about LEAP, Maintenance, the Pre-School Programs, and the School Administration currently at the Hartwell Site?

It is assumed that LEAP and maintenance will remain in the Pods and are not part of the program for the new building. Some schemes do include Pod renovations as part of their work. It is assumed that the pre-school programs and the school administration will remain where they are in the Hartwell Building.

What about Playgrounds and Fields?

The Hartwell campus will not lose playgrounds or fields. They may be relocated, depending on which scheme is chosen, but they will still be convenient to users.

What Will Happen to Bemis Hall and the Pods?

Regarding Bemis Hall, many small New England towns have town halls built in the 19th century which they no longer use for municipal offices. We anticipate doing what many of those towns have successfully already done: continuing to use the programmable spaces for community functions and repurposing the office space to other town departments or community partners. Pod C will likely continue to be used by LEAP and Pod B will still be occupied by the School's maintenance department.

HOW BIG WILL THE COMMUNITY CENTER BE AND WHAT ROOMS, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES WILL BE IN IT?

How Big Will the New Community Center Be?

Using a program that has been developed and refined by the 2012, 2015, and current committees, the Community Center will likely be about 23,000 square feet.

How Did You Come Up with This Number? How Did You Decide What Rooms Will Be Included?

Programming – determining how many rooms are needed, how big they need to be, and which rooms should be near one another – began with the 2012 study and will continue until the final design is complete.

To summarize, PRD and COA staff have worked with the committees and consultants/architects to come up with a program that meets current needs and realistically addresses what will be needed in the future while being reasonable for a town Lincoln’s size. They took into account:

- 1) What programs and services are currently offered
- 2) What programs should be offered that cannot currently be accommodated
- 3) Anticipated growth based on population projections
- 4) The experience of other towns with new community centers
- 5) What space is needed for community organizations
- 6) What space the Schools would like in the community center for their use
- 7) What space is desired based on the results of numerous town wide surveys, public forums, focus groups, and interviews over a number of years.

We have compared our conclusions to state wide standards developed by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and other towns to ensure that we are neither over nor under-designed.

Isn’t This an “Ideal” Program? What Could You Cut to Save Square Footage and Cost?

This is not an “ideal” program in the sense that it does not include every space PRD and COA would like. Compromises on a number of fronts will need to be made. For example, we are able to save about 5000 square feet by sharing space. In other words, all programming spaces will be used by the COA, PRD, and community groups at different times while both the COA and PRD will have separate administrative spaces. Sharing space, while it makes sense for a town Lincoln’s size economically, entails sacrificing the ability to always schedule programs at the best times, and sometimes it will not be possible for both departments to schedule all the programs that would be beneficial in the space provided.

Also, having many different groups using the Center will mean that it will be more difficult to ensure that close parking is available for seniors with mobility impairments.

Finally, sharing space means that we will not be able to offer some programs that require equipment or furnishings to be left out between sessions and rooms cannot be furnished to meet the special needs of either seniors or children. For example, while a Fix It Shop for the COA would be desirable, it may be difficult for the seniors to put away all their equipment and items being fixed at the end of each session.

In addition, there are many programs offered by other centers in our area that would be beneficial that we have not included due to the desire to come up with a program that is affordable to the town’s residents. Examples include a volunteer-run gift shop and a walking track.

Why Is There Such a Difference Between What PRD and COA Currently Have and What They Are Asking For?

The current programs of the PRD and COA are based on their current inadequate facilities, including programming spaces that are too small, are not up to code, are not ADA compliant, and a severe lack of parking at Bemis Hall.

One of the primary reasons for building a community center is to enable the COA to offer core programs that cannot be currently offered due to space limitations. The core programs would greatly enhance the quality of life of older Lincoln resident, particularly among those who are frail or who have cognitive and/or emotional impairments. . These core programs include congregate meals for nutritional support and space where seniors can build emotional support networks with each other and COA staff.

In addition, according to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, attendance is likely to increase by about 250% in the first 18 months due to both new programming and the willingness of residents to come to an accessible, attractive, welcoming environment. We must take this into account when planning for the future.

Will the New Community Center Replace the Functions of Local Businesses?

No, the purpose of the Community Center is to offer programs and services generally provided by local government and organizations, not businesses. When we mention a “café,” for example, we do not mean a commercial café with a variety of beverages and foods, but rather a place where people can sit and chat between activities or while waiting to pick up family members. Refreshments will be modest and complimentary.

Likewise, fitness, art and educational programs would be improved versions of what the PRD and COA provide now.

WILL THE NEW COMMUNITY CENTER BE BUILT ON SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES?

Will the New Community Center be Energy-Efficient?

The architects hired by the CCPDC, Maryann Thompson Architects, always design for energy efficiency. Among the strategies they will use are:

- 1) super-insulated walls
- 2) triple-paned windows
- 3) overhangs to help cool the building in summer and allow light in winter,
- 4) south-facing orientation to allow the sun’s heat in the winter
- 5) north side siting of closets, storage, and small windows to keep out winter’s cold
- 6) LED lighting
- 7) large windows for natural sunlight
- 8) cross ventilation for cooling
- 9) a solar hot water system

- 10) a solar voltaic system as part of “net-zero” and “fossil-fuel free” building design
- 11) Efficient Air to air heat pumps.

Will Wood Be Sustainably Sourced?

Yes, all of the wood in the building will be sustainably sourced. It will either be Forest Stewardship Certified, ensuring it does not come from depleting rainforest, or we will use local woods like Ash and Maple, which can be heat treated to be durable outside. Any wood cut from the site can be reused for furniture and other uses.

What about the Wetlands and River Front in the Hartwell Area?

The project will improve the overall condition of the wetlands and river front within the Hartwell Area. Each scheme varies in its improvements but each looks to remove existing paving from the wetlands setbacks and control run-off water into the stream.

WHAT WILL BE THE DESIGN FEATURES OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER AND SITE?

What Will the Overall Feel of the Community Center Be?

Maryann Thompson is designing for a “cozy modern” feel based on feedback from surveys and public forums. This means that the building will have a “homelike” rather than an “institutional” ambiance that will be achieved by the use of smaller, nook like spaces for socializing, interiors and furniture that looks more homelike, and natural materials. Lincoln’s own Henry Hoover has been very inspirational to the designs. His work exhibits the desired warm modern feel, richly connected to site that is cozy while being fluidly connected spatially.

Will the Community Center Be Accessible?

The Community Center will go beyond compliance of ADA requirements. For example, it will have natural lighting throughout, which is important for those with visual impairments, and have good acoustics and sound control for those with hearing loss. It will also use principles of Universal Design so that individuals of all ability levels feel comfortable and welcome in the Center.

Will There Be Outside Program Spaces?

Yes! We are planning a variety of outdoor spaces for people to gather and for passive and possibly active recreation. These will relate to the indoor spaces in a harmonious way.

WHAT ABOUT SITE ISSUES?

What about Parking?

The parking in the Hartwell area will be expanded to 100-110 spaces to accommodate the community center. There will be a drop-off loop and spaces very close to the building for those with mobility impairments or parents dropping off children.

What about Septic?

The Community Center will need its own septic system, which is incorporated into the cost.

HOW MUCH WILL ALL OF THIS COST?

The cost will depend on the scheme chosen. However, the cost for all the various schemes is in the range of \$12 to 16.5 million. The Finance Committee estimates that the community center alone would add between \$325 and \$503 to the median tax bill annually for 30 years.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Maryann Thompson Architects will develop three to four schemes based on community feedback. An update will be provided at the Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, March 24 in the Brooks Auditorium. Other opportunities to provide feedback will also be offered. On Saturday, June 9, we anticipate that we will present the schemes.. Maryann Thompson Architects will then do more detailed drawings of the most popular schematic design for a potential future construction project.

HOW CAN I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

We love feedback! Please send your thoughts, ideas, and concerns to CCPPDC@lincolntown.org. For more information, go to LincolnCCPPDC.org.