

## **Frequently Asked Questions about proposed Upton Community Center**

Approved by Community Center Building Committee 4/27/2021

### **1. What are the challenges of the existing buildings?**

The existing library space in the Knowlton Risteen building:

- 1) is Small. Upton has 3,200 square feet of library space vs a suggested 1-3 square feet per resident. Of the 69 Massachusetts towns with population between 5,000 and 10,000, Upton is 63 out of 69 for library size.
- 2) is not Accessible. Current location has no accessible entrance, no accessible parking, no accessible restrooms.
- 3) Has a Fieldstone foundation and dirt floor which allows water, mold and rodents into the building.
- 4) Has 1970s heating, plumbing and electrical infrastructure that require constant maintenance and prevent the installation of modern, energy efficient systems.

The existing space of the Upton Center:

- 1) Limited space. The current space is under 4,000 square feet, while the State recommends 4-5 gross square feet per elder. Given this, Upton should offer 4,808-6,000 square feet.
- 2) No separation of space possible to offer different programs at the same time.
- 3) Kitchen facilities are limited.
- 4) Office space is restrictive, and not conducive to confidentiality of services.

### **2. Why did the project cost increase from the Nov 2019 conceptual estimate? 9.3M to 12.3M project cost.**

- 1) Construction start date one year later, with corresponding escalation and materials cost increases.
- 2) Increased sitework required including larger parking lot size, utility connections and rock and soil conditions that were not included in conceptual estimate
- 3) Increased gross square footage from Nov 2019 Conceptual Design (13,728) -> March 2021 Design Development (15,132 + attic). This increase was driven by +1,400 sqft of functional space and +360 sqft required to separate entrances and staff space for the two departments.

Refer to 1/7/2021 multiboard presentation, slide 18:

[https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif5121/f/uploads/2021.01.07\\_ucc\\_multidepartmental\\_mtg\\_updated.pdf](https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif5121/f/uploads/2021.01.07_ucc_multidepartmental_mtg_updated.pdf)

### **3. Why is the building 1 story instead of 2 stories?**

For a building of this size, the committee determined that the operating and design efficiencies of a single story outweighed the advantage of a smaller footprint of a two story building. During the conceptual design stage, a potential two story option was evaluated.

- 1) Library usage requires high load limits for a second story, making construction more expensive than for a residential or commercial building. Senior Center space should be on the first floor for accessibility.
- 2) Splitting services across two stories contradicted our goals of sharing space between the departments, and created excess 'unassigned' space (hallways, stairs.) The single story design has functional spaces that connect and flow into each other, providing maximum flexibility and future adaptability.
- 3) A single story minimizes service points, reducing the staffing requirements of operating the building.
- 4) Second story requires inclusion of an elevator with associated costs, such as elevator foundation, pit, utilities and a yearly maintenance contract.

#### **4. What was the design approach that determined the street view? What features make the building more than just a 'barn' ?**

The design draws loosely on the cupola form of a historic grist mill that occupied the site in the 19<sup>th</sup> and possibly early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Upton Community Center case, the functional cupola/light monitor serves to provide daylight deeper into the building and to highlight the main circulation spine as a way of wayfinding through the building and building organization. The street facing façade has large windows into what is expected to be the most active part of the building – the multi-purpose space so that the building functions have a strong relationship and visibility to and from the street. The base of the building is clad in stone veneer for durability. Materials are traditional clapboard above that, rendered in a red color. The red color may influence the viewers reference to 'barn', however the design is not meant to emulate a barn. The design approach also takes advantage of the Upton Zoning By Law allowance by Special Permit through the Zoning Board of Appeals for relief from the front yard setback requirement from 30' to 0'. The street side of the building sits on the front lot line and the Route 140 right of way, resulting in a 10'+/- set back from the back of the sidewalk to the building. This will help with sight lines at the parking lot entrances. -Turowski2 Architecture.

#### **5. Could there be more active recreation options - skatepark, pickleball fields, basketballs?**

On this site, the design includes active recreation on the redesigned, accessible playground. The committee hopes there are other opportunities in town for construction of active recreation, such as Heritage park or the 'Trask Property', which was donated to the town for the express purpose of recreational activities.

#### **6. Why not pursue the State library construction grant program?**

Massachusetts has an established state grant program that supports qualifying library building projects with typically 40% of the project cost. In order to qualify for these funds, projects must adhere to the State timeline and design standards.

- 1) Grant applications were last accepted in 2017. Upton conducted a 2015-2016 feasibility study in an attempt to apply for this grant round, and was unable to develop a feasible design. 25 projects are currently on the waiting list for funding from this grant round.

Timing of a new grant opportunity is determined by state lawmakers. Historically applications have been accepted every 5-8 years.

- 2) Successful grant applications require a design that adheres to space and service standards which can limit the flexibility and efficiency of the design. Upton's previous 2005 grant application was for an 18,000 square foot design.
- 3) This grant program provides funds only for dedicated library space. That portion of the building used for shared or Council on Aging space would not be eligible for grant funding.

Refer to MBLC Construction Grant information:

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/construction.php>

A short history of Upton's construction grant applications:

2001-2003 - Regional library with Upton and Mendon. State grant approved, project fails at ballot vote in both Upton and Mendon.

2005-2008 - Upton library located in planned village development on Maple Ave railroad site. State grant approved in 2005, on waiting list until 2008, developer removes offer of donated site and grant opportunity is lost.

2015-2016 - Feasibility study is conducted, which considers a combined Library + Senior Center for the first time. No suitable site is found, and the town is unable to apply for the 2017 construction grant round.

More details in this report from the Upton Town Library Board of Trustees:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/119Vge4I-Ur3Oi4Zi\\_ewlbgejqQZeUyBFL9SHSjafqfY](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/119Vge4I-Ur3Oi4Zi_ewlbgejqQZeUyBFL9SHSjafqfY)

## **7. Why this site? Is it the best site in town? What about Westborough Rd / Maplewood cemetery / Trask land or other parcels?**

During 2015 and 2016, a library feasibility committee extensively studied the town looking for possible sites to construct a library. All town-owned parcels were reviewed and two RFPs seeking privately owned sites were publicized, and all responses were reviewed. Key criteria for the review included: acquisition cost, proximity to the center of town, size of parcel, access to utilities, suitability for building and site development costs.

By the end of the process in September 2016, two finalist sites remained: 0 Milford Street (the current proposed site) and a private proposal from Maplewood Cemetery. Ultimately, the committee decided neither site was feasible for a successful Massachusetts Construction Grant application.

Since that time, the town completed the downtown vision process, adopted the Upton Center Business District zoning changes, and the community center design evolved away from the requirements of the construction grant program, all of which increased the benefits of the 0 Milford Street site.

To briefly address other sites reviewed:

- 1) Westborough Rd town owned parcel - distant from center of town, not on town water / sewer.

- 2) Maplewood Cemetery - committee unable to negotiate a mutually beneficial agreement with landowners.
- 3) 'Trask Property' - the estate willed to the town contains restrictions that would not allow this project to be built on the site. (Library use does not qualify as 'recreational')

#### **8. Does anyone still use the library anyway?**

Upton Library has over 1,500 currently active registered accounts, and on average in 2019, 600 of them had items checked out.

Upton is a member of a library network that provides over 8 million physical items and 130,000 digital items.

During an average week in 2019 at Upton Library, 719 physical items and 183 digital items were borrowed, there were 377 visits to the library, 46 reference questions answered, 53 people attended programs and 43 people used public computers.

We look forward to providing increased services to residents once COVID restrictions are lifted and the new community center expands our services. -Matthew Bachtold, Upton Town Library

#### **9. Now that everyone has a smartphone and Zoom, are library services important?**

Libraries are always changing and adapting, but our basic purpose of providing information and technology support has remained. Usage statistics statewide and country wide show that use of both print and digital library materials is increasing.

As technology becomes more common, complex and required, a library's role in bridging the digital divide for those residents that don't have easy access to online services becomes more important.

Libraries also provide a shared common space and personal connection for members of the community. If the trend continues of online meetings and remote work removing our traditional sources of human connection, the library becomes more important as a space for community interaction.

-Matthew Bachtold, Upton Town Library

#### **10. The Senior Center would move farther away from Millhaus apartments, how does that affect the elders in town?**

The proposed location for the new community center is in the center of downtown, accessible to all of the over 1200 elders living in Upton. Transportation to CoA programs will be available free of charge on the CoA Van for elders from Millhaus, Coach Rd apartments or any other location in town. -Janice Nowicki, Director of Elder and Social Services.

#### **11. Why isn't the Historical Museum included in the building?**

The Upton Historical Society, which is a private non-profit organization distinct from the Historical Commission, currently occupies 2,100 square feet of space including the Historical Museum. The amount of space needed to adequately house and display their collections was not able to be included in the Community Center design.

The building committee hopes that Town officials and residents will support the Historical Society as they pursue other options, including the possible use of any space vacated by the Library in the Knowlton-Risteen building.

We look forward to collaborating with the Historical Society to use display cases and create exhibits inside the Community Center.

**12. Will the building connect to town sewer and water? Will that sewer line allow other businesses to connect? How much does that cost?**

The building will be connected to town water and sewer. Water lines run directly in front of the building allowing direct tie in. Sewer lines require a connection in front of the former Holy Angels Church. The total cost is estimated to be approximately \$80,000.

The proposed sewer line may have the capacity to accept other buildings, dependent on their size, usage and design engineering. The pipe is sized to match the downstream pipe which is 8-inches. The eight-inch line based on its pitch has a capacity of around 0.9229 MGD (million gallons per day). The UCC building is estimated to contribute less than 2,500 gallons per day (0.0025 MGD). This allows 0.9204 MGD for future development, depending on the slope of the road as the main continues upstream. -Turowski2 Architecture.

**13. Why are mechanical spaces above ground? Isn't it cheaper to put them in a basement?**

We provided a cost benefit analysis of constructing a basement vs. placing mechanical spaces on the ground floor and/or attic and the latter was much more cost effective. The depth of the foundation would require blasting of rock. -Turowski2 Architecture

**14. Why is the shared parking agreement important? How much does that cost?**

The Shared Parking agreement between the Town and the VFW allows both groups access to the combined parking spaces east of the Community Center. Coordinating our events and peak usage times allows the parking to be used more efficiently and reduces the total parking requirements of the area. 16 parking spaces located on town-owned land and 69 spaces located on VFW land are shared through the agreement.

This allows the Community Center design to dedicate more space to the playground and building instead of reserved parking spots.

The VFW benefits by the spaces on its property being refurbished as part of the community center construction, regular maintenance performed by the town going forward, and an annual lease payment to offset any disruption to their fundraising activities.

The lease payments begin at a maximum \$6,000 per year and increase over time (max of \$8,000 from years 11-20, and max of \$10,000 from years 21-25, with the option to extend another 10 years.) Fundraising through a VFW annual carnival will reduce the lease payment. The Upton Center Business District zoning encourages shared parking agreements in this area of town, and we hope this agreement can be a model for future development.

**15. What is happening to the existing playground? Couldn't we just leave it alone?**

The existing playground does not currently meet State accessibility standards, and will need to be renovated regardless of the Community Center project.

This opportunity allows us to re-use most of the existing playground equipment, install a new accessible surface, ensure the entire playground and parking area is accessible, and create a new nature playground with embankment slides.

The playground, patio and building will be designed to seamlessly integrate and complement each other. The playground will be re-dedicated to its long-time patron, Moe Capistran. Last but not least, the community center will provide restrooms adjacent to the playground!

**16. How will this project affect surrounding properties, such as the apartments at 1 Milford Street, or the town-owned Holy Angels church and open lot on Grove Street?**

This project only utilizes the two town-owned parcels east of Center Brook, and our collaboration with the VFW. There is no direct impact on other privately owned or town-owned properties.

The building committee hopes that the Community Center will be an 'anchor' for the downtown redevelopment vision, and that this investment by the town encourages and enhances future projects in the area.

**17. What is the snow removal plan for winter?**

The proposed plan has been reviewed by the DPW, which will be responsible for snow removal. Areas of the parking lot have been identified as snow storage locations if needed.

Resurfacing of the playground, with proper care, will allow for easier snow removal and a longer usable season than the existing playground.

**18. How does the size of the proposed building compare to other towns' libraries and senior centers?**

There are 69 municipalities in Upton's population group with certified public libraries. (Pop 5,000 - 9,999). Library gross square feet in those towns range from 1,710 sqft to 29,000 sqft, with an average of 11,095 and median of 11,500 sqft.

Upton Library currently has 3,200 sqft of space, in the bottom 10% of our population group.

The proposed Community Center would provide 5,461 sqft of library space, 4,819 sqft of shared space, 2,061 sqft of CoA space, and 2,791 sqft of unassigned space (restrooms, hallways, stairs, etc), for a total of 15,132 square feet, plus additional attic storage.

In 2020, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners published "Library Space - a planning resource for librarians". This document contains an analysis of trends and standards for library facilities, and the proposed Community Center meets many of the recommendations for a small library serving under 10,000 population.

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/libraryspace.php>

Data from annual library statistics reported to the Commonwealth:

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/library-statistics/index.php>

**19. What is the size of the building based on? Standards? (What is the recommended size of a library for the town's population?)**

Upton Library space needs are based on a study performed in 2015 which included a town-wide survey and focus group meetings and resulted in the Upton Town Library Building Program.

<https://sites.google.com/site/uptonlibraryplanning/building-program>

This building program, or list of space and service needs, has been used as the basis for each library feasibility project since 2015, including the 2016 attempt at a State Construction Grant application, and the current design process that has led to the proposed Community Center.

The building program, which is independent of any site or location considerations, estimated an adequate library design would be 14,953 square feet. The current proposed project would provide 12,541 square feet of library and shared space.

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<https://mbclc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/libraryspace.php>

The proposed Senior Center / Council on Aging space is adequate for program needs. -Janice Nowicki, Director of Elder and Social Services.

**20. Is this a 'green' building? What about LEED certification? Solar panels? Geothermal heating? Could these elements be added later (especially refitting the mechanical room to geothermal?)**

The Building Committee received many comments from town officials and residents asking about the 'green friendly' features of the project. While the project is not pursuing the LEED certification process (which incurs additional reporting and certification costs), the designer and committee are keeping LEED goals in mind, and have identified many areas where the proposed design would qualify for LEED points and LEED certification.

A LEED scoresheet completed by the project designer indicates that a LEED Silver classification could be achievable. (See Page 24 of the April 6 presentation on the town website):

[https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif5121/f/uploads/2021.04.06\\_ucc\\_bc\\_meeting.pdf](https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif5121/f/uploads/2021.04.06_ucc_bc_meeting.pdf)

Geothermal heating was evaluated as one of three options for the building's HVAC systems. Our preferred displacement ventilation system scored best on lifetime cost. The displacement system also provided significantly better contaminate control inside the building.

Solar panels are not included in the project scope, but could be installed later.

A rainwater recapture system (rain barrel collecting roof run off) and electrical car charging stations are included in the project.

From Turowski2 Architecture: The design energy model indicates that the building as designed will consume greater than 40% less energy than a baseline building fully meeting the stringent Building Code and Energy Code requirements. This building will perform 40%+ better than another code compliant building. The project design documents have been forwarded to the local utility company to take advantage of their energy rebate programs, which essentially pay the Owner for energy cost savings measures.

**21. Is there any potential for future expansion?**

The building committee planned this project to meet the needs of Upton for at least the next 20 years.

The interior design, open floorplan and adaptable workspaces provide the flexibility to adjust space allocations to meet future changes in Library and CoA services.

If the town decides it needs more square footage 25+ years from now, options would include relocating the playground and building an addition on that space; or, the design is suitable for either the Library or the CoA to expand into the entire building, should a new facility be built for one of the departments in the far future.

**22. Did the building design change in response to COVID pandemic?**

Yes, in two main ways.

First, our choices for HVAC system were heavily influenced by a desire to use all fresh air for ventilation and have the best contaminate removal possible. The planned system is a displacement ventilation system, where fresh air comes in low to the floor, and pushes old air upwards along with contaminants where it is removed from the building, instead of recirculating. The filtration can accommodate MERV-13 or better filtration along with UV disinfection units. Secondly, the floorplan introduced more separation between the CoA and Library services, with the infrastructure in place for emergency measures if needed. While we hope these measures are not required, the design allows for the CoA and great room to be divided from the Library space, and the programs room could be isolated for no-contact services with outside access.

**23. What are the parking requirements for the building?**

The shared parking agreement allows flexibility in assessing parking needs with the goal of reducing overall pavement areas in the center of town. The Zoning By Law allows a 30% reduction of parking spaces for competing uses in the UCBD. 85 spaces is approximately 30% below the required parking for the VFW and UCC. This is subject to review by the Upton Planning Board through the Site Plan Review process. Additionally, an independent traffic engineer is evaluating parking and other related traffic impact issues. -Turowski2 Architecture

**24. Is exiting the parking lot onto 140 safe? Especially when making a left turn?**

We believe the parking lot is an improvement on the current parking lot. A traffic engineer is evaluating the entrance drives and sight lines, and the designer is also coordinating the design with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

**25. Building use policies and services:**

The exact policies and procedures governing use of the building have not been finalized. As a town-owned facility housing multiple departments, several elected and appointed boards will have authority to set policies, including the Board of Selectmen, Board of Library Trustees and Council on Aging.

Over the last two years, the boards and departments have had extensive discussions about how we intend the building to operate, and a joint steering committee has been appointed to make recommendations.

I am able to share my personal objectives and intentions for the building's operation, but all policies will be subject to approval and revision by the elected officials. -Matthew Bachtold, Upton Town Library Director.

**1) When will the building be open / hours? What about after hours usage?**

My intent as Library Director is to expand the library hours to match the current CoA hours, plus remain open 3 evenings per week and Saturdays. The design of the building should make these hours achievable with the existing library staff. -Matthew

The building is equipped for after hours access to the great room and adjoining restrooms while the rest of the building remains secured.

**2) Will residents and non-residents be able to use the rooms, kitchen, etc? What fees or regulations will control the use of the space?**

My intent as Library Director is to have the three quiet study rooms and conference room available for drop-in use or reservation by the general public with no fee during the library's open hours. -Matthew

The programs room, great room and kitchen will most likely be offered for community use under similar regulations and fee schedule to those of the current Town Hall spaces.

**3) What will the great room and exercise room be used for? What sort of adult recreation programs can be offered? (On the plan, it looks full of tables)**

Both the great room and the program room have adjoining furniture storage rooms so all tables and chairs can be easily removed when needed. Both spaces can function flexibly as open floorspace, table seating or auditorium style seating.

I look forward to seeing the community generate activities and programs to fill these spaces, in addition to the schedule of events Janice and I are already planning! -Matthew

Storytimes for various age groups, Technology classes, Book groups and other interest groups such as crafting clubs. Multimedia presentations such as lectures or workshops, Art classes and galleries, Meals through the meals on wheels program and special events such as pancake breakfasts and spaghetti suppers, Exercise classes including yoga, tai-chi, chair exercise. Health clinics, tax preparation and legal aid clinics. Cooking and nutrition classes. Teen/Tween and afterschool activity groups. Evening and weekend programs. Collaboration with Recreation Commission.

**4) Will food / drink be allowed in the building?**

Current library policy allows food and drink to be brought in and consumed anywhere in the building except for directly at the computer workstations. The CoA serves meals and refreshments at events, so we expect similar policies in the new building. -Matthew and Janice

**5) Are there amenities like coat racks, cubbies, stroller parking, family friendly restrooms?**

We are trying to fit as many as we can! Coat racks in the vestibules and outside the great room. Cubbies for personal possessions in the children's activity area. Strollers take a lot of

floorspace, but we have some space in the circulation spine and children's area and we encourage families to use our outdoor space on the patios for strollers. -Matthew  
There is a public unisex single occupancy restroom inside the library that includes a changing station. The vestibule restrooms are traditional multi-occupancy gendered restrooms with changing tables that meet all accessibility and building code standards.

**6) Is there a nursing room where a parent could breastfeed in privacy without having to use a bathroom?**

One of our multi use quiet study rooms will be equipped with shades / blinds for privacy and could be used for this purpose.

**7) What public technology will be offered?**

Current plans include 7 public computer workstations (with space to add more up to 11). A business center with public copier / scanner / fax machine, along with supporting tools such as paper cutter, diecut, long arm stapler.

LCD screens for public use in the conference room and one study room. Guest wireless network throughout the building and grounds. Electric car charging stations in the parking lot. Plentiful charging outlets in the seating areas.

A focus of our planning and design has been on providing the infrastructure to easily install future technology. (for example, we have no plans to include a 3-D printer, but the business center could accommodate one in the future.) -Matthew

**8) How will the 'quiet' activities be separated from the 'noisy' activities?**

Libraries have tended to become more active and less 'quiet' over the last decades. The only group I've had to 'Shush' in the current library is my rambunctious lego building club.

The proposed community center has sound-dampening acoustical materials on many wall and ceiling surfaces, and we have attempted to identify and provide natural separation for quiet areas. The children's area, program room and business center will be active areas on the south end of the building (and connect to the playground outside), while the adult collection, study rooms and soft seating on the north end will be quieter areas. -Matthew

**9) Will there be anything like a cafe or coffee kiosk associated with the Community Center?**

Having a small cafe or coffee bar inside a library is often suggested as an amenity and revenue source. Librarians have found that these operations are usually only successful in large institutions such as Boston Public Library.

The community center has sink and counter space for offering refreshments during events, but we'll rely on local businesses within the downtown area to provide commercial food and beverage opportunities to residents. -Matthew

If the Council on Aging forms a Friends group (fundraising support organization), there may be an opportunity to use a cafe as a fundraiser. -Janice

**26. Could a footbridge across center book be built in the future?**

Yes, in the future, but there are no plans to include it in the scope of the current project. Center Brook poses challenges - the east bank is much higher than the west bank along the town-owned parcels, and any bridge would be contingent on MA DEP and Upton Conservation Commission requirements.

The design of the nature play area of the playground will make it an ideal location for connecting to a future walking trail along Center Brook.

## **27. How does this use fit into the downtown vision and new business district zoning?**

The Upton Center Visioning Project Report was approved by the town meeting in May 2019, and used as the basis for creation of the Upton Center Business District zoning regulations.

[https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5121/f/uploads/upton\\_final\\_report\\_2019-0502.pdf](https://www.uptonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5121/f/uploads/upton_final_report_2019-0502.pdf)

The report identifies 10 goals on page 99, which represent the final recommendations of the planning process.

One of those goals directly concerns the community center:

*“Site the proposed Library/Community Center and Historical Society Museum within walking distance of Town Hall, if possible. If possible, means if there is a site that is adequate to meet the needs of the facilities.”*

The proposed project also addresses 3 additional goals:

*“Activate Upton Center and make it the heart of community life in the Town.”*

*“Maintain the Center’s village scale and building types. New buildings should be no more than three stories.”*

*“Provide adequate parking.”*

## **28. What will happen to the existing locations of the Senior Center and Library? Can they be sold to offset costs?**

The current Senior Center is located in a leased building, which is not owned by the town. The current lease expires in 2029, and any improvements made to the space become the property of the owner, a private management company.

The current library occupies one floor of the Knowlton Risteen building, which is owned by the town. The Knowlton-Risteen building is currently not accessible to Massachusetts Architectural Access Board standards. The upper floors contain town offices, storage space, and the Historical Society museum. The usage, maintenance and disposition of the building are controlled by the Board of Selectmen. There are no plans or timeline in place, but it is theoretically possible that if the other functions were relocated the building could be sold or repurposed.

If the Knowlton-Risteen building does leave town control in the future, there is a designated spot inside the Community Center that could accommodate the stained glass window if desired by the town.