

# Plan Elements: F. Town, School and Cultural Facilities

## INTRODUCTION

**B**rookline has long been recognized as a community with excellent Town facilities, public schools, and services. Continued investment is needed in these facilities to ensure that high standards are maintained. The town allocates funding for improvements to municipal and school facilities through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Significant recent spending has been allocated to several public schools (High School, Lincoln, Lawrence), the Main Library, and the Public Safety Headquarters.

Cultural facilities within the town are also recognized by residents as contributing to quality of life. Many of these cultural uses are dependent on ongoing fundraising to continue to support their programs and activities that are used by many residents. In order to continue to sustain the diverse range of cultural facilities and uses the Town is committed to provide assistance where possible to ensure the continued strength of Brookline's cultural communities.

### **TOWN, SCHOOL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES VISION**

The Town will continue to maintain and, where needed, improve its public facilities.

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## Trends and Challenges

Brookline is a well-managed community that provides high quality community services and facilities while maintaining the budgetary discipline necessary to maintain its Aaa bond rating (one of only 12 communities in Massachusetts to achieve this rating). Brookline rates in the top 15% of communities statewide for total spending on a per

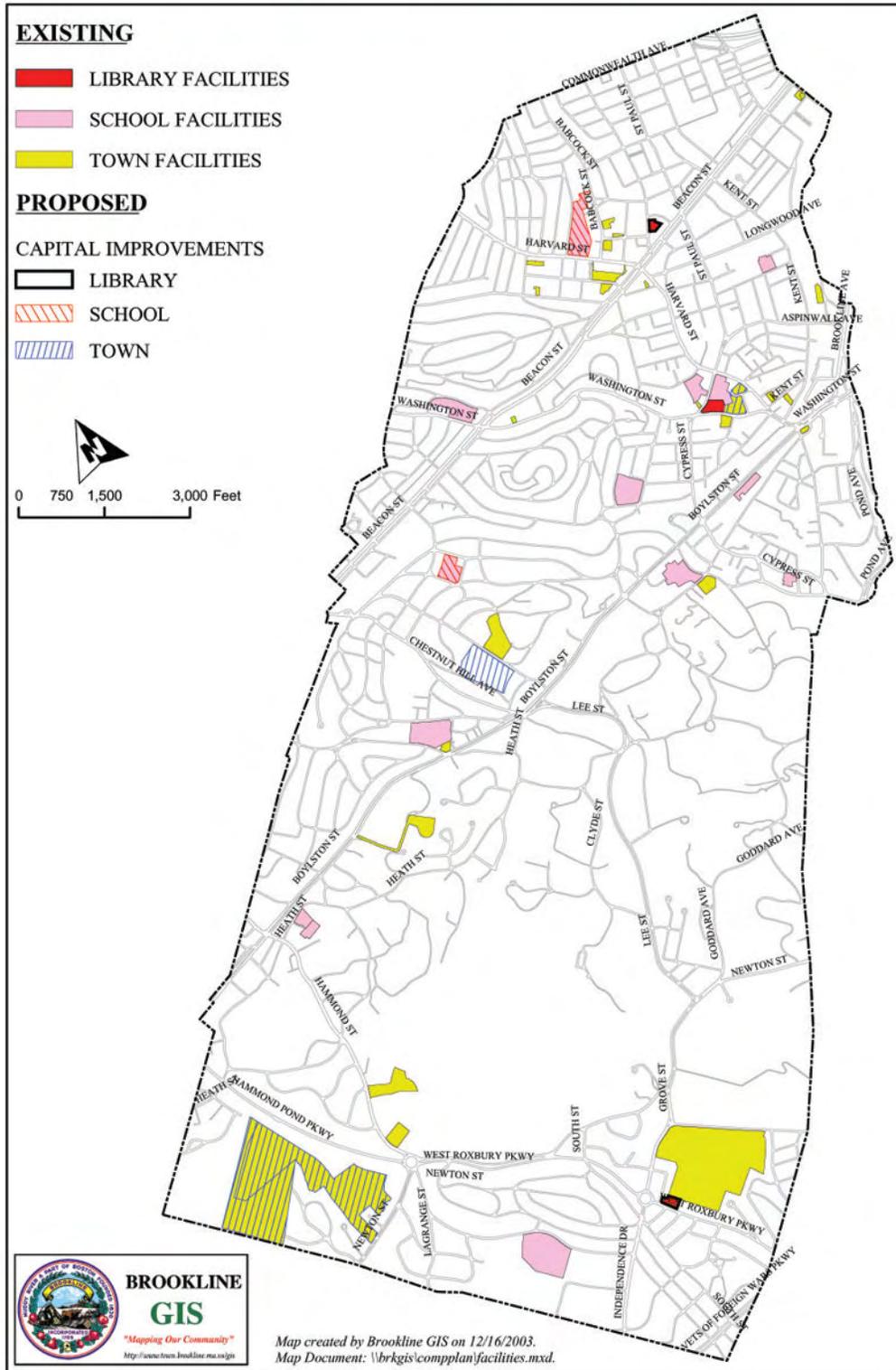
capita basis. School spending per pupil rates in the top 7%. In recent years Brookline has continued to invest aggressively in improvements to public facilities to ensure that residents have access to the high quality facilities and services that are seen as a characteristic of the community. The Town's 2003 Financial Trend Monitoring Report states that "debt service continues to absorb a larger part of the budget, evidence of the emphasis placed on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP)." Development of new or improved public facilities will need to be within the context of the Town's overall budgetary process.

- Continued efforts to ensure Town facilities meet applicable ADA standards represent a high priority item.
- Very little land is available in Brookline for development of major new facilities or programs. Consequently partnerships that incorporate use of private or institutional facilities for public use represent an important potential opportunity for expanding public amenities.
- Pursue implementation of a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) program with Boston University and other tax exempt institutions that require Town services.
- The Town has continued to expand its E-Government and IT initiatives through the Town website and other means to provide residents with information on Town initiatives and services, and to facilitate enhanced participation in planning and development processes affecting the Brookline community. An expansion of programming on Brookline Access Television is another important vehicle for providing important information to the community together with increased access for citizens and non-profit organizations seeking to create programming on topics of public interest.
- Brookline's citizens are lovers of the arts, but there is no program for public art in Brookline and limited exhibition and performance space.
- The Brookline Arts Commission, which provides grants to individual artists, has also identified a potential need for affordable live/work space for artists.



Background information can be found in the *Issues and Opportunities* reports on town facilities; arts; and information technology, all available in the Appendix.

# Map 10: Town, School and Cultural Facilities



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## Plans and Major Projects Underway

Several public buildings have been identified as priorities for funding over the next several years:

- Town Hall
- Public Health Building
- Coolidge Corner and Putterham Branch Libraries
- Runkle School
- Devotion School

The Town has also created a Wireless Communications Committee to look at issues related to citizen and Town needs for wireless communications and develop a method for providing adequate access to wireless communication that is also sensitive to community character. This will be an increasing challenge and need in the next ten years. The potential for a Town-wide wireless network that provides access to the internet will also increase in the next few years as the technology that provides such access matures and becomes less intrusive.

### GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Maintain excellent schools.
- Support cultural activities.
- Any new development should have no net impact on the Town's finances unless it provides other community benefits, especially affordable housing.

### POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- Continue to invest in public school facilities to respond to evolving program and facility needs and continued development of partnerships with private schools to seek shared use of facilities.
- Continue to invest in Town facilities to address evolving community needs, regulatory considerations (including ADA), technology changes (E-government, IT plan, etc.) and maintenance considerations.
- Continue to support the development of partnerships with non-profit entities that provide services to town residents.
- Support the continued development of Brookline's diverse cultural organizations.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Continue to enforce Sec. 4.09 Wireless Telecommunications Services of Town's Zoning By-law.*
- > *Consider the feasibility and evaluate impacts of telecom leases on Town-owned properties pursuant to Sec. 4.09 4. c. of Zoning By-law*

### Planning and Management

- > *Evaluate potential uses of the Old Lincoln School.*  
It is likely that the space will continue to be used as an alternative site for Town offices as other buildings are rehabilitated, at least for the ten year period 2005-2015. The Town should plan to meet anticipated parking needs for use of this building in this time period.
- > *Coordinate Town Parks and Recreation Master Plans with short- and long-term school improvements plans.*
- > *Continue to strengthen public/private school partnerships involving shared use of facilities and seek to secure long-term commitments around facility use.*
- > *Study elimination of overhead wiring along public streets, particularly in heavily-travelled parts of Town.*
- > *Implement the recommendations of the Moderator's Committee on Community Electricity Franchising.*
- > *Advance phased implementation of Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan, including public event kiosks.*
- > *Advance relocation and improvement of the DPW facility currently located at the Town reservoir as part of Fisher Hill Master Plan.*



- > *Consider rezoning of DPW Service Centers in South Brookline from Industrial Services to a new Municipal Services category.*
- > *Assess potential need for enhanced or expanded facilities and programs at the Brookline Senior Center. Relocate off-street parking from the Fuller Street lot to an alternative location.*
- > *Develop a strategic plan for short and long term programs and services for seniors as part of the 50 year anniversary of the Council on Aging.*
- > *Identify a location for a Parks and Open Space Office and Maintenance Facility.*
- > *Identify a location for a Building Maintenance Facility to serve Town and School facilities.*
- > *Create standards and procedures for maintenance and the review of repairs and alterations to Town-owned historic buildings and landscapes, including Putterham School and Devotion House.*
- > *Provide for ADA accessibility throughout Town facilities.*
- > *Implement microclimate study and Green Brookline plans and recommendations.*
- > *Study the need for affordable live/work artist space.*  
Affordable housing is a pressing need in Brookline and is difficult to provide under any circumstances. The Brookline Arts Commission should survey artists, perhaps with the assistance of graduate students in one of the region's public policy graduate schools, to gauge the extent of the specific need for artists' live/work spaces.
- > *Organize programs for art in public spaces, e.g., festivals, storefront displays.*  
The Economic Development Department and the Brookline Arts Commission should work together to encourage the display of art by Brookline artists in commercial districts. For example, the Somerville Arts Council sponsors storefront displays of art for several weeks each year in commercial districts.
- > *Develop a long-term plan to provide sustained funding for public art through the CIP.*  
Many governments and public agencies have recognized that

public art adds to the identity and vitality of public spaces. Some public agencies have a “1 percent for art” program through which one percent of any project’s cost is devoted to providing public art.

- > *Facilitate the creation of an interdisciplinary exhibition and performance space.*
- > *Incorporate public art into commercial district streetscapes, such as identity and gateway-marker programs.*
- > *Establish a plan for incorporating art in public places in the town.*
- > *Support Performing Arts in Brookline that were ranked highly in a recent attitude and opinion survey conducted for Parks and Recreation Commission.*
- > *Continue to support the Coolidge Corner Theater and consider relationships to the Coolidge Corner District Plan.*
  - Support ongoing capital improvements.
  - Incorporate potential needs in any redevelopment of the Centre Street parking lot.
- > *Continue to pursue strategies to identify facilities that would permit the expansions of early childhood education opportunities and other school programs requiring more space.*
- > *Continue Town investments in Information Technology and Telecommunications.*
  - Provide adequate facilities and programs to Brookline Access Television.
  - Continue to pursue E-Government initiatives.
  - Implement the IT plan and the recommendations of the Wireless Communications Committee.
  - Explore the feasibility of a Town-wide wireless network to provide access to the internet

### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Advance school capital improvements in several facilities including major improvements to:*
  - Devotion School
  - Runkle School
  - Universal access to buildings

- > *Advance Town Hall Renovations.*
  - HVAC and window improvements are the highest priority.
  - Evaluate spatial locations of Town agencies and functions to improve public access.
  - Consider providing first floor meeting space that can remain open when the rest of Town Hall is closed.
- > *Advance Health Department Renovations.*
- > *Advance branch library capital improvement projects as finances permit.*

### **Financial**

- > *Continue to pursue implementation of a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes program (PILOT) with Boston University and other tax exempt institutions that require Town services.*
- > *Explore a Zoning By-law amendment requiring that all new residential developments over six units submit a fiscal impact statement regarding their net impact on Town finances and resources.*