



8. Community Facilities

8.1 Introduction

The community facilities element of a master plan should guide decisions about the public buildings, utilities and infrastructure a local government will need in order to meet future needs. Community facilities make it possible for municipal employees and volunteers to provide services for the public good. The adequacy of municipal and school facilities for the functions they serve is largely determined by three factors:

- The form, size and organization of the community's local government;
- The community's land use pattern; and
- The expectations of the community's population.

What is a Community Facility?

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

A town's ability to provide adequate facilities depends on effective capital planning and a commitment to implementation, asset management policies, and the amount of revenue available for local government operations. Merrimack, like many other New Hampshire municipalities, receives very little funding from non-local sources and relies almost entirely on its own residents and businesses for financial support. Although it has basic core facilities for local services, some of Merrimack's facilities are inadequate to meet current or future needs in order to accommodate the personnel, equipment, technology and records storage that government organizations need in order to run efficiently. Some departments are also under-staffed, yet it has been difficult for the Town to balance demands for excellent schools with its municipal needs.

Like residents of other towns, Merrimack voters have traditionally supported their public schools and worked hard to assure that children receive an excellent education. Good schools benefit a community's families and help to preserve high property values for everyone, so investing in public schools is very important. In addition, many people come into contact with school buildings, not only parents and children, but also any residents participating in community activities that take place inside school facilities. In contrast, few people ever venture inside a police station and for the most part, the same can be said for fire stations or the Public Works Department (PWD) facilities (aside from the transfer station). Residents may go to Town Hall to pay a tax bill, purchase a dog license, or obtain a copy of a birth certificate, but except for the most motivated citizens who routinely attend night meetings of town boards, a small percentage of a community's population spends much time in government office buildings. This fact of life for most towns makes it hard to build a constituency for high-quality municipal facilities and often causes both ordinary maintenance and capital improvements to be deferred for many years.

When communities make investment decisions on a year-to-year basis, without direction from a broadly accepted long-range plan, they are at greater risk of placing short-term needs and popular causes ahead of capital improvements. Although Merrimack has a capital budget, the process for developing it does not appear to be integrated very well with the Town's overall financial planning framework. Today, Merrimack has some municipal facility needs that should be addressed within the next few years, but needs a more comprehensive manner for prioritizing those needs in terms of projected growth.

8.2 Community Facilities Goals

- Develop a comprehensive planning process for short- and long-term capital improvements for all town facilities and services.
- Given the often conflicting demands, establish priorities for building and facility upgrades and replacement.
- Establish new or improved/upgraded facilities and increase staffing for public safety to meet demands resulting from anticipated growth.
- Provide and enhance recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.
- Lead by example in community facilities and operations by establishing sustainability principles and initiatives.

8.3 Existing Conditions

8.3.1 Municipal Services

The municipal services that Merrimack provides are fairly typical of New Hampshire towns. Like most communities, Merrimack does more for its population than it is required to do by law. To residents and businesses in just about every city or town, many local government services qualify as “essential” regardless of whether the state mandates them. For example, municipalities do not have to provide solid waste disposal services, youth services, recreation programs, a senior center or a public library, but the towns that provide these services often consider them important to the quality of life and an indispensable part of what it means to be a community.

Table 8-1: Merrimack’s Municipal Services

Administration and Finance	Public Safety	Public Works
Town Manager	Police:	Highway
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	Animal Control	Stormwater
Assessing	Fire and Rescue:	Wastewater
Finance	Building Code Enforcement	Solid Waste
Human Resources	Emergency Management/ Homeland Security	Buildings and Grounds
	Health	
Land Use	Human Services	Culture and Recreation
Community Development	Welfare	Public Library
Planning and Zoning	Senior Citizens	Parks and Recreation Department
Conservation		Heritage Commission
Agriculture		Merrimack TV

Source: Merrimack Town website, <http://www.merrimacknh.gov/>

8.3.2 Municipal Facilities and Services

Merrimack’s government operates from ten major facilities, scattered throughout the Town. Below is a description of the municipal facilities summarized in **Table 8-2.**¹ **Figure 8-1** provides a map showing the locations of all municipal facilities including municipal buildings and recreational facilities.

In 2005, the Town retained H.L. Turner Associates to conduct a comprehensive review of all Town-owned buildings and facilities. The report details the history of each building, upgrades made to each facility, and identifies needs and potential costs for further upgrades, improvements, or expansion. The following is a summary of the more significant town-owned buildings and its functions, and an assessment of any major deficiencies or needs for improvement. The information provided below is based upon Turner report, along with responses to

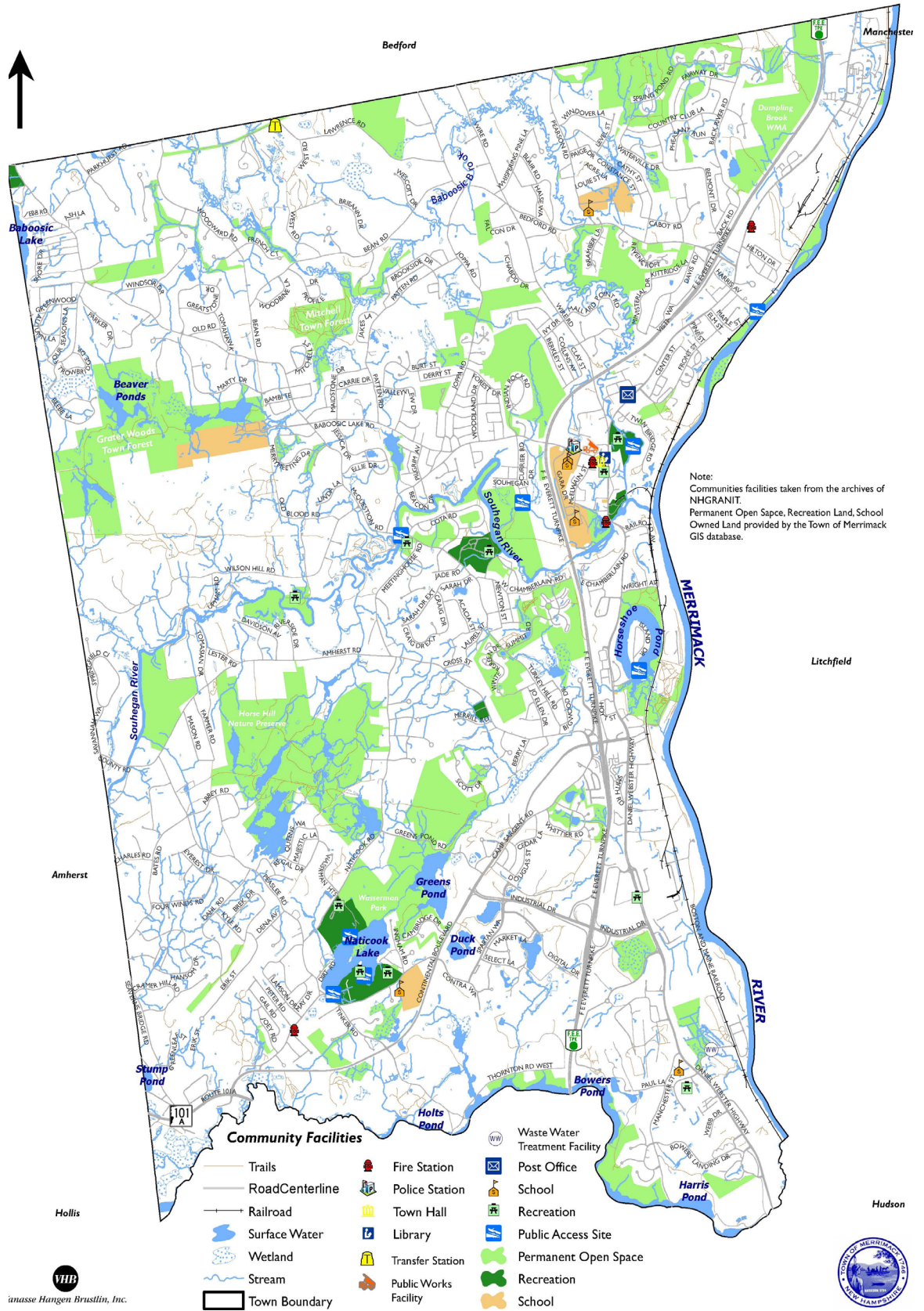
¹ Community facility summaries are based on the following sources: Merrimack Planning Department, Merrimack Public Works Department, H. L. Turner Facilities Assessment, November 2005.

a questionnaire provided to each department head and a follow-up interview. For specific details on potential improvements, one should review the Turner report.

Table 8-2: Merrimack's Municipal Facilities

Facility	Location	Functions	Acres	Year Built/ Renovated	GFA	Condition
Town Hall	6 Baboosic Lake Road	Government offices	–	1872/1980/2010	15,185	Good
Library	470 Daniel Webster Highway	Library	–	1925/1979	12,644	Fair
Police Station	31 Baboosic Lake Rd.	Public Safety	–	1998	12,846	Good
Fire Station 1	432 Daniel Webster Highway	Headquarters	–	1960/1976/1997	9,216	Good
Fire Station 2	196 Naticook Road	Substation	–	1973/1987	2,480	Fair
Fire Station 3	643 Daniel Webster Highway	Substation	–	1973	3,456	Fair
Fire Station 4	6 Baboosic Lake Road	Garage bay/storage	–	1970's		Fair
PWD Garage	Turkey Hill Road	Offices, Highway, Vehicle Maintenance	10.0	1973/early 1980's	–	Fair
Transfer Station and Recycling Facility	Fearon Road	Offices, Transfer Station, Recycling, Yard Waste	11.5	1977	–	Good
Wastewater Treatment Facility and Composting Plant	36 Mast Road	Wastewater Treatment, Compost Production	27	1970	–	Good (wastewater treatment) Fair (compost)
John O'Leary Adult Community Center	Church Street	Senior Citizen Center		1981		

Figure 8-1: Community Facilities in Merrimack





Merrimack Town Hall

Town Hall

The Town Hall is located on a 3.4 acre site in what is identified as the Town Center of Merrimack. The majority of the site consists of parking, landscaping and administrative offices. The west wing of the Town Hall was originally constructed in 1872 and has been renovated over time, most recently in 2004 and 2010. It is a two and half story wood framed building. A number of municipal administrative offices and functions are housed here such as the Finance and Welfare Departments. Until 2010, it also housed the Merrimack District Court on the second floor. The Court moved into a new building in 2010 on a site adjacent to Town Hall. This allowed for the construction of a new state-of-the-art meeting room where meetings can be recorded and broadcast by Merrimack TV.

The east wing of Town Hall was built in 1980 and consists of a one story building with an occupied basement level. The main floor of East Wing contains the offices of the Town Council, Town Manager, Town Clerk and the Assessor. The basement offices, which include Community Development and Public Works, has a separate entrance at the parking lot level and cannot be accessed by the public from the first floor level offices. The two buildings comprise 15,185 square feet and are connected by an open breezeway.

Most municipal services and functions are housed within the two wings of Town Hall except for public safety (Police and Fire and Rescue), the Public Works Department (PWD), and Parks and Recreation (on a seasonal basis). At least for the foreseeable future, the Town Hall space is deemed to be adequate, although there are some issues regarding accessibility.

There are two meeting rooms in Town Hall. The east wing has the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room, which has a capacity of 40 people and has video equipment for taping and broadcasting meetings. The west wing, as mentioned above, has a new state-of-the-art larger meeting room (Matthew Thornton Meeting Room) that is equipped with new audio-visual capabilities. However, the room has fixed seating which limits the flexibility of the meeting space. Although it has a much larger seating capacity, there are times when even that room is insufficiently sized for meetings that draw large crowds. The meeting rooms are booked most weeknights for various municipal functions, including the School Board. Alternative meeting space can be found in the Library and the Police Station. The School District also has two formal conference rooms in the high school and each school has a gymnasium and auditorium that may be used for public meetings or by private organizations.

Merrimack Public Library²

The Merrimack Public Library, originally known as the Lowell Memorial Library, is located on a 1.5-acre parcel in the center of Merrimack on the corner of NH Route 3 and Baboosic Lake Road. The original building was constructed in 1924 as a single story structure, with approximately 2,100 square feet of space. An addition was constructed in 1979 that expanded the facility to 12,644 square feet.

In an effort to maintain the building and to prevent leaking, the windows on the roof were replaced in 2010. The Town took advantage of PSNH's Smart Start program and replaced all lighting for better efficiency in 2010. In 2009, all the pipes and heating units were replaced and a new air-conditioning unit was installed. In 2010, the 1979 boiler was replaced with a gas-fired boiler as part of an initiative by National Grid. There are ongoing issues with some leaking from the slate roof and the flat roof, as well as some drainage problems.

The Merrimack Library has provided emergency shelter, cooling, heating and Internet services for Merrimack citizens during several weather emergencies during the past decade. In 2011, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established new regulations qualifying libraries, along with police, fire protection/emergency services, medical care, education and utilities, as essential community services.

The Library has 28 staff members: 9 full-time and 19 part-time. Overall staff hours were cut back due to budget cuts which necessitated a reduction over the last two years in the number of hours that the Library is open.

² Town of Merrimack 2002 Master Plan Update, p, VI-15 – VI-16; Response to questionnaire by Janet Angus, Library Director, November 2011.



The Library has a collection of 90,083 items which includes books, DVDs, VHS tapes, music CDs, audio books, video games, and CD ROMs. The Library's total circulation, which includes the items that it owns as well as items through the inter-library loan and reciprocal borrowing programs, was 277,822 in 2010-11.

A new Library building has been part of the Capital Improvements Program since 1994. The Library Building Development and Marketing Committee have been working diligently since September 2008. The options of retrofitting and expanding the library, or moving into another existing building have proven to be impractical or cost-prohibitive. The existing building is not large enough to house its current collection of materials and it cannot provide enough community meeting space. It also cannot accommodate the number of people who

come to use the wireless connection. The current CIP anticipates planning for a new Library building in FY 2014-15.

Police Department³

The Merrimack Police Department is a full-time department with a central station located in the Town Center on Baboosic Lake Road. This 13,500 square foot facility is the third Police Department headquarters location during the past 30 years. As a result of space constraints at the Town Hall, the Town acquired a former medical center on Baboosic Lake Road in 1996 and relocated both the Police Department and the Communications Center. The new station is centrally located, allowing for rapid response times and flow of information between the Communications Center and the department. Renovations to the new station were completed in two stages, culminating in 1998, and are intended to meet the Department's long-term needs.⁴

The building consists of one main facility, made up of two separate, but "joined" buildings (no through passage except through the exterior lobby). There are five adult jail cells and one female/juvenile cell. At this time, the department deems this to be sufficient to meet present and future needs.

Merrimack Police Department



The Police Department has a total of 61 employees, including the members of the Communications Division and administrative staff. In addition to the Chief, there are two captains, one lieutenant, 25 patrol officers and five detectives. In 2010, the Department responded to over 36,000 calls, half of which related to motor vehicle accidents or violations. Demand for services is anticipated as the Town continues to grow, especially with the upcoming opening of the Premium Outlet Mall.

³ Response to questionnaire by Chief Mark Doyle, November 2011.

⁴ Town of Merrimack 2002 Master Plan Update, p. VI-7 – VI-8.

The Department uses 11 marked cruisers for Patrol and Community Services; 3 unmarked cars for detectives; 3 administrative vehicles for Command Staff; 2 all-purpose SUVs (ACO and K-9 Officer use); and other miscellaneous vehicles for a variety of purposes.

Fire and Rescue Department⁵

The Fire and Rescue Department includes Fire/Rescue Operations, Fire Prevention, Office of the Fire Marshal, Emergency Medical and Ambulance Service, Building Division, Code Enforcement, Emergency Management and Health Divisions.

The Operations Division of the Merrimack Fire Department is headed by an Assistant Fire Chief who oversees four platoons of firefighters and officers. In addition there is a group of on-call firefighters and emergency medical technicians as well as a small group of part-time emergency medical technicians who supplement ambulance coverage. There are four shift captains and four lieutenants, 17 firefighter/EMTs, and seven firefighter/paramedics on a full-time basis in addition to the Chief, Assistant Chiefs, and Fire Marshall. There are also 16 volunteer firefighters on an on-call basis. The Department oversees the Building Inspector, Building Official, and Health Officer.

Merrimack Fire Department



Equipment for the Department includes 5 Engines, 1 Ladder Tower, 1 Heavy Rescue, 1 Medium Duty Rescue, 3 Wild-land Fire Trucks, 4 Ambulances, 3 Command Cars, 4 Inspection Vehicles, 1 Utility/Plow/Tow Vehicle, and 1 Command/MCI Trailer. (A CIP plan has been developed for fire apparatus and ambulance replacement).

Headquarters/Station 1 (432 Daniel Webster Highway)

The Central Fire Station houses the Emergency Services (Operations) Division, Support Services Division which includes Fire Prevention and Emergency Management, the Emergency Operations Center for the Town, as well as the Building and Health Divisions. The Operations Division includes five (5) Fire/EMS personnel who are on duty 24/7 at this station. The Fire Prevention Division, including the Fire Marshal's Office, is located at this station. In July

⁵ Response to questionnaire by Chief Michael Currier, November 2011.

2010, the Building and Health Divisions came under the administration of the Fire Department. The addition of four personnel and significant file storage has placed a premium on space at this station. There is virtually no more usable space available for file storage, equipment or gear storage. Parking is also very limited at numerous times during the day.

This station was originally built in 1960 and a second floor was added in 1976 to add living quarters. The station received a \$598,000 expansion in 1997, adding more apparatus bays, as well as office and living space. In 2011, the station was converted from oil to natural gas at a cost of \$28,000, window replacement is scheduled for 2012-2013, and air conditioning upgrades are needed. The roof was replaced in 1997 and appears to be in good shape. No major repair/replacement is anticipated to the roof over the next ten years.

Station 2 (196 Naticook Road)

This station was built in 1973, and living quarters were added in 1987. It is essentially a two-bay garage and there are three Fire/EMS personnel assigned there who are on duty 24/7. There is insufficient space for training, exercise, administrative activities, and proper storage of apparatus and equipment. Furthermore, there are no female accommodations, ADA access, or sprinkler system at this location. A new South Fire Station, to be located on Continental Boulevard was proposed to the voters in the spring of 2011, however it did not pass. An estimate of \$ 50,000.00 for renovations to this station was forwarded to the Town Manager in June 2011. Due to the limited size and location of the current station, it has been recommended that the Town continue to evaluate a new station on Continental Boulevard instead.

Station 3 (643 Daniel Webster Highway)

Station 3 (Reeds Ferry Station) was built in 1973 as a garage with limited facilities. It lacks space for training, fitness, living quarters, and offices. To better meet the needs of the department, it must be transformed into a modern fire station by redesigning the interior and expanding its size to provide more usable and functional space. This expansion should include living quarters for future staffing needs. This station does offer good southbound highway access on the F.E. Everett Turnpike via Bedford Road and is relatively close to the new airport access road. There is a large tract of land to the north and east of this station that will eventually be developed. The Town may be able to attain some more land and a donation from the developer to enlarge and modernize this station.

Station 4 (Town Hall, 6 Baboosic Lake Road)

This building is currently shared with the Police Department and Building and Grounds. One bay is utilized for storage of the Rescue 2 unit along with sandbags and some hazardous materials absorption booms. This garage, built in the 1970's, has very limited facilities. It should not be considered an operational fire station.

A new fire station, to be located in the northwestern corner of Merrimack, has been in the planning stages for a number of years. This proposed new station received the highest rating from the Capital Improvements Committee in 2000 and is expected to be located on the 11.2

acre “Bishop property” at the intersection of Baboosic Lake Road and McQuestion Road. The plan is to set aside land for an approximately 8,000 square foot station along the front portion of the property, leaving the back portion potentially available for recreational fields and access to the new middle school. A northwest station will significantly reduce response times to this part of Town, which can be excessive because of traffic congestion on Baboosic Lake Road. A significantly reduced response time would be achievable from this new location.

The Operations Division of the Merrimack Fire Department responded to over 2,600 emergency calls for service in 2010 which resulted in over 3,600 emergency responses. This reflects multiple responses (fire and ambulance) during a single call.

The demand for service in the modern fire department has changed immensely over the past years. The calls for service had shifted from fires to medical as well as greater educational needs and fire prevention activities. With this being said fire departments cannot staff for the major fire that may or may not occur, but must utilize staffing to effectively handle the day to day multiple resource calls when they are received.

The demand for service is likely to increase based on the national and local trend of recent years as well as the present and anticipated growth of the community. To meet these anticipated needs, additional staffing will be required. The completion of the airport access road and the Merrimack Premium Mall and the resultant projected growth can exacerbate emergency services needs.

The other issue is the aging fleet of emergency apparatus that can also hinder response time, particularly with maintenance issues cropping up, much of it attributable to the age of the fleet which is an average of 16.6 years.

Public Works Department⁶

The Merrimack Public Works Department is responsible for town roadways, the sewer system and wastewater treatment facility, vehicle maintenance, park and recreation maintenance, and solid waste and recycling services. The Administration and Engineering functions are located in three offices in Town Hall. The department shares a conference room and entry way with staff from Community Development. In total, the department is charged with maintenance of 170 center lane miles of Town-owned roadway, 26 miles of sidewalks, and 90 miles of sewer lines.

The Highway Division is housed in one main garage, on a site that includes a fueling station for Town vehicles, a fenced storage yard, and a salt shed. The new salt shed was completed in 2010. Vehicle maintenance is also performed in the highway garage for the fleet of vehicles from PWD, Fire, Police and other Town vehicles. The garage is located on Turkey Hill Road in Central Merrimack. Although some piecemeal repairs have been made, the existing highway garage needs mechanical, structural and electrical upgrading (i.e. building siding upgrade, overhead door replacement, bathroom/locker room renovations, ADA code compliance needs, electrical panel upgrades, etc.). Indoor space for storing many of the vehicles in the garage is scarce and therefore most of the vehicles sit outside the building all months of the

⁶ Response to questionnaire by Richard Seymour, Director, November 2011; interviews December 2011 and January 2012.



Merrimack Solid Waste
Transfer Station



year, which is particularly problematic during the winter months. Additionally, the gas pumps need to be replaced in order to meet safety and fire suppression standards.

A proposal to upgrade the garage and office space is listed in FY 2013-14 Capital Improvements Plan for the construction of a new 1,500–2,000 square foot administration building. This new facility is expected to be located north of the current maintenance facility and the existing office space in the maintenance facility will be converted to storage space. Although there is limited space at this site, the department would like to remain at this location because of the convenience of getting maintenance vehicles in and out of the premises.

The Town uses the "PAVER" system to assist in prioritizing needed roadway improvements as part of its pavement management plan, which is updated each year. It is estimated that the Town should spend approximately \$900,000 annually to maintain the status quo in roadway condition.

The solid waste transfer station and recycling center is located on Fearon Road and off of Lawrence Road in the northeast section of Merrimack. It includes an office, separate drive-up buildings for trash and recycling, and drop-off areas for yard waste, white goods, construction debris, and other miscellaneous disposables. The facility is open five days a week – half of the estimated 4,500 resident visits to the site occur on Saturdays. There is no curbside pick-up although residents who prefer that option can arrange it through private haulers.

The Town recently adopted a single-stream recycling system (2009), which has yielded a 50% increase in the recyclable tonnage collected. The solid waste facilities are in good shape with adequate capacity, and no major upgrades needed or anticipated in the near future.

Wastewater is handled through the secondary treatment wastewater facility, located off the Daniel Webster Highway on Mast Road in the southeast section of Merrimack. The wastewater treatment system includes one compost facility on-site and six pump stations off-site. Septage and sludge from Merrimack and surrounding municipalities is accepted at the wastewater facility. This produces a revenue source that offsets some of the operating expenses associated with the treatment facility. The sludge is treated and turned into compost which is then sold as a landscaping product.

The wastewater facilities are old (40 years), but have been maintained over the years so that they are in fairly good condition. The facility, which provides secondary treatment, has a capacity of 5 million gallons per day and is only using approximately 40% of that capacity. The plant was initially designed to accommodate large industrial users such as Anheuser-Busch, although over time technological improvements led to significant reductions in water use, and subsequently wastewater discharge. Thus, the facility has more than enough capacity to accommodate new residential and commercial growth.

Sewage Treatment Plant



Currently, the facility is looking to upgrade the compost facility which is in need of new electrical control systems, new blowers and structural improvements to the building. An estimated budget for this upgrade is approximately \$2.9 million. There is a proposed Phase II (FY 2012-13) and Phase III (FY2013-14) facility wide improvements program in the current Capital Improvements Plan. Phase II at \$4.2 million includes replacement of main pumps, a new dechlorination system, a new plant water system, replacement of the aeration blowers, updated control systems, updated electrical systems and lighting improvements. Phase III at \$4.5 million includes replacement of the primary and secondary collectors, a new raw wastewater screening facility, additional updated electrical systems, sludge storage improvements and various process instrumentation upgrades.

In April 2013, the Sewer Master Plan for the Town of Merrimack, NH was prepared by Wright-Pierce. The plan examined potential sewer improvements and extensions to the existing system, which currently includes 90 miles of pipeline. There is almost \$1 million in the sewer extension fund at this time.

Additionally a drainage master plan is being prepared that will prioritize drainage improvement needs by examining areas where flooding occurs in conjunction with environmental and damage assessment criteria.

Parks and Recreation⁷

Merrimack is a family-oriented town, so it is not surprising to find that it has a number of varied parks, playgrounds and playing fields. The Merrimack Recreation Department offers recreational, leisure and cultural programs on a year-round basis, mainly but not exclusively for school-age children. Table 8-3 lists the outdoor recreation facilities owned and managed by the Town. In addition to the public parks, there are a number of privately owned park facilities that are open to the public including the Anheuser Busch Field owned by Anheuser Busch in Merrimack.

Merrimack Park and
Recreation Office



⁷ Response to questionnaire by Sherry Kalish, Director, November 2011; interview January 2012.

Table 8-3: Town-owned Recreation Facilities Owned and Managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation

Facility Name	Use	Size
Abbie Griffin Park	Bandstand, summer concerts, weddings, library events	
Bishop Property	Soccer and lacrosse field	
Depot Street River Access	Public boat ramp to Merrimack River	
Heritage Trail	Main trail follows Souhegan River	
Kids Kove	Playground, wooden structure maze	
Lyons Road Fields	Soccer, lacrosse, baseball, softball	35 acres
O’Gara Drive Recreation Area	Skateboard park, basketball court, ice skating rink , 4 tennis courts	
Turkey Hill Park	Softball field, 2 youth baseball fields	18 acres
Twardosky Field	Softball field, 2 soccer fields	
Twin Bridges Park	Bise Field-youth baseball, hiking trails, picnic areas	25 acres
Veteran’s Memorial Park	Boat ramp to Naticook Lake, 2 baseball fields, 1 Babe Ruth multi-purpose field	25.5 acres
Wasserman Park	Town Beach, 7 tennis courts, 2 baseball fields, 2 basketball courts, volleyball, playground, Function Hall, community garden	46 acres
Wasserman Park Conservation Area	Hiking trails, cross country skiing	87.7 acres
Watson Park	Passive recreation, picnic, garden	12 acre
Weston Park	Passive recreation, picnic, sledding	5.78 acres
Warriner Memorial Playground	Playground, picnic area in Veterans Park	See above

Source: Merrimack Recreation Department

The Parks and Recreation Department operates from an office at Wasserman Park except for the winter months, when it is located in Town Hall. It runs a number of recreational programs and annual special events including the Summer Concert Series, Halloween Haunted Walk, Tree Lighting Ceremony, Holiday Parade, Santa Calling, Winter Carnival, Easter Egg Hunt and two bus trips a year. Seasonal programs that are held every year include the Naticook Day Camp, as well as swimming, tennis, and golf lessons.

Staffing consists of the Director and a part-time secretary. Seventy seasonal maintenance employees are hired each year. As of July 2011, maintenance on the facilities is conducted by PWD, with the exception of a summer seasonal maintenance worker that is hired to keep up with day-to-day issues at Wasserman Park. PWD typically does the early season lawn mowing and maintenance for the playing fields.

An important component of the parks and recreation program is the contribution of the Merrimack Youth Association (MYA). The MYA is a volunteer, non-profit organization that makes recreational sports available to all youth in Merrimack. The MYA sponsors over 2,400 children in a variety of independent sporting activities, each devoted to providing the best opportunity possible for kids of all ages to play sports. These programs include baseball,

softball, football, cheerleading, basketball, lacrosse, soccer, and wrestling.⁸ MYA assists in the maintenance of the fields they use, with the help of its members and sponsors.

Wasserman Park is a key recreational asset for the Town. The Park is run by the Department, and hosts the Naticook Day Camp. Wasserman Park is on a 46 acre parcel of land that borders on Naticook Lake. The park consists of a number of athletic fields, tennis courts, a playground, picnic area, beach area, a series of buildings, and a community garden. Some of the buildings include a theatre, dining hall, function hall, park office, and nine separate buildings that serve as bunkhouses or cabins for overnight stays. A Building and Health Inspection of the facility was completed in December 2011. This inspection report builds on the assessment included in the Turner Associates report on Town-owned facilities from 2005. It details existing conditions and needed maintenance and renovations, but concluded that the overall condition of the park and its components is good.

Wasserman Park



In October 2010, the Athletic Fields Needs Committee prepared the Merrimack Athletic Fields Plan. The plan identified that there are 42 public (including Merrimack School District facilities) and private playing fields and courts in Merrimack as of 2010.⁹ The support the following programs:

- Baseball (from children's T-Ball to men's leagues), school sponsored, MYA sponsored, and organized adult leagues
- Softball (from school and MYA sponsored to adult leagues)
- Soccer (school and MYA related)
- Lacrosse (school and MYA related)

⁸ <http://www.merrimackyouth.org/>

⁹ Note that the Town also has several playgrounds and a skateboard park, although such facilities were not addressed in this report.

What is a Capital Improvements Plan?

A capital improvements plan (CIP) is a road map for planning and funding public facilities and infrastructure. It typically incorporates both the construction of new facilities and the rehabilitation or replacement of existing capital. Typically, a CIP covers a period of three to six years and serves as a declaration of intent by a locality to make capital expenditures on the schedule indicated. A CIP may or may not consider multiple forms of funding.

- Football (school and MYA related, including cheerleading)
- Field hockey (school)
- Tennis (school and recreational)
- Basketball (school and MYA related)

That plan examined the demand for field and court use by residents, the School District, and MYA, and the projected needs based upon the following major factors:

- Using school district enrollments to determine the number of children in town.
- Current usage of the fields by both children and adults.
- The possibility that certain fields may need to be replaced if some corporately-owned fields, such as the Anheuser Busch Field and the Atrium Field at 40 Continental Boulevard, are no longer available.
- The projected future population of Merrimack at full build-out.

As a result of the analysis, the Committee determined the Town and School District needs 26 new fields to meet future needs. Specifically this includes six rectangular fields¹⁰ and three baseball/softball diamonds (one small, two large) for the School District; two baseball/softball diamonds (one small, one large) for adult league use; and nine rectangular and six baseball/softball diamonds (five small, one large) for MYA. Currently, there is a specific need for five new fields as follows:

- One softball field in support of the MYA softball program.
- Three rectangular fields in support of the MYA football, soccer, and lacrosse programs.
- One adult (90') baseball field to support several programs.

Costs, field dimensions, parking and other considerations are addressed in the report.

A number of potential locations are considered for the development of playing fields including PWD property, state-owned properties, private sites such as the Flatley property, and town-owned sites. In order to fund these efforts, the plan identifies several options including making annual \$150,000 contributions to Athletic Fields Capital Reserve Fund in the CIP, establishing a \$2 million bond for new field construction, applying for grants, and including some field construction in the School District CIP.

The report further concluded that any future demand for basketball or tennis courts can be met with the existing inventory of these facilities.

John O'Leary Adult Community Center

The Adult Community Center is located on the same site as the Library on Church Street in the center of Merrimack. The Center is governed by a board of directors and is primarily used as a senior center. The facilities contain a large meeting room, sitting area, kitchen, and support facilities.

¹⁰ Rectangular fields include those used for football, soccer, lacrosse, or practice.

The building, although modest in appearance, is historically significant. The Center was originally built in the early 1900s as a two-room schoolhouse (Schoolhouse #9) for eight grades. It is one of three remaining two-room schoolhouses in Merrimack. Because of this, many Merrimack residents have sentimental ties to the building. In 1970, the building was renovated to house Town's police station and was later converted to the Adult Community Center after completion of the East Wing of Town Hall in 1981.

8.3.3 Public Schools¹¹

The Merrimack School District is comprised of six schools, a Superintendent's Office, a Special Services Office and a Maintenance Facility. The offices and maintenance facility are located adjacent to the high school. They are listed in Table 8-4, along with the grade levels and the current condition of each.

Table 8-4: Merrimack's School District Facilities

Facility	Grade Levels	Current Condition
James Mastricola Elementary School	Pre K-4	Good
Reeds Ferry Elementary School	Pre K-4	Good
Thorntons Ferry Elementary School	K-4	Good
James Mastricola Upper Elementary School	5-6	Good
Merrimack Middle School	7-9	Excellent
Merrimack High School	9-12	Good
Superintendent's Office	N/A	Poor
Special Services Office	N/A	Poor
Maintenance Facility	N/A	Excellent

Source: Merrimack School District

Five of the six schools were constructed in 1949, 1961, 1965 and 1968. Over time the schools were expanded to accommodate increasing enrollments. The facilities in excellent condition were built in the last ten years. The Superintendent's Office and Special Services Office were built in 1973 and 1979 respectively. Each was a private, ranch style home renovated into office space.

As of September 2011, total enrollment in the Merrimack School District is 4,205 students, including pre-kindergarten, early intervention enrollees. The student-teacher ratio is 23:1. Projections show that enrollment will continue to decline for a variety of reasons including decrease in the number of families with school-age children in Merrimack and a national trend toward a smaller household size. Enrollment peaked during the 2000-2001 academic year when it reached 4,941 students and it has been declining since then. Although there have been fluctuations, this trend has affected all schools in Merrimack. Enrollment is projected to decrease to 3,761 by 2016 and then it would start to level off in the subsequent years, although projections beyond five years are less reliable. School facilities, including the

¹¹ Response to questionnaire by Marge Chiafery, Superintendent, Merrimack School District, January 2012; interviews with Marge Chiafery and Matt Shevenell, February 2012.

number of classrooms and size, are deemed to be adequate to meet current needs, and thus have adequate capacity for the foreseeable future and no expansion is anticipated. **Table 8-5** shows enrollment figures and projections from the 2000-2001 academic year through 2016-2017.

Table 8-5: Merrimack's School District Enrollment Figures and Projections, 2000 – 2016

Academic Year	Kindergarten – 12 th Grade Enrollment
2000-2001	4,851
2001-2002	4,837
2002-2003	4,817
2003-2004	4,749
2004-2005	4,617
2005-2006	4,713
2006-2007	4,643
2007-2008	4,539
2008-2009	4,445
2009-2010	4,320
2010-2011	4,240
2011-2012	4,129
2012-2013	4,032
2013-2014	3,926
2014-2015	3,870
2015-2016	3,808
2016-2017	3,761

Source:: Merrimack School District for enrollment figures through 2011-2012; New England School Development Council for future projections

Recreation facilities at the schools are prioritized for school use before use by the public or the MYA. There are three playing fields at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School, but they are not really used by the school given the age of the students, so the MYA uses and assists in maintaining them. The Merrimack High School football/soccer field has lights, thereby allowing the fields to be used in the evening. Artificial turf is being considered to extend life and functionality of field. The high school also has another soccer field and a practice field. The middle school has a soccer/baseball field and a softball field. The Masticola Upper Elementary School has a softball and a soccer field, and the Masticola Elementary School has one soccer/lacrosse field. The School District takes the primary responsibility for the maintenance of the school fields. Additionally, there are two playgrounds each at the Reeds Ferry and Thorntons Ferry Elementary Schools.

The School District employs 722 employees. The composition is as follows: 28 administrators; 364 professional staff including teachers and other educators such as speech therapists and school counselors; and 330 support staff such as food service workers, maintenance workers and para-educators.

The Merrimack School District contracts with a private vendor to provide general and special education transportation. The school district owns four pickup trucks with plows and four vans.

The Merrimack School District has a Capital Improvement Plan approved on an annual basis by the School District's Planning and Building Committee, the Merrimack School Board, and the Planning Board. The most significant projects for the foreseeable future will be roof repairs/replacements (at every school except the Mastricola Upper Elementary School), paving and parking lot improvements (at every school except the Middle School), and asbestos removal (at the High School, Middle School, and Mastricola Elementary School).

The office space is inadequate because there is not enough space for the current staffing level, which is not expected to increase. The work space is considered to be less than ideal because desks and offices are located in spaces that are not suitable, such as under a stairwell. There is not enough space for records storage and there is no meeting space in those buildings. Recent flooding exacerbated this situation. Consolidation of the offices is on the CIP.

The biggest challenge the District faces in the immediate future is upgrading the network infrastructure that was installed ten years ago. This includes replacing switches, routers and miscellaneous servers throughout the system. Over the years, the on-site computer equipment has been expanded and upgraded, but its efficiency is held back due to shortcomings in the infrastructure that supports it. Improvements to the system will provide better service and communications for students, staff and parents. Replacement of the hardware to support system is on the CIP and is expected to be phased in over the next few years.

8.4 Community Facilities Recommendations

Merrimack, like many other communities in New Hampshire, is facing an uphill battle in trying to meet the needs of residents and businesses to provide cost effective services and to maintain and improve its public facilities. The Town, through its Capital Improvement Planning process, recognizes the need to plan, schedule, and budget for its capital investments.

Historically, the Town has established capital reserve funds for a variety of specific projects, building improvements, and equipment, which had as much as \$7 million set aside for such purposes. Eventually, those funds were returned to residents in the form of tax relief, so the Town was in a position to try to replenish the funds over time. In FY 2013 almost \$1 million has been set aside for capital improvements in addition to approximately \$800,000 specifically for road work.

The funding situation is exacerbated by two primary factors that were out of the Town's control. First, the nation faced a significant economic downturn during the 2008 recession, which stressed municipal budgets across the country. Second and somewhat related, the State of New Hampshire was not in a position to honor many of its funding obligations. The Town is now committed to continue to replenish these funds on an annual basis.

Capital Improvement Planning¹²

C-1 The Town should establish a systematic process for developing, maintaining and implementing a CIP. The Town should continue its capital improvement planning process and update it on a regular basis. However, much of that planning is done by the individual departments, as well as by the MVD and the School District. These CIP's are presented to the Planning Board for review and approval. While that helps to establish priorities for each department, the plans need to be looked at in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner so that the Town can better prioritize needs on a town-wide basis across all departments.

A detailed, carefully documented CIP is just as common as an annual operating budget, especially so that it can provide solid legal ground for impact fees (see recommendation below). In addition, it is almost always carried out under the direction of a planning department (note that the CIP is reviewed by the Planning Board in Merrimack) because capital improvements should relate rationally to a community's master plan or comprehensive plan.

By way of background, a CIP is typically a six-year financing plan for a series of agreed-upon capital projects. Projects anticipated to extend beyond the plan's six-year window should be memorialized in an appendix or future projects list, and revisited as the plan is updated each year. Developing a CIP is not difficult, but developing a long-range CIP that a community can actually implement requires all of the following:

- › A complete, descriptive inventory of existing assets – real estate, equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, and other items defined as a capital project under local policy;
- › An assessment of the lifespan of existing assets;
- › Criteria for evaluating and ranking capital project requests;
- › A roster of current and anticipated near-term capital funding requests from town departments and the schools, including a description of each request, the time required to start, carry out and complete each request, and the estimated capital and operating costs associated with each request;
- › An analysis of potential funding sources on a project-by-project basis, i.e., a determination of each project's eligibility for general fund, enterprise fund, recreation fees, grants, developer contributions, bonds, proceeds from sale of existing assets, and so forth, and the approximate amounts that should be contributed from each source;
- › Six-year financial goals for the town;
- › Debt evaluation standards;
- › Local revenue projections, and a transparent methodology for preparing them;
- › An analysis of the CIP's impacts on the tax rate, cash reserves, enterprise reserves, and bonding capacity; and
- › A financing plan for all projects included within the CIP.

Years of deferred maintenance will aggravate the condition of facilities that need to be renovated, replaced or expanded such as Library and the Highway Division Garage. Substantial funds are needed to meet these needs and with all these pressing requirements, it is necessary to address the long-term priorities for making improvements, recognizing that continued deferral of these expenses will result in ever increasing expenses over time.

12 Terry Holzheimer, FAICP, Capital Improvement Programming, PAS QuickNotes No. 25, a publication of the American Planning Association's Planning Advisory Service (PAS), April 2010.

Essentially, the Town needs a more coordinated CIP process that takes holistic and comprehensive view of all the Town's capital needs. The process needs to allow for the integration of recommendations from various plans and studies with other capital needs. An example can be found in the Merrimack Athletic Fields Plan where the Athletic Fields Needs Committee proposes new fields at a Turkey Hill Athletic Complex, which is on land utilized by the Highway Division.¹³

An effort should be made to share information and resources between different departments, MVD and the School District. The Town needs to look for opportunities to break down the "silos" between municipal functions and enhance more efficient resource allocation to limited resources go further. The Town needs to develop a program for comprehensive capital planning to look at the "big picture" in setting budget priorities.

The Town should also consider developing a town-owned property inventory for the CIP to identify surplus property and conduct an assessment of a site's suitability for municipal facilities or open space. The properties should be ranked by relative importance to the Town, based upon criteria that are established for potential suitability to meet the Town's needs.

To that end, the Town should establish Capital Improvement Planning Committee and charge it with the organization and oversight of the CIP; to conduct a consensus process for ranking capital project requests, with staff support from the Community Development Director, Finance Director, and School Business Administrator; identify potential sites for municipal facilities; and monitor progress toward implementation. The Committee would start with the planning efforts that have already been undertaken by each department as referred to in this chapter. A new or updated capital plan should be prepared and updated on an annual basis.

What is an Impact Fee?

An impact fee is a charge on new development to pay for the construction or expansion of off-site capital improvements that are necessitated by and benefit the new development.

Impact Fees

C-2 The Town should consider impact fees as a means to create another source of funding to meet future capital needs. While not a panacea, impact fees can offer an opportunity to bridge the funding gap to provide improvements needed to encourage and support appropriate development. Among other things, impact fees can be used to fund school, park, road, water, sewer improvements. Before impact fees can be implemented, there is a planning process that the Town must undertake a capital improvement planning process to identify what additional capital needs are required to accommodate projected growth. This includes an assessment of the cost and timing of the improvements in order to ascertain the fee to be assessed (typically on a per home basis for residential development and a square footage basis for commercial and industrial development).

There are some important legal caveats to consider including:

- Impact fees cannot be used for staffing.
- Impact fees cannot be used to address existing deficiencies – only future projected shortfalls resulting from new development.

¹³ Merrimack Athletic Fields Plan, Report of the Athletic Fields Needs Committee, p. 21, October 2010.

- Funds raised through impact fees must be accounted for in a fund separate from the municipal general fund.
- Projects for which the fees are used must provide a direct benefit to the development from which the fees were received.
- Impact fees need to be encumbered within a certain period of time or they must be returned to the developer. New Hampshire law has established that the maximum amount of time is six years.¹⁴

Specific Department Needs

C-3 Fire and Rescue Department: A long term goal of the Fire and Rescue Department is to work toward putting forth a plan to build a fire station combined with emergency ambulance services, and house an engine company in the Northwest section of Merrimack. By doing this, response times in that section of the community will be greatly decreased allowing for quicker and more efficient service to an area of the Town that is expecting potentially significant growth.

The Town should also continue to evaluate the options for an upgrade to the existing South Fire Station or the construction of a replacement on Continental Boulevard. To accomplish this, the Town should conduct a comprehensive plan for fire and emergency services to address future town-wide needs.

C-4 Parks and Recreation Department: Continue maintenance of existing parks. Many cities and towns establish routine maintenance plans that describe what is to be done at each park and ball field on a revolving basis to address short-term maintenance issues and identify where repairs are needed so that they do not become long-term problems into the future. This can also help to extend the life of each field and minimize the effects of overuse. The Town needs to review and update the original 2010 plan to ensure that there are contingency plans in place in the event that the playing fields located on industrial property are no longer available. The Town should conclude an agreement with the Manchester YMCA to establish a plan of usage for their new fields being developed off Wright Avenue. In the event that the playing fields located on industrial properties are no longer available, the Town should develop a plan for the replacement of those fields.

C-5 Library: A modern library, as a source of knowledge, culture, literature, arts, music, and a community gathering place in good times and when emergencies arise is an essential element of Merrimack's public infrastructure. Although the library of the future may look and act much differently in the way it serves the community and uses technology, its core function to provide community access to knowledge resources is vital for the foreseeable future. To meet that core function, Merrimack's public library must develop and execute a vision for a 21st century public community library. The Library Board of Trustees has been examining a number of possibilities for replacement of the current library facility. The Library needs to stay relevant with the latest technologies so that it can provide the services to meet the needs of the Town's residents. Once a recommendation has been brought forward, the Town should incorporate it into the CIP process as described above.

¹⁴ See NH RSA 674:21.

- C-6 **Public Works Department:** The Town should move forward with the designing and construction of a new Highway Garage and PWD administrative office facility as proposed in the Capital Improvements Plan.
- C-7 **School District:** The School District should plan for and design new Superintendent's Office and Special Services Office to meet their future needs.

Regionalization of Services

- C-8 With growing fiscal constraints, it has become more difficult for municipalities in southern New Hampshire to provide services in a cost-effective manner. As an alternative, municipalities around the country have considered ways in which supplies can be purchased and services provided across municipal boundaries. Examples include inter-municipal agreements to provide public safety, solid waste disposal, library, and public works services and shared facilities.

Although there are some challenges to implementation of a regional approach to the sharing of municipal responsibilities, such as funding disparities between small and large municipalities, control of budgets and services, and potential resistance among employees, the Town should attempt to work with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and neighboring communities to begin a dialog on options for shared services and facilities.

Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

- C-9 The Town should take a leadership role in "greening" Merrimack through its operations, governance, and management. This is particularly true with respect to municipal buildings and facilities. As an example, the Town has been upgrading energy efficiency in some municipal buildings and seeking ways to reduce energy costs across all municipal operations. These are substantial projects that can serve as models for making cost-effective, sustainable planning and building practices part of project design, planning, construction, and operations.

