



SOUTHBOROUGH  
EST. 1727  
TOWN HOUSE

## 8. Municipal Facilities and Services



**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.**

### Introduction

The municipal 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.

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. As an affluent suburb, Southborough receives very little funding from non-local sources and relies almost entirely on its own residents and businesses for financial support. Although it has

### What is a Municipal Facility?

A **municipal 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.

basic core facilities for local services, Southborough's facilities are quite old, some are obsolete, and most are hard-pressed to accommodate the personnel, equipment, technology and records storage that government organizations need in order to run efficiently. Southborough also has under-staffed departments, notably public safety, yet it has been difficult for the Town to balance demands for excellent schools with its other municipal needs.

Southborough seems to be conflicted about its community service priorities. Like residents of other affluent towns, Southborough voters have traditionally supported their public schools and worked hard to assure that children receive an

*The Southborough  
Town House.*

Photo courtesy of  
Southborough Planning  
Board.



*The present Town House was built in 1871 to replace an earlier building destroyed in a fire.*

Photo courtesy of the Southborough Historical Society

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 Town meeting or other 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. 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 Southborough 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. In addition, Southborough has commissioned facility studies, yet these studies were not conducted under the umbrella of a transparent, well-understood capital planning process. Today, Southborough has major municipal facility needs, a fragmented commitment to addressing them, and very little room to absorb additional debt service.

## Existing Conditions

### Municipal Services

The municipal services that Southborough provides are fairly typical of Massachusetts towns. Like most communities, Southborough 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 are not required to have a police department, yet nearly every town in the Commonwealth has one. Similarly, 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 an indispensable part of what it means to be a community.

### Municipal Facilities

Southborough's government operates from ten buildings, most located in the Town's historic population nodes: the Town center and the villages of Cordaville, Southville and Fayville. Below is a description of the municipal facilities summarized in Table 8-2.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Town Hall*

The Southborough Town House on Common Street is situated in an enclave of civic and institutional buildings that define the center of Town. Built ca. 1870 in the Italianate style, the Town House serves as Southborough's principal government office building. Nine departments

<sup>1</sup> Community facility summaries are based on the following sources: Southborough Planning Department, Public Facility Inventories; The Cecil Group, Southborough Facilities Plan (2005); Southborough Municipal Facilities Committee, "Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment" (2004); Kaffee Kang Architects, Cordaville Hill Integrated Community Center (PowerPoint Presentation, undated); and FY 2007 property record cards from the Southborough Assessor's Office [online].

Table 8-1 Southborough's Municipal Services		
Administration & Finance	Public Safety	Public Works
Town Administrator	Police	Highway
Town Clerk	Fire/Emergency Medical	Water
Assessors	Animal Control	Cemetery
Town Accountant	Building Inspector	Tree Warden
Treasurer/Collector	Emergency Management	Transfer Station
Legal Services		Buildings & Grounds (Facilities)
Information Systems		
Personnel		
Land Use	Human Services	Culture & Recreation
Planning & Zoning	Public Health	Public Library
Conservation	Council on Aging	Recreation Department
Community Preservation	Family & Youth Services	Historical Commission
Affordable Housing	Veterans Agent	Celebrations
	Housing Authority †	

Source: Southborough FY07 Operating Budget, EEO Employment Report, Municipal Facilities Study Committee, Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment (2004).  
Notes: † The Housing Authority provides housing assistance services, but technically it is not a department of the Town.

with a combined total of 22 employees are located at the Town House, including the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Town Accountant, Town Treasurer/Collector, Assessor, and the Town's permitting agencies: the Building Department, Planning Department, Conservation Commission and Board of Health. Together, these departments handle Southborough's core administration and finance responsibilities. Most of them also provide staff support to Town boards and committees that meet at the Town House or available space in other public buildings.

The Town House has nineteen offices and three meeting rooms, and a basement area used mainly for storage. There does not appear to be a conservation plan in place to reduce energy or water consumption, but the Town has instituted basic systems to encourage recycling. Southborough's Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment (2004) reports that all of the departments currently located at the Town House have significant space needs, ranging from larger or reconfigured offices to small conference rooms and records storage. The combined space needs amount to approximately 3,000 sq. ft. Since the

Board of Health will be relocating to Cordaville Hall in 2008, Southborough expects to hire a space planner to evaluate options for reorganizing space in the Town House.

The Flagg School is located on the same site as the Town House. It is a small structure that provides limited museum space and some additional storage and office space for the Southborough Historical Society, which leases the building from the Town.

#### *Southborough Public Library*

The Southborough Public Library is a Colonial Revival style building constructed in 1911 and expanded in the late 1980s. It occupies a prominent location at the corner of Route 30 (Main Street) and Route 85 (Cordaville/ Marlborough Road) in the Town center. The library has eleven employees and an average of four on duty during normal business hours, and it is overseen by an elected board of library trustees. In addition to books and other materials in circulation and a reference collection, the library has a local history room with maps, photographs, books and various historical documents about the Town. Southborough's library is open six days per week during the year and on weekdays only during the summer.

The 1989 library expansion and renovations project included a complete upgrade of the building's heating, air conditioning, and wiring systems. The building's energy management system was most recently upgraded in 2006.

#### *Police Station*

The Southborough Police Station shares a 2.4± acre site with the Fire Department Headquarters on Main Street, just east of the intersection of Route 30 and Route 85. Originally designed for

use as a school, the building was renovated and converted to a police station in 1970-1971. The Police Department has thirty full- and part-time employees, including the chief, sergeants, patrol officers and dispatchers.

The Police Station is in poor condition. It has a number of structural, accessibility and safety problems, not the least of which are poor separation of booking space, prisoner cells and hallways and the absence of a functional fire suppression system. In 2007, Town meeting agreed to fund schematic design services for improvements to the Police Station, but the requisite Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion was disapproved at the Town election. There appears to be substantial agreement that Southborough needs an appropriate facility for the Police Department, but some disagreement about the best way to proceed. The Southborough Municipal Facilities Plan (2005) recommended a joint Public Safety Building to meet needs of the Police Department and Fire Department.

#### *Fire Station Headquarters*

Southborough has two fire stations, the Fire Department's Headquarters on Main Street and Station 2, located in Southville on Highland Street (see below). The Fire Department currently has twenty paid professional firefighters and twenty call firefighters providing fire protection, emergency medical and inspectional services. Built in 1977, the Headquarters building is staffed twenty-four hours a day. It is a two-story brick building with at-grade access to both floors and a three-bay garage that houses a majority of the Fire Department's equipment.

The Headquarters station is not adequate to meet the Fire Department's needs. It has significant space problems, both in terms of

**Table 8-2  
Southborough's Municipal Facilities**

Facility	Location	Functions	Acres	Year Built/ Renovated	GFA	Condition	Accessible
Town House	17 Common St.	Government Offices	2.0	1900/1978	8,872	Good	Yes
Library	25 Main St.	Library	1.7	1911/1989	5,262	Good	Yes
Police Station †	19 Main St.	Public Safety	2.3	1929/2007	9,484	Poor	No
Fire Station I †	21 Main St.	Headquarters	2.3	1927/2005	9,216	Poor	Yes
Fire Station II	2 Harrington St.	Substation		1953/2007	2,200	Fair	Yes
Arts Center	21 Highland St.	Recreation	3.0	1911	9,833	Good	Yes
Cordaville Hall	9 Cordaville Rd.	Senior Center	1.7	1914/1988	9,988	Fair	Yes
Fayville Hall	42 Central St.	Municipal	0.2	1912/2007	8,405	Fair	Yes
DPW Garage	147 Cordaville Rd.	Offices, Transfer Station	5.0	1969/2000	19,769	Good	Yes
Cemetery Building	Cordaville Rd.	Offices, Storage		1977	4,800	Fair	Yes
Facility	Heating Fuel	AC	Heating Costs	Electricity Costs	Parking Spaces	Employees on Site ‡	Security System
Town House	Gas	HVAC	\$6,500	\$23,000	53	22	None
Library	Gas	HVAC	\$9,800	\$15,300	37	4	Yes
Police Station	Oil	HVAC, Window Units		\$8,500	53	16	None
Fire Station I	Oil	HVAC	\$7,700	\$11,800	53	8	Inadequate
Fire Station II	Oil	Window Units	\$4,100	\$900	4	2	None
Arts Center	Oil	Window Units		\$4,700	39	6	None
Cordaville Hall	Oil	Window Units	\$8,900	\$6,000	55	10	None
Fayville Hall	Gas	Window Units	\$3,400	\$1,000	3	4	None
DPW Garage	Oil	Central Air	\$1,200	\$9,900	39	10	Yes
Cemetery Building	Oil	Window Units	\$4,100	\$1,400	3	3	None

Sources: Southborough Planning Department, Southborough Facilities Plan (2005), Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Notes: † Police Station and Fire Station located on the same site.

‡ Employees refers to the number of employees regularly working on the premises, not the total number of employees in a given department.

space availability and configuration. Since it lacks garage space to store all of the department's equipment, some vehicles have to be kept outside. The oil burner is fairly new, but the air conditioning system works poorly and the wiring is more than thirty years old. There is no formal energy conservation plan for this building, but in the past few years, insulation was installed in the attic space, the main electrical system was updated, and some lighting improvements have been made.

#### *Fire Station 2*

The Town's other fire station, Station 2, is no longer used by the Fire Department except for limited equipment storage. The building is too small for modern fire suppression equipment and vehicles, and its location is not ideal for a fire substation serving the southern end of Town. Today, the Southborough Facilities Department uses Station 2 as a workshop and stores its equipment and supplies there. Southborough recently invested in new wiring and a new hot water heater for the building. Station 2 is a small, one-story facility with two bays, built in 1956 and renovated in 1983 and 2007.

#### *Arts Center*

The Arts Center is located on a three-acre lot at 21 Highland Street in Cordaville. Originally the South Union School, the Arts Center is a three-story brick block built in 1912 the Classical Revival style. It is currently occupied by the Southborough Arts Council, the Recreation Department, and the Facilities Department, which is responsible for maintenance of municipal buildings and grounds. The building was renovated in 2004 so that it would be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

The Arts Center is frequently used for programs and activities, and occasionally used for public meetings. In addition to this building's recent renovations, the Town plans to upgrade the windows and doors, improve the heating system, and carry out other modernization work in 2008. Overall, the building is in good condition.

#### *Cordaville Hall*

Southborough acquired Cordaville Hall from the Chapel of the Cross in 2004. The building consists of a large hall (formerly the sanctuary) and residential wing, with total usable floor area of about 7,500 sq. ft. Conveniently located at 9 Cordaville Road just south of the Town center, Cordaville Hall doubles as a senior center run by the Council on Aging and public meeting space for Town boards and committees.

When Southborough purchased Cordaville Hall, the Town anticipated the possibility of demolishing and replacing a portion of the building and expanding it for use as a community center, including the Council on Aging, the Recreation Department and the Youth and Family Services Department. Toward these ends, Southborough retained an architect to analyze options for the property and recommend a preferred plan. However, the Town has not moved forward with the architect's proposal to construct a new 12,000 sq. ft. building on the site. The existing facility is in fair condition and it needs heating, air conditioning, and electrical system upgrades.

#### *Fayville Hall*

Fayville Village Hall was built in 1911 in the Colonial Revival style. It is currently used by the Town's Youth and Family Services Department and Cable Commission. The building's exten-

sive mold problems have been resolved and the building is currently undergoing additional cosmetic improvements. Although the Municipal Facilities Plan recommended demolishing Fayville Hall, Southborough has been reluctant to embrace this proposal. Many people in Southborough appreciate Fayville Hall because of its historical significance and setting within Fayville Village. In April 2006, Town meeting appropriated \$110,000 for modest repairs to the building. At the same Town meeting, voters agreed to demolish the adjacent Delarda house and create additional parking for users of Fayville Hall and the playground on the opposite side of the street. The Delarda house has been demolished, and the expected improvements that will include additional low-impact parking and landscaping will move forward in 2008.

According to the Municipal Facilities Plan consultant, a cost estimate prepared in 2001 called for \$2.7 million to renovate the building and bring it fully up to code. However, the Town believes that its current renovation plan for Fayville Hall will result in a fully functioning building for its departments and for the Fayville Village community.

#### *Public Works Facility*

The Southborough Public Works Department is responsible for highway, water, tree, cemetery and solid waste and recycling services. Its main facility at 147 Cordaville Road, south of Route 9, was constructed in 1968, renovated in 1995 and improved most recently in 2000. The complex includes a two-story highway garage and transfer station. The DPW employs twenty people and does not have enough space for offices, storage of vehicles, equipment and records, or parking. The Municipal Facilities

Needs Assessment and Facilities Plan identified an urgent need for a 4,000 sq. ft. covered salt storage facility and about 4,500 sq. ft. of additional building space for offices and records storage. The salt storage shed was completed in early 2008.

The Facilities Plan characterized the condition of the Transfer Station as fair to poor, mainly due to the conditions outlined above and also because the facility has many maintenance needs that have been deferred.

#### *Cemetery Building*

The DPW cemetery division operates from a small one-story building at 11 Cordaville Road, adjacent to the cemetery near the Town center. The building needs renovations, better space utilization and removal of architectural barriers. As for cemetery space, the Facilities Plan indicates that Southborough will need another twenty acres for burial plots in the next ten to fifteen years.

#### **Public Schools**

Southborough provides public education for its children through a shared administrative structure (supervisory union) and a regional school agreement with the Town of Northborough. The communities have separate K-8 school districts overseen by two separately elected school committees, and a regional academic high school (grades nine through twelve) overseen by a ten-member regional school committee. As shown in Table 8-3, each of Southborough's primary schools houses two grades. Since Southborough does not assign children to schools on the basis of geographic districts, all children in the same grade attend the same school regardless of where they live.



Enrollments in prekindergarten through eighth grade have increased significantly in Southborough since the late 1980s, when public school enrollments began to grow throughout Eastern Massachusetts. Southborough's most conspicuous increase occurred ten years ago, for the number of children in kindergarten through grade five rose by nearly twelve percent in 1997 and by another eleven percent in 1998. A pattern of comparatively high rates of enrollment growth persisted until the 2003-2004 school year, when primary grade enrollments dropped slightly. Chart 8-1 shows that K-8 enrollments have stabilized in Southborough since 2003. A similar pattern of stable elementary school enrollments and slight declines in the school-age population have occurred in many Massachusetts suburbs during the same period.

Together, Northborough and Southborough send about 1,400 students to the Algonquin Regional High School, which is located in Northborough. While the regional high school's enrollments continue to climb, the annual rate of enrollment growth has softened somewhat. It appears that some extraordinarily large classes entered the Northborough and Southborough schools in the mid- to late-1990s and progressed through each Town's middle school, reaching Algonquin between 2003 and 2004. Meanwhile, household growth in Southborough has generated an increasingly large share of the region's enrollments each year. Today, approximately thirty-seven percent of Algonquin's students live in Southborough.

In addition to Algonquin Regional High School, Southborough's high school-age children have the option of attending the Assabet Valley Vocational-Technical School in

Marlborough. However, Southborough students make up a very small percentage of Assabet's total enrollment (about one percent). Southborough also participates in a regional special education collaborative that serves thirteen communities clustered around I-495. The Assabet Valley Collaborative, based in Marlborough, offers educational programs and services for children with severe special needs. Its governing board includes the school superintendents from all participating school districts. Like other collaboratives in Massachusetts, Assabet Valley relies on member school districts to provide space for regional special education programs, including its alternative middle school program located in Southborough.

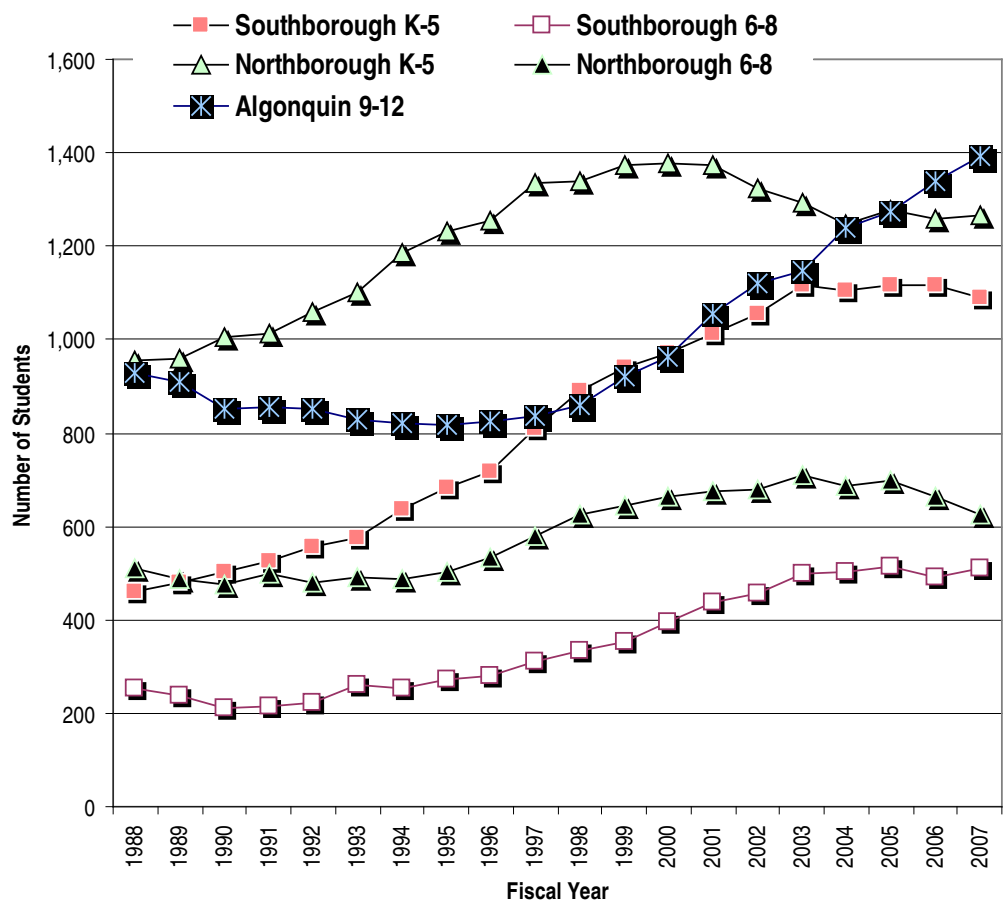
Southborough has made a significant investment in improving and expanding the capacity of its school facilities. Townspeople approved Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusions to modernize, expand or build new schools in 1996, 1998 and 2001, including a new middle school and a new elementary school, substantial renovations and an addition to the Mary E. Finn School, improvements to the regional high school, and phased improvements at the Margaret Neary School. With these projects, it is not surprising to find that a large share of Southborough's annual operating budget is devoted to the schools. More than ninety percent of Southborough's annual debt service payments (principal and interest) are attributable to local school construction projects and Southborough's proportional share of improvements at Algonquin. In FY 2007, total school spending accounted for nearly seventy percent of the operating budget.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Brian Ballantine, Treasurer-Collector, FY 2007 Operating Budget; by email to Vera Koliias, Town Planner, 2 February 2007.

Table 8-3 Southborough Public School Facilities			
School	Grade Configuration	# Teachers (FY07)	Enrollment (FY07)
Mary E. Finn School	Prekindergarten-1	27	389
Albert S. Woodward Memorial School	Grades 2-3	26	343
Margaret A. Neary School	Grades 4-5	26	357
P. Brent Trottier Middle School	Grades 6-8	43	509

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, School District Profile Series.

Chart 8-1  
K-12 School Enrollments,  
1989-2007



## Water Supply Challenges

Southborough has more than its share of main highways, railroads, large storage reservoirs and aqueducts crossing through the Town. It is difficult and costly to manage a complex water supply network like this.

Some of the problems include undersized pipes running under railroads, the Massachusetts Turnpike and Route 9, and crossing a water body and aqueduct. Because of their location, the pipes are costly to replace [and] it is difficult to obtain the permits required to install these new pipes. There are many dead ends in the system, and most of them are difficult to eliminate.

Source: Water Distribution System Study, 11.

### Public Water Supply

Although Southborough does not have a sewer system, public water service is available in eighty-five percent of Town.<sup>3</sup> The Southborough Public Works Department provides water to more than 3,000 residential, commercial and institutional customers. Residential uses account for approximately ninety-six percent of all water service connections and eighty percent of total annual water consumption. Southborough's other noteworthy source of water demand, commercial development, represents about three percent of all service connections and fifteen percent of total water consumption.<sup>4</sup>

Southborough purchases water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and delivers it to residents and businesses through an eighty-six mile network of water mains owned and maintained by the

Town. Water is withdrawn from the MWRA's new MetroWest Water Supply Tunnel at two locations in Southborough: a pumping station located off Northborough Road and a second located adjacent to the Hultman Aqueduct Shaft No. 3 in the northeastern part of Town. Although the two pumping stations combined can pump up to 2,000 gallons per minute (gpm), Southborough's contract with the MWRA provides for a maximum withdrawal rate of about 1,400 gpm, or two million gallons per day (gpd).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to water mains, Southborough's water distribution system includes three storage facilities with a total of two million gallons of storage capacity (but 1.2 million gallons of usable capacity): the Fiddlers Green Reservoir in the northwest part of Town, and the Clear Hill and Oak Hill Stand Pipes in the east part of Town. Storage facilities play a critical role in the overall performance of a water distribution system because they help to stabilize pressure, provide adequate water to extinguish fires, and supply backup water in the event of an emergency. Together, the pumping stations, water mains and storage facilities provide the essential infrastructure for domestic water service and fire flows (gallons per minute available for firefighting). According to a recent study prepared for the Public Works Department (H2O Engineering Associates, Water Distribution System Study Report, 2007), Southborough's water distribution system has a number of problems.

Southborough has experienced significant increases in water consumption since the early

<sup>3</sup> Town of Southborough, General Obligation Bond Prospectus, 16 November 2006, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Southborough Department of Public Works, Public Water Supply Annual Statistical Report (2006), 6.

<sup>5</sup> H2O Engineering Consultants, Inc., Water Distribution System Study Report (2007), 8-8. The 1,400 gpm maximum assumes both pumping stations operate continuously for 24 hours per day, i.e., a maximum allowed withdrawal of slightly more than 2 million gallons per day (gpd).

1990s. While increased water demand is a nearly inescapable outcome of new development, in Southborough the rate of growth in water consumption has exceeded the rate of household and population growth. In 1990, average water consumption in Southborough was about ninety-nine gallons per capita per day (gpcd), but by 2005, it had reached 120 gpcd. In 2006, it declined to 110 gpcd, mainly due to a cooler summer season.

Average-day demand is one of the commonly cited planning standards for water systems, but it has some limitations. It represents total annual consumption from all users divided by the total number of days in a year, without regard to seasonal fluctuations. Southborough's water system study reports that average-day demand more than doubled between 1988 and 2005, yet the Town's population increased by approximately forty-eight percent in the same period. The vast majority of growth in water consumption was attributable to residential users – or domestic demand – which makes sense given Southborough's predominantly residential land use pattern. However, the rate of growth in average-day demand reflects not only the prevalence of low-density housing development, but also the demographic characteristics of Southborough households and the amenities they expect. Landscaped yards served by irrigation systems, swimming pools, and a variety of water-intensive household appliances accelerate the rate of growth in water demand in towns like Southborough: affluent, family-oriented suburbs that fall into the category of "Nine-Bedroom Communities" – communities dominated by expensive single-family homes that generate an unusually large demand for water.

Since the Town's entire water system is metered, the types of water users served in Southborough and their proportional share of total consumption can be traced over time. Residential development clearly drives most of the water demand in Southborough (Chart 8-2), yet it is not the only factor that influences the amount of water purchased from the MWRA each year. Aside from its metered customers, Southborough – like all communities – loses some water within the distribution system. After estimating the amount of water used for unmetered municipal purposes, such as hydrant flushing, fire protection training, or street cleaning, Southborough has "unaccounted for" water ranging from seventeen to nineteen percent of all water withdrawn from its two pumping stations.<sup>6</sup> This exceeds the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) guidelines, which currently call for a maximum of fifteen percent of unaccounted-for water in public water systems.<sup>7</sup>

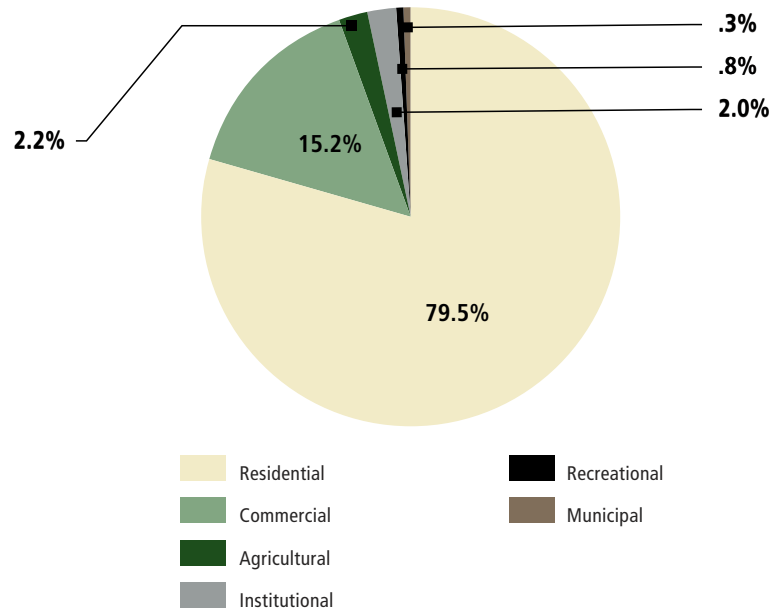
Average-day demand is important for tracking long-term changes in aggregate water use, but managers of public water supplies usually place more importance on a second planning standard: maximum-day demand. Unlike the average-day metric, maximum-day demand represents the largest volume of water pumped in any twenty-four hour period during the year, and it almost always occurs during the summer. A water supplier's inability to meet maximum-day demand can have major consequences for fire protection. Since 1990, maximum-day demand has ranged from 2.0 to 2.7 times

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<sup>6</sup> Public Water Supply Annual Statistical Reports, (2005, 2006) Section D, Water Management Act Annual Report.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Environmental Protection, Guidelines and Policies for Public Water Systems (2001), 232.

Chart 8-2  
Sources of Water Demand in Southborough



average-day demand in Southborough. Future consumption projections indicate that maximum-day demand could reach 3.75 million gallons per day (gpd) by 2020, and average-day demand, 1.51 million gpd.

Southborough's water distribution system is hard-pressed to accommodate maximum-day conditions. First, the Town does not have enough usable storage to assure adequate fire flows, especially during peak-period demand. Moreover, Southborough cannot take any of the existing storage facilities offline for maintenance because there is no reserve capacity elsewhere in the system. Second, the Town has several areas with dead-end water mains, a condition that also reduces fire flows. Third, under-sized water mains in some parts of Town compromise the water system's ability to move water out of storage and into the distribution system. The combination of inadequate storage capacity and

dead-end and undersized water mains means that the water distribution system suffers from weak domestic pressure and poor fire flows in Southborough's higher-elevation neighborhoods and areas distant from the existing storage facilities. In addition, the 2,000 gpm capacity of the two pumping stations is insufficient to meet Southborough's projected 2020 maximum-day demand.

The Town has devoted a considerable amount of work to evaluating options for increasing water storage capacity. In addition to the Water Distribution System Study (2007), Southborough obtained a "peer review," or second opinion, to verify that all possibilities had been explored. The peer review consultant provided a hydraulic modeling analysis and capital and operating cost estimates for twenty-five potential storage sites in Southborough. In most cases, the consultant modeled two or more construc-

**Table 8-4  
Potential Water Storage Facility Sites**

Site/Facility Type	Map/Lot Number	Location	Site Ownership	Cost
Site 2/At Grade	Map 33, Lot 41	Tara Road	Town	\$1,237,500
Site 1/At Grade	Map 27, Lot 40	Fairview Road	Town	\$1,546,000
Site 18/At Grade	Map 24, Lot 3	Vicinity of I-495, N of Route 9	Flatley Company	\$1,673,800
Site 21/Existing	Map 49, Lot 9	James Carroll WTF	MWRA	\$1,910,000
Site 20/At Grade		I-495 Interchange, Westborough	State	\$1,925,000
Site 16C/At Grade	Map 11, Lot 2	Vicinity of I-495, S of Route 9	EMC Corporation	\$2,225,000

Source: Pare Engineering, Tank Siting Analysis (January 2008), ES-iii.

tion methods for each site, such as partial or complete burial of a storage tank, and identified additional improvements that would be required in order to make each facility as effective as possible. The sites were ranked according to a set of criteria, such as elevation, proximity to a water supply, site access, ownership, and soil conditions. Table 8-4 reports the highest-ranked sites identified in the peer review report. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is currently reviewing both of the Town’s water storage tank studies.

### Recreation Facilities

Southborough is a family-oriented Town, so it is not surprising to find that it has several parks, playgrounds and playing fields. The Southborough Recreation Department offers recreational, leisure and cultural programs on a year-round basis, mainly but not exclusively for school-age children. Table 8-5 lists the outdoor recreation facilities owned and managed by the Town.

Local youth sports organizations use many of the Town’s outdoor recreation facilities and help with playing field maintenance. Most of the organizations collect registration fees that include a fee charged by the Town for use of public recreation facilities. In turn, Southborough offers a variety of indoor recreation programs at the Arts Center and in the schools, but the Recreation Department also organizes programs that use other facilities in Town, such as horseback riding lessons at a privately owned stable, and skating lessons at St. Mark’s School.

### Local Government

#### Form of Government

The organization and size of a local government has implications for the types of facilities a community needs and the amount of space required for various functions. For example, governments with a “streamlined” central administrative structure need office space,

**Table 8-5**  
**Town-Owned Recreation Facilities**

Name	Location	Facilities
Choate Field, Albert S. Woodward School	28 Cordaville Road	Soccer, Outdoor Basketball, Softball, Field Hockey, Sand Volleyball, Gymnasium
DiPietri Field	53 Parkerville Road	Soccer, Lacrosse
Harold E. Fay Memorial Field & Playground	42 Central Street	Soccer, Outdoor Basketball, Softball, School Age Playground, Tot-Lot, Picnic Pavilion
Kallander Field	Kallander Drive	Multi-Purpose Playing Field
Liberty Estates Field	Liberty Road	Multi-Purpose Playing Field
Lundblad Field	53 Parkerville Road	Multi-Purpose Playing Field
Margaret A. Neary School	53 Parkerville Road	Tennis, Soccer, Softball, Playground, Walking, Outdoor Ice Skating, Outdoor Basketball, Lacrosse, Small Gymnasium
Mary E. Finn School	Richards Road	Soccer, Baseball, Playground and Tennis, Gymnasium
911 Memorial Field †	Acre Bridge Road	Soccer, Lacrosse, Football
Mooney Fields	Parkerville Road	Baseball
P. Brent Trottier Middle School	Parkerville Road	Soccer, Softball, Track, Field Hockey, Gymnasium

Source: Southborough Recreation Department <[www.southboroughTown.com/recreation/fields.htm](http://www.southboroughTown.com/recreation/fields.htm)>.

Note: The Town of Southborough manages and maintains Memorial Field, but the facility is located on land owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

records storage, small conference rooms and a few public meeting halls, but decentralized, participatory governments with many boards and committees need a variety of meeting rooms with access to records, convenient parking, and access for people with disabilities. Today, the public often expects that meetings will be televised, too, which means that some meeting spaces need cable access.

Southborough is a hybrid; it has both professional staff and many volunteer committees, and planning for its present and future space needs must account for the kind of government the Town has chosen for itself.

For the most part, Southborough follows the tradition of decentralized government that exists in a majority of the Commonwealth's towns. Its executive branch consists of a three-member board of selectmen, nine other elected boards



*St. Mark's School circa 1900.*

Photo courtesy of the Southborough Historical Society

and officers, and forty-one appointed boards and committees that share responsibility for a wide range of programs and services.<sup>8</sup> In turn, Southborough's legislative branch is an open Town meeting: a body composed of registered voters who set the Town's annual operating budget, authorize capital projects and adopt local bylaws. Over time, Southborough has professionalized its government by hiring administration and finance personnel and staffing functions that used to be handled entirely by volunteers. In an effort to operate more efficiently, Southborough also consolidated its highway, water and other departments into a Department of Public Works.

Since 1966, the Commonwealth has operated as a "home rule" state, which means that municipalities have a constitutional right of self-government and authority to design their own form

of government – to a point. Long before 1966, however, the General Court approved local government organizational changes petitioned by cities and towns. Over time, Massachusetts has assembled an interesting collection of local governments. They range from the highly decentralized, all-volunteer governments found in very small towns to the City of Everett's unusual bicameral legislature – a Board of Alderman and Common Council – and mayor.

The "default" or standard powers and duties of municipal officials appear in the Commonwealth's general laws. Many of these provisions date to the early 1800s, and most communities in Massachusetts still operate under them to some degree, including Southborough.

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<sup>8</sup> Town Governance Study Committee, Final Report to the Town of Southborough (April 2007), 7.



By law, Massachusetts towns are required to elect a board of selectmen, school committee, board of assessors, board of health, planning board, town clerk, tax collector, treasurer, auditors, highway surveyors, tree warden, constables, and town moderator, but nearly all of these positions can be converted to appointees of the selectmen by majority votes at town meeting and the annual town election (M.G.L. c.41, s. 1B).<sup>9</sup> Southborough has retained the state's historic preference for elected officials because the Town fills very few statutory offices by appointment.

Southborough recently evaluated its present form of government and studied other models of government in nearby communities. In its final report, the Town Governance Study Committee recommended that Southborough establish a charter commission and pursue a "home rule" charter. Cities and towns seeking to change their form of government have access to three procedures:

1. Adopt the provisions of "enabling" or local option statutes – a form of legislative home rule -- found variously in M.G.L. c.40N, c.41, or c.43C;
2. Establish a charter commission and adopt a home rule charter under the Home Rule Amendment (Article 89), ratified by voters in 1966, and M.G.L. c.43B, the Home Rule Procedures Act, enacted by the legislature in 1967; or

<sup>9</sup> Municipalities with a Town form of government must retain an elected board of selectmen and school committee, but all other officers mandated under M.G.L. c.41, s.1 can be appointed by following the procedures set forth in s. 1B. Planning boards and boards of health also may be converted from elected to appointed positions as well, and a board of selectmen can serve as the board of health, board of assessors or board of water commissioners. Communities may elect their moderator on the floor of Town meeting instead of by ballot at an annual Town election. Although rare, this practice still exists in a few Towns.

3. Petition the legislature for a "special act" charter, or a governmental organization change approved first by a town and thereafter by the state legislature.

In Massachusetts today, 83 cities and towns have home rule charters and 55 operate under special act charters.<sup>10</sup> Some of the existing special act charters pre-date the Home Rule Amendment, yet even after 1966, many communities continued to choose special act over home rule charters, in part for procedural reasons. In substance, there is little difference between them.

Short of a charter, communities also may use the special act process to make a single change in their government organization, such as creating a town manager position or consolidating several departments under a single department head. In fact, Southborough has relied on special acts of the legislature several times since the 1970s. For example, it combined the elected treasurer and tax collector functions in 1976 and made the new position an appointee of the Board of Selectmen (Chapter 483, Acts of 1976). In 1991, Southborough created a consolidated Department of Public Works (Chapter 447, Acts of 2001). Some organizational changes also can be accomplished by adopting the local option models in M.G.L. c.43C, which provide for a consolidated finance department, community development department and inspectional services department. However, the process for adopting them is fairly onerous and there is little flexibility to alter any of the models by local bylaw.

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts Municipal Association, "Massachusetts Municipal Directory," 2006, and Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, "Massachusetts Communities Operating Under Home Rule Charters," January 2006, both updated by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., through January 2008.

## What is Proposition 2 ½?

In 1975, five years before Proposition 2 ½, Southborough's tax rate was \$31.70. Today, it is \$12.54. Why is the tax rate so much lower in 2008?

Until the late 1970s, Massachusetts communities did not assess taxes based on the full and fair cash market value of real estate. Assessment practices varied widely, often benefiting long-time homeowners at the expense of newcomers and placing a very large share of the tax burden on commercial properties.

In a landmark decision in 1974, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court held that cities and Towns must assess properties at fair cash value. The Court also ruled that the Department of Revenue had authority to supervise local assessment procedures. In 1979, the legislature enacted a law to implement the Court's decision in *Town of Sudbury v. Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation* (1974). By 1981, Southborough's tax rate had dropped to \$26.50, and reached its lowest level in 1989, \$9.00. Since 2000, the tax rate has ranged from \$12.00 to \$13.00 (rounded).

### Municipal Finance

Southborough pays for community services with property taxes, state aid, other local revenues such as motor vehicle excise taxes or licensing and permit fees, and available reserves. The same sources form the backbone of local government finance throughout the Commonwealth, yet communities differ by their degree of dependence on each source. As a rule, affluent communities rely primarily on property tax revenue because the state directs most of its aid programs to communities with the greatest financial need. In Southborough, the tax levy has historically supplied sixty-five to sixty-nine percent of each year's total revenue, and about eighty percent of general fund revenue.<sup>11</sup> These

11 Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), "General Fund Revenue," 2000-2007, and "Revenues by Source," 1981-2007.

statistics place Southborough in the upper quartile statewide for indicators of property wealth.

The general fund is the largest and most important type of fund in government accounting practice. General fund revenue includes all revenue not restricted for a specific purpose, so the vast majority of a community's ordinary operating expenditures – from salaries to paper clips - are general fund expenditures. Since 2000, general fund expenditures in Southborough have increased by eighty-eight percent in current dollars and about fifty-eight percent in 2007 constant dollars. The most noticeable increases have occurred in education, human services, debt service, and fixed costs such as employee health insurance and general liability insurance (Chart 8-3).

Southborough's expenditures for public schools have accelerated more rapidly than non-school expenditures, excluding the school system's proportional share of fixed costs and debt service. It is obvious that residents care deeply about their public schools because the Town spends quite a bit more on education than the minimum required under a state formula that determines each community's annual spending requirement. Southborough has continued to receive increases in Chapter 70 aid each year even though many towns have not, yet over time, Chapter 70 aid has declined as a percentage of total school spending, both in Southborough and in the Northborough-Southborough Regional School District.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in the past twenty years, debt service has increased

12 Massachusetts Department of Education, Chapter 70 Profile: Southborough Public Schools, 1998-2007. Since Chapter 70 aid for Algonquin Regional High School is paid directly to the regional school district, it is not revenue to the Towns.

from 1.5 percent to eleven percent of Southborough's total operating budget, mainly due to school construction bonds.

The fiscal consequences of a high rate of population growth are plainly evident in Southborough, for the Town's average single-family tax bill increased nearly eighty percent between 2000 and 2008. Still, not all of the growth in spending can be attributed directly to new housing development. For example, Southborough's expenditures for employee benefits and liability insurance increased significantly between Fiscal Years (FY) 2006 and 2007, yet the total number of eligible employees has barely changed. On balance, however, it is clear that Southborough is struggling to "catch up" with the demands of residential and nonresidential growth, and one byproduct of the stress placed on its operating budget is the shortage of funding for major capital improvements.

The Commonwealth's municipal finance system unwittingly contributes to the some of friction about growth that exists in many communities today. In November 1980, a successful referendum known as Proposition 2 ½ introduced a cap on annual growth in the property tax levy. Southborough is among the towns that have chosen to exceed the cap by following the statutory procedures for general overrides and debt exclusions. This is partially why its tax bills have increased faster than the statewide average: Southborough voters have agreed to tax themselves above the limits set forth in the law. Southborough is not alone in this regard. Proposition 2 ½ overrides and debt exclusions for new schools have been fairly common in high-growth suburbs.

A second feature of Proposition 2 ½ encourages tax base growth. In any given fiscal year, the tax levy can increase up to 2.5 percent over the previous year's levy plus taxes for new development and other property improvements not included in the previous year's base. When the legislature enacted procedures to implement Proposition 2 ½ in 1981 (M.G.L. c. 59, s. 21C), the "new growth" provision was added in order to recognize that as communities grow, the demands on local government services increase. Once the value of new growth is added to the tax base, the extra taxes become part of the base against which the levy limit is calculated in future years. On one hand, Southborough has benefited from this aspect of Proposition 2 ½ because "new growth" tax revenue has exceeded \$1 million three times since FY 2000 – largely due to nonresidential development. On the other hand, Southborough's new growth revenue has come with some costs. A large portion of the residential tax base growth stems from the creation of more than 500 housing units between 1999 and 2008.

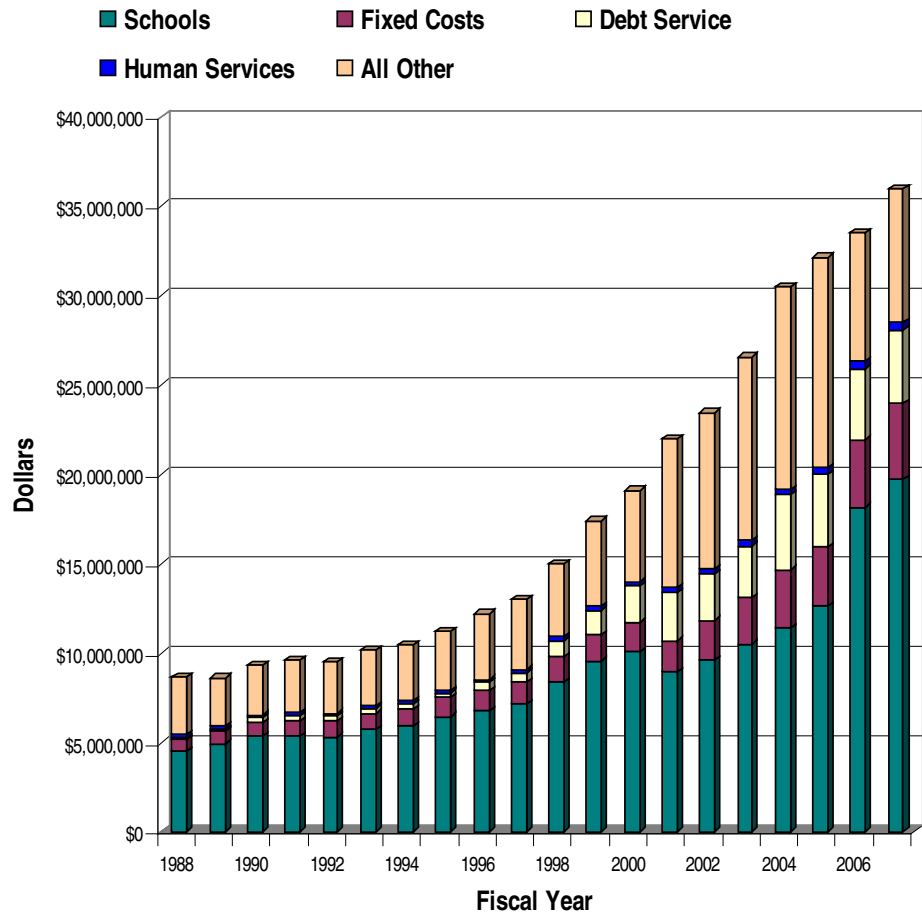
A potentially troublesome aspect of new growth revenue is that many communities have come to depend on it to boost their available resources. When the market softens and real estate investments decline, the amount of revenue that can be garnered from new growth also declines. As if to underscore the degree to which the Massachusetts real estate market has deteriorated in the past two years, the total assessed value of new residential growth in Southborough has dropped by more than half since FY 2006. In the absence of extra state aid or increases in other local revenues, communities have only a handful of options to address a decline in tax revenue growth: reduce the operating budget, override Proposition 2 ½,

postpone capital improvements, or use reserves to fill the gap. Local governments usually try to protect their reserves for emergencies and to maintain a strong bond rating. Statewide and in Southborough, however, free cash appropriations and stabilization fund transfers have become a way of life as communities try to ward off a condition that public policy analysts call a structural deficit.

Like other communities, Southborough has adopted some “fiscal survival” strategies to maintain local services and still comply with

Proposition 2 ½. Throughout the Commonwealth, local services that were paid for with tax revenue prior to 1980 gradually became subject to user fees. In 1980, it was not uncommon for services such as drinking water, solid waste disposal and recreation programs to be included in a community’s tax rate. By the end of the 1980s, however, most communities had resorted to user fees to offset the cost of some or all these services.

**Chart 8-3**  
**General Fund Expenditures,**  
**1988-2007**



As a result, the share of local (“own source”) revenue generated by non-tax sources has increased in the past twenty-five years, from a statewide average of fourteen percent just before the passage of Proposition 2 ½ to thirty percent in 2007.<sup>13</sup> The shift from tax to non-tax sources has been less pronounced in small towns like Southborough, in part because they do not have the range of municipal services and utilities provided by cities and the larger, maturely developed suburbs.

In addition to charging fees for services, communities began to segregate more revenue from the general fund by establishing special revenue, revolving or enterprise funds, which effectively earmark revenue for specific purposes. Special revenue funds and trust funds had always been used by local governments, in part because state and federal grants required them. However, the prevalence of revolving funds and enterprise funds in Massachusetts today is largely a post-Proposition 2 ½ phenomenon. In the early 1990s, the legislature created more options for local governments to establish departmental revolving funds and since then, they have proliferated. Southborough has a variety of mechanisms in place to account for special or “dedicated” revenue sources, such as revolving funds for building permit fees and recreation user fees, and other funds for ambulance fees or water charges. Further, Southborough is one of 127 cities and towns that have adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which allows the Town to impose a surcharge on property tax bills and earmark the revenue for activities associated with open space,

13 Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *State of the Region (1975)*, 74, and Department of Revenue, *Municipal Budgeted Revenues by Source, Statewide Totals, 1981-2007*, Municipal Data Bank. “Own-source” revenue includes the tax levy, local receipts and source such as free cash, i.e., excluding state aid.

affordable housing, and historic preservation. Southborough currently receives about \$230,000 from CPA surcharge revenue and a match of \$229,000 from the state’s CPA trust fund.<sup>14</sup>

### Community Service Costs and Revenue in Context

Southborough is a fairly expensive place to live. Its average single-family tax bill is currently \$7,231, and for the homeowner with an average-value dwelling unit, the CPA surcharge is approximately \$60.<sup>15</sup> In addition to property taxes, most residents pay an average annual water bill of \$302 and a \$110 fee to dispose of solid waste at the transfer station.<sup>16</sup> Families spend even more than non-family households because so many programs and services for children, both school and municipal, involve special user fees. These kinds of additional residential services costs, above and beyond property taxes, exist in virtually all communities today.

When Southborough officials evaluate their employee compensation schedules, licensing, permitting and user fees, and service costs, they often look to a group of comparison communities as a guide.

14 Massachusetts Department of Revenue, “Community Preservation Surcharge Report Comparison, 2002-2007,” and “FY 2008 Community Preservation Matching Funds,” Municipal Data Bank.

15 Massachusetts Department of Revenue, “Average Single-Family Tax Bill, 2008.” CPA surcharge estimated at 1% of the property tax bill for an average-value single-family home, minus the first \$100,000 exemption.

16 Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Advisory Board, *Annual Water and Sewer Retail Rate Survey (2006)*, 29; and Town of Southborough, “Transfer Station Rules and Regulations,” at <[www.southboroughtown.com/dpw/transferstation.htm](http://www.southboroughtown.com/dpw/transferstation.htm)>.

Although the communities are larger than Southborough, they serve as the labor market area for municipal workers and as a region in which location-sensitive costs are likely to be similar. For reasons similar to Southborough's, most cities and towns have a "comparable community" list today. For example, benchmark studies have become increasingly common device for communities to judge the reasonableness of their expenditures for municipal and school services. Despite the uniformity and restrictiveness of municipal finance laws, it is difficult to compare Massachusetts cities and towns because communities have different forms of government and political cultures. They also differ by household and property wealth, growth rates and land use patterns. Since it is impossible to find a perfect match for any town, a reasonable comparison study should try to limit differences and acknowledge those which are unavoidable. Table 8-6 shows that on balance, Southborough falls roughly in the middle of its comparison group for most of the major metrics of municipal finance.

**Table 8-6**  
**Comparison Snapshot of Community Service Costs and Revenue (FY 2006)**

City or Town	Population (Estimate, 2006)	Population Growth Rate (2000-2006)	Total Land Area (Square Miles)	Centerline Road Miles	Per Capita Income (Estimate, 2006)	Average Single-Family Tax Bill (2006)
Ashland	15,678	6.0%	12.4	78.8	\$38,287	\$5,067
Grafton	17,405	16.1%	22.7	99.2	\$32,995	\$3,583
Holliston	13,896	0.4%	18.7	89.8	\$40,551	\$5,548
Hopkinton	14,172	5.4%	26.6	124.1	\$51,316	\$6,440
Marlborough	38,062	4.0%	12.1	165.2	\$33,230	N/A
Medway	12,817	2.6%	8.1	73.6	\$34,526	\$5,283
Northborough	14,681	4.5%	18.5	92.7	\$42,066	\$5,078
Shrewsbury	33,262	4.6%	20.7	178.1	\$39,249	\$3,536
<b>Southborough</b>	<b>9,551</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>\$57,483</b>	<b>\$6,884</b>
Sudbury	17,027	0.7%	24.4	137.5	\$62,775	\$8,956
Wayland	12,970	-1.2%	15.2	95.5	\$59,334	\$8,693
Westborough	18,634	3.1%	20.5	110.7	\$43,638	\$6,234
Weston	11,646	1.3%	17.0	113.1	\$80,002	\$12,865
Westwood	13,832	-2.1%	11.0	88.5	\$53,566	\$6,770

Table 8-6 cont'd  
 Comparison Snapshot of Community Service Costs and Revenue (FY 2006)

City or Town	Residential Tax Levy Per Capita (2006) †	Levy Per Capita % Per Capita Income	Expenditures Per Capita (2006) ‡	Reserves Per Capita *	Debt Service Per Capita	Actual Net School Spending Per Student **
Ashland	\$1,705	4.5%	\$2,596	\$93	\$376	\$9,082
Grafton	\$1,091	3.3%	\$1,858	\$303	\$146	\$8,299
Holliston	\$1,819	4.5%	\$3,058	\$79	\$387	\$8,899
Hopkinton	\$2,139	4.2%	\$3,552	\$222	\$471	\$9,604
Marlborough	\$1,058	3.2%	\$2,178	\$196	\$167	\$10,434
Medway	\$1,626	4.7%	\$2,706	-\$9	\$275	\$8,126
Northborough	\$1,568	3.7%	\$2,586	\$269	\$112	\$9,389
Shrewsbury	\$1,144	2.9%	\$2,414	\$68	\$453	\$7,901
<b>Southborough</b>	<b>\$2,326</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>\$3,510</b>	<b>\$346</b>	<b>\$417</b>	<b>\$9,592</b>
Sudbury	\$2,972	4.7%	\$3,982	\$178	\$325	\$9,364
Wayland	\$3,114	5.2%	\$3,893	\$99	\$283	\$11,157
Westborough	\$1,616	3.7%	\$3,449	\$176	\$569	\$10,317
Weston	\$4,009	5.0%	\$4,800	\$108	\$654	\$14,055
Westwood	\$2,351	4.4%	\$3,713	\$145	\$454	\$10,454

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Bank; Massachusetts Department of Education, Chapter 70 Profile; Claritas, Inc.; and Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Notes: † "Residential tax levy" is the sum of residential and open space taxes.

‡ "Expenditures per capita" is limited to General Fund expenditures. This statistic needs to be interpreted cautiously because a general fund expenditure in one Town may be an enterprise fund expenditure in another Town, e.g., water, solid waste disposal, or recreation programs.

\* "Reserves per capita" includes free cash and the stabilization fund.

\*\* "Actual net school spending" is as defined by the Department of Education.



## Municipal Facilities and Services Goals

### MF-1

Establish new or improved/upgraded facilities for public safety.

### MF-2

Establish a new community center for use by residents of all ages.

### MF-3

Increase sewage/septic options in Town and at municipal facilities.

### MF-4

Enhance communication with residents and among Town boards, commissions and staff.

### MF-5

Enhance facilities for Town staff and departments.

### MF-6

Create a process for identifying and disposing of surplus Town-owned property.

### MF-7

Provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.

### MF-8

Maintain and enhance existing open space and recreational facilities.

# Municipal Facilities and Services Recommendations

- ▶ Goal 1: Establish new or improved/upgraded facilities for public safety.
  - ▷ MF-1: Replace the Police Station with a modern, safe, adequately sized facility that can meet current and future needs.
  - ▷ MF-2: Plan for and schedule improvements to the Fire Department's headquarters.
  - ▷ MF-3: Identify suitable site, or explore regional opportunities, for a fire substation to serve the southern part of Southborough; plan for and schedule construction of a fire substation.

Southborough's Police Station and Fire Station are undersized and obsolete. In their present condition, both facilities compromise the safety and welfare of departmental employees, but the need for a new Police Station is particularly acute. In 2008, Town meeting agreed to fund Police Station conceptual design plans – the requisite first step toward understanding a community's options for a new public facility, choosing a preferred approach, and developing detailed plans and cost estimates.

Southborough should take its public safety facility needs as seriously as it has taken the need for excellent schools.

- ▶ Goal 2: Establish a new community center for use by residents of all ages.
  - ▷ MF-4: Implement the Southborough Facilities Plan by planning for renovations and improvements to Cordaville Hall.
  - ▷ MF-5: Continue to upgrade and improve Fayville Hall.
- ▶ Goal 3: Increase sewage/septic options in Town and at municipal facilities.

- ▷ MF-6: Explore opportunities for shared wastewater disposal or small package treatments plants, such as a wastewater treatment facility serving facilities in the center of Town, and assure that local regulations do not impede shared systems.
- ▷ MF-7: Consider opportunities for using District Improvement Financing (DIF) to leverage public facility investments from commercial or industrial development.
- ▶ Goal 4: Enhance communication with residents and among Town boards, commissions and staff.
  - ▷ MF-8: Adopt a Town manager form of government, whether by establishing a charter commission or petitioning for a special act of the legislature ("special act charter").
  - ▷ MF-9: Consider holding quarterly meetings or "all boards" meetings in order to have a predictable process for encouraging boards and commissions to communicate.
  - ▷ MF-10: Provide support for website development and maintenance, and include technology in any program for enhancing communications within Town government.
  - ▷ MF-11: Develop volunteer recruitment and volunteer recognition programs to encourage residents to serve on Town boards.
    - Create a "mentor" system with a small corps of veteran board or committee members who serve as points of contact for new appointees.
    - Design and distribute a "welcome packet" for interested volunteers, including basic information about Southborough's local government, finances, public service opportunities, and major issues affecting the Town.

## Municipal Facilities and Services Recommendations

- Provide high-quality training programs so that new officials can learn their roles and responsibilities and all officials can stay on top of major issues, changes in state law, and case law affecting the jurisdiction of the boards on which they serve.
- ▷ MF-12: Explore additional options for streamlining and modernizing Southborough's form of government, e.g., a consolidated finance department.
- ▶ Goal 5: Enhance facilities for Town staff and departments.
  - ▷ MF-13: Establish a systematic process for developing, maintaining and implementing a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Like most Towns in Massachusetts, Southborough has a capital budget and a basic capital plan, but the Town lacks a comprehensive, well-understood capital planning process. It also does not have a system for integrating the recommendations of various plans and studies (like the Southborough Facilities Plan) with other capital needs. In other states, particularly states that provide solid legal ground for impact fees, a detailed, carefully documented CIP is just as common as an annual operating budget. In addition, it is almost always carried out under the direction of the planning department because capital improvements should relate rationally to a community's master plan or comprehensive plan.

A CIP is typically a five-year financing plan for a series of agreed-upon capital projects. Projects anticipated to extend beyond the plan's five-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 Capital Planning Committee or an Asset Management Committee to organize and oversee the CIP, and to conduct a consensus process for ranking capital project requests, with staff support from the planning director;
- 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 or CPA revenue, 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;
- Five-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.

Both the capital projects evaluation process and preparation of the CIP should include citizen volunteers and staff – the former for policy direction and the latter for practical knowledge of departmental operations. Since Southborough does not have the “foundation” components of a long-range CIP today, the Town should consider hiring a consultant to assist with setting up the CIP inventory, a capital projects request system, rating and ranking criteria, and the initial five-year financing plan. Depending on the effort contributed by staff and volunteers, the cost to set up a CIP process with consulting support would most likely range between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

- ▶ Goal 6: Create a process for identifying and disposing of surplus Town-owned property.
  - ▷ MF-14: Charge the Capital Budget Planning Committee (Capital Planning or Asset Management Committee) with responsibility for developing an asset management plan.
  - ▷ MF-15: Establish criteria for making (a) surplus property determinations and (b) land use suitability decisions for properties that will be sold or leased.
  - ▷ MF-16: Use the Town-owned property inventory developed for the CIP and the surplus property criteria referred to above, conduct a parcel-by-parcel assessment of a site’s suitability for municipal facilities or open space.
  - ▷ MF-17: Rank or group properties by relative importance to the Town, and consult with Town boards and committees about properties that appear to be appropriate candidates for disposition.
  - ▷ MF-18: For properties deemed appropriate for disposition based on an initial consultation process, conduct a public meeting to solicit comments and answer questions from residents.
- ▶ MF-19: Develop standard documents that can be used to dispose of surplus property, e.g., standard Request for Proposals (RFP) documents that comply with the Uniform Procurement Act, M.G.L. c.30B.
- ▶ MF-20: Secure Town meeting approval for property dispositions (when a Town meeting vote is required by law).
- ▶ Goal 7: Provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.
- ▶ Goal 8: Maintain and enhance existing open space and recreational facilities.
  - ▷ MF-21: Maintain timely updates of the Southborough Open Space and Recreation Plan, and implement it.
  - ▷ MF-22: Integrate recreation facility improvements within the Capital Improvements Plan.
  - ▷ MF-23: Prepare and implement land management plans for publicly owned open space.