

A Deep Dive into NewCAL

A Working Group Member Perspective

Important note: Links are given both via a title and via an explicit URL. In Word, both are clickable. In the conversion to PDF, only the explicit URL is clickable. To avoid a bug in PDF conversion, the URLs use a smaller font size so they require only a single line.

It is suggested that you first skim read this document to get an idea of what is in it. Then read only the sections that interest you in more detail.

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Introduction

The aim of this document is to discuss the NewCAL project, that is, the project for the Newton Center for Active Living. The goal of the project is to provide a successor facility to the current Newton Senior Center. The hope is to explain the reasons for certain decisions made so far and the data underlying these decisions.

Background

Issues with the current Newton Senior Center

During Fall 2016, a number of people who were active users of the Senior Center became quite concerned with the deteriorating conditions at the Center. Among the concerns were space issues:

- The one "large" Function Room is not large enough for the many activities that are being held in that room. This means that people who visit to try out an activity may leave because the room is too crowded.
- The next largest room in the building is the Dining Room which is furnished with heavy wooden tables and chairs. The dining room is fine for meetings where people will be seated but is not useful for other activities.
- The remaining rooms for senior use are in the basement. The two largest rooms are the Game Room and Art Studio which are dedicated space. The only multi-purpose space in the basement is the small Library/Lounge which can accommodate 10 people who are doing something active and a few more people if everyone is seated.
- The net effect of the limited activity space in the Senior Center is that the senior programming is severely constrained.
- The remaining space in the basement consists of a small conference room, an office, and two rooms set aside to provide services. The latter rooms are so tiny that they are little more than closets.
- The staff space for the center personnel consists of one first floor office and a tiny mezzanine with the director's office and additional staff space.
- Half of the spaces currently used in this building were never intended for use beyond storage. The basement area has very little natural light, and was not designed to meet the needs of seniors or any of the functions for which they are currently used.

There were also serious concerns about the building infrastructure:

- The building needs a great deal of work both inside and out. The level of renovation needed would require the building to be vacated for 18-24 months, and it is not large enough to warrant this level of investment for the current use.

- The building envelope has not seen significant investment since the building was constructed. A restoration project would require roof, masonry, window, and door replacement.
- The air conditioning and ventilation systems does not provide adequate fresh air exchange and exhaust to all areas, lacks the ability to provide controlled cooling throughout the facility, and is very inefficient.
- The heating system is inconsistent and can leave some rooms quite cold and make some rooms unbearably hot. This is a steam system that was designed and built into the slab of the basement which was insulated with asbestos. To make repairs, the basement must be vacated, and the concrete slab flooring would need to be cut and removed for access. The steam pipes then run up to the second floor where they are buried in the walls behind the millwork. Repairs to these lines would also require the main floor to be vacated.

Given these issues, the group of concerned senior center users began to organize to lobby for a new senior center. This group had buttons produced with the words: "New Senior Center". The hope was to spread awareness in Newton that there were center users who felt strongly that a new senior center was essential.

Mayor Fuller has been committed to addressing the need for a new facility since her campaign in 2017.

The Council on Aging and the Age-Friendly Movement

It is important to briefly explain the role of the Council on Aging in Newton. In many communities in the state, the Council on Aging is an official department in the municipal government. In this setup, the Council on Aging manages the Senior Center in the community. This is *not* the setup in Newton. In Newton, the Council on Aging is an advisory body to the city whose members are appointed by the mayor and the city council. The Council on Aging may create committees to aid in its advisory role and these committees may include members drawn from the citizens of the city. In Newton, the responsibility for the management of the Senior Center belongs to the Department of Senior Services.

During 2016, the Council on Aging, in coordination with Mayor Warren, decided to apply for Newton to be accepted into AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This network is part of an international effort sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) to encourage planning for the needs of an aging population. The 82 page WHO guide has been copied to the Newton site:

[WHO: Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide](http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87030)
<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87030>

Newton was accepted into the Age-Friendly Network and there was a formal ceremony held on September 20, 2016. The Council on Aging then supervised a planning process that included many community listening sessions. The process produced 3 outcomes.

1. A report in January 2018:

[Planning for a Livable All Age-Friendly Newton \(PLAAN\)](http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87388)

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87388>

2. A set of demographic slides developed in late 2017:

[Newton Older Adults: 2017 Demographic Data Slides](http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87541)

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87541>

3. A list of 10 age-friendly domains that will be the focus of Newton's effort:

[Age-Friendly Domains](http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87539)

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/87539>

This domain list adds two domains to the eight recommended by WHO & AARP: Arts & Culture and Educational Opportunity.

The PLAAN report mentions the Senior Center three times. The Senior Center is described as "inadequate" and "deficient". The report recommends that Newton expand the Senior Center facilities to accommodate a growing senior population.

The Beginnings of NewCAL: Newton Center for Active Living

Mayor Fuller has a page on the Newton site that provides links to all public messages that she has posted since becoming mayor in 2018.

[Mayor Fuller's Updates](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/mayor/newsletters.asp)

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/mayor/newsletters.asp>

In Mayor Fuller's inaugural address, on 1/1/18, the mayor states:

Working together, let's make Newton an even better place for our older residents. They are the ones who built this great city, funded the school system with their tax dollars, and laid the foundation for the Newton we all love. I will launch a feasibility study this year for a top-notch Senior Center with a rich, all-encompassing program. Working together, we will make it happen.

In the State of the City address, on 2/21/18, the mayor states:

Building a greater Newton for the next generation means supporting those who did so much to build a greater Newton for us. We are

working together with the seniors to make a new facility a reality. A working group that includes City Councilor John Rice has been launched. Earlier this month, I also got some great news from Senator Cindy Creem who was able to get \$6 million in funding toward that facility included in a state bond bill. There's still a long way to go before that money makes its way to Newton, but it's a huge first step. Thank you Senator Creem.

Note: To date the project has been granted \$100,000 for feasibility studies.

In the mayor's update of 4/13/18, "Newton Center for Active Living or NewCAL" is mentioned for the first time:

We're beginning the process of scoping out what and where a Newton Center for Active Living or NewCAL, the name we're currently using for the new senior center, will be. The first in a series of meetings to hear about the process, timeline, and to share input that will help to create a new facility is scheduled for June 19, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street.

Between the time of this announcement and the meeting of 6/19/18, the public was told that there would be two committees formed to assist in the NewCAL process: The Executive Building Committee (EBC) and the Advisory Building Committee (ABC). The EBC would include city officials and a certain number of citizen members. The EBC would be able to vote to make recommendations on issues. The ABC would have additional citizen members in an advisory role. There was a public process where citizens could apply for membership on either or both committees. The membership of the EBC and ABC would be announced at the meeting of 6/19/18. A link to the slides from this meeting will be given in a moment.

The NewCAL web site contains links to FAQs and documents concerning Program and Design, Site Selection Process, Community Feedback, Meetings and Presentations, and Supporting Documents. Vision and Mission Statements and lists of Upcoming Meetings are directly posted. There is also a link to information about other area Senior Centers and Senior/Community Centers.

NewCAL Site

<https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/>

The slides from the initial NewCAL meeting of 6/19/18 are at:

NewCAL Meeting of 6/19/18

https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2018-06-19-NewCAL-Committee-Meeting-Presentation.pdf

Here is a summary of what the slides revealed about the EBC and ABC. The slides described the roles of the EBC and ABC and then listed the initial membership. *Every member of the EBC was considered to be a member of the ABC.* The EBC consisted of 10 people associated with city government and 8 citizen members. The ABC added 14 additional citizen members.

The EBC and ABC met early in the process to facilitate the development of the Mission Statement and Guiding Principles, the needs assessment, community outreach, and program development. Once we had gathered enough information from the community on this phase of the project, we worked with the Council on Aging to restructure the ABC. The Council on Aging absorbed the ABC within the Building Domain Action Team under their purview. The resident members of the EBC were joined with the NewCAL working group to act as a sounding board as the staff and project team navigated the project process.

One *important aspect* of the 6/19/18 meeting that is not reflected in the slides is that Mayor Fuller discussed her vision of the Center for Active Living as a *multigenerational* center that would provide activities both for seniors and for members of the public of all ages. The reaction of the audience was mixed. Some people thought this was a good idea and some preferred a pure senior center.

The question of how would a multigenerational center work and how would the needs of seniors be addressed would occupy the city and its senior citizens for most of 2018. These issues would be discussed in large city-wide public meetings, in small neighborhood listening sessions, and in EBC/ABC meetings. The policy approach that the city settled on was stated in the NewCAL Project Vision Statement (January 2019) and the NewCAL Guiding Principles (February 2019). We will discuss these below.

Activities in Summer 2018

The city filled two important professional roles for the project: the firm that would serve as the project manager and the firm that would provide design services. NV5 was chosen as project manager and Steffian Bradley was chosen as the design services firm. One task that NV5 manages is the NewCAL website.

The Senior Center Data Site

The Senior Center Data Site was created during Summer 2018 and is maintained and updated as a volunteer effort to assist the NewCAL project.

[Senior Information for Newton MA](https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/)
<https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/>

Initially, the site posted links and information about Newton and 29 communities. There are now 40 communities in addition to Newton. It turns out that frequently the community web sites for the Council on Aging and the senior or community center have minimal information. Detailed information must be gleaned from the newsletters.

There is definitely lots of data directly available on the data site, but it became clear during Fall of 2018 that there was a need for some data summaries. The first such summary was:

[Newton MA Senior Center Programs and Services](https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/Newton_MA_Senior_Center_Programs.pdf)
https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/Newton_MA_Senior_Center_Programs.pdf

This summary organizes the information about programs and services in Newton into 9 categories:

- Exercise and Fitness
- Health and Wellness
- Discussions and Presentations
- Games and Entertainment
- Arts, Music, Theatre, Film, Etc.
- Language
- Services, by appointment
- City of Newton Financial Assistance for Seniors in Need
- City of Newton Parks and Recreation 55 and Over Program

As you can see, only the first category is roughly parallel to what is offered in traditional athletic facilities such as the YMCA and JCC. We say "roughly" because many of the activities offered in this category are not even offered in traditional facilities or are offered but without attention paid to the needs of older adults. Further, many seniors have limited income and the Senior Center accommodates this by providing services at no cost or for small voluntary donations.

Once the Newton summary was complete, the question was asked: What are other centers offering that is BEYOND what is being offered in Newton?

This led to the creation of 9 data summaries for the 9 communities: Belmont, Brookline, Marlborough, Natick, Needham, Plymouth, Randolph, Waltham, and Wellesley. Each of these summaries lists only what is done BEYOND Newton.

The link to each summary is placed with the other links for that community. In addition, the summaries are also collected on a separate web page:

[Senior Data Extracts](https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/data_extract.html)

https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/data_extract.html

Using the data summaries, it was easier to compare Newton's offerings with those of the 9 communities but there were still 9 other data files to examine. Therefore, one more file was created that combines all information in the 9 files into a single file:

[Summary of Selected Data](https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/Summary_of_Selected_Data.pdf)

https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/Summary_of_Selected_Data.pdf

Therefore, it is possible to examine what is being offered in Newton with what is being offered in the 9 communities beyond what is being done in Newton by examining only the Newton file and the Summary file. The comparison is striking.

The Newton file is 2.8 pages and the Summary_of_Selected_Data file is 8.6 pages. This means that there are 3 times as many programs and services being offered in the 9 communities beyond those being offered in Newton, and this is a direct result of insufficient facilities to support these programs and services.

When this comparison was presented to the EBC, it meant that the EBC did not need to decide now exactly what additional offerings for older adults would be made available in the NewCAL center. There were lots and lots of options. The key was to plan for enough spaces in the building so that many offerings would be possible when the building opens and then 10, 20, 30, 40 years into the future. These spaces also need to be flexible to allow for the evolution of the center's programs over time.

All of this summary information regarding programs and services was completed by December 2018. This information was in the minds of EBC members throughout the planning processes of 2019.

During summer of 2019, additional brief information about senior and community centers was extracted and placed in comments. This includes: clientele served, hours of operation, and whether facility rental is available. This information is analyzed and summarized in a spreadsheet:

[Senior Center Data](https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/SeniorCenterData.pdf)

<https://web.northeastern.edu/rasala/senior/pdf/SeniorCenterData.pdf>

Towards a Vision Statement for NewCAL

A substantial number of Newton seniors were in favor of a "pure senior center" rather than some sort of "intergenerational" or "multigenerational" model. The current Newton Senior Center is friendly, warm, cozy, and supportive. Newton seniors did not want to lose this atmosphere in a new building.

However, the *pure senior center* model has significant downsides.

The reason for collecting the data about hours of operation for senior and community and making this information directly visible on the data site was to make clear the time constraints that most pure senior centers operate under. *Most pure senior centers are open during a subset of hours between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM on Monday through Friday. Otherwise, the buildings are closed.*

Using the data on the Senior Center Data spreadsheet of Newton and the 40 other senior and community centers we can be more precise.

Of the 41 centers, only 3 centers have 10 or more evening hours, and all of these are intergenerational centers or community centers with senior programs:

- Randolph Intergenerational Community Center: 30 evening hours
- Harwich Community Center: 20 evening hours
- Lexington Community Center: 20 evening hours

The next three centers in terms of evening hours are pure senior centers:

- Bedford Senior Center: 9 evening hours
- Westford Cameron Senior Center: 6 evening hours
- Northhampton Senior Center: 4 evening hours

There are 10 other centers that have a few evening hours (most often 2).

The point is that:

If a building is dedicated to be a pure senior center, there is not enough senior programming in the evenings to economically justify keeping the building open. The only economical way to easily enable some senior programming in the evenings is to make the building available to the community as well.

The issue is similar for weekend hours. Randolph is the only center open on both Saturday and Sunday. Harwich and Lexington have substantial Saturday hours. Bedford, Northampton, Cambridge, and Southborough have modest Saturday hours. All other centers are closed on weekends.

One of the key reasons that the city initially proposed a multigenerational or community center model was that *it did not wish to build an excellent facility and then keep it closed on evenings and weekends.*

There is also a *psychological downside* to a pure senior center model. During the large public meetings in Fall 2018, many senior centers users commented that they had friends in their 80's who would not go into a senior center. For these people, the word "senior" had the negative connotations of "old and decrepit". These people did not wish to be associated with anything suggesting "old and decrepit".

Some of these psychological issues with the term *senior* can be dealt with by the naming of the center and by emphasizing that the programming covers a wide range of activities. The town of Plymouth made the conscious choice to rebrand itself as a Center for Active Living. There are two links on the Plymouth portion of the data site that explain this decision.

Other communities avoid the word senior by naming the center after one or more people:

- Concord: Harvey Wheeler Community Center
- Dover: Caryl Community Center
- Framingham: Callahan Center
- Lincoln: Bemis Hall
- Wellesley: Tolles Parsons Center

Other communities avoid the word senior by naming the center by its location:

- Belmont: Beech Street Center
- Needham: The Center at The Heights

Currently, following Plymouth, the Newton project name is Center for Active Living. Whether this name or some other name is chosen is as yet unknown. Whatever name is chosen, the center programming should emphasize a wide range of activities that are appropriate for older adults who are still at their full physical and mental strength and for older adults with limitations or safety concerns who must take things easier. The center should continue to provide and improve services for older adults who have specific needs.

A key advantage of a senior/community center model is that there is no hard transition from going to a general facility and going to a senior center. Community members, as they use the general facility, can learn of activities for older adults and join in when they are ready. Conversely, older adults may take part in activities with younger adults if that is their desire.

The Vision Statement for NewCAL and the Guiding Principles

The task facing EBC (Working Group) during Fall 2018 was to create a model for a new facility for older adults that preserved the features of the current Senior Center (friendly, warm, cozy, and supportive) while integrating community activities so that:

- the new facility could be kept open in evening hours and 7 days a week
- the community could also benefit from the facility

Notice the phrase "older adults" in the above statement. Although the current center uses "senior center" in its title, the mission statement of the Senior Services Department carefully avoids the word "senior". The mission statement is:

To optimize quality of life for older adults and those who support them through the welcoming, respectful and meaningful opportunities that engage and value older people, and empower them to remain independent and to be important assets in our community.

Using the phrase "older adults" attempts to avoid any baggage associated with the word "senior".

What the EBC (Working Group) was tasked to do was *to create a hybrid senior/community model that is not represented by any of the 41 centers on the data site*. The NewCAL center should focus on older adults but should not be a pure senior center. The alternative models (community, intergenerational, multigenerational) *do not fit* because there is no concept in these models of a focus on older adults. What the NewCAL project wishes to do is to create a *hybrid center for older adults* within the following parameters:

A hybrid senior center that is focused on older adults but welcomes community activities in appropriate spaces and at appropriate times.

In January 2019, the **NewCAL Project Vision Statement** was issued. This expands in much more depth on the brief description above:

The City of Newton's goal, as an age friendly community, is to build a large, well equipped, comfortable Center to meet the unique interests and needs of older adults, both those currently using the Senior Center and many others who are not. The Center will foster a special sense of community and belonging for this growing group. This facility will be designed to optimize the quality of life for Newton's older adults and those who support them, through welcoming, respectful and meaningful opportunities that engage, value, and empower older adults to remain independent and important assets in our community.

When spaces within this facility are not programmed for older adults, the goal is to offer well managed, quality and enriching community and multigenerational experiences for all residents of Newton.

The first paragraph carefully explains that the focus of the center will be on older adults. It includes references to the age friendly agenda of the Council on Aging and to the mission statement of the Senior Services Department. It states that the design focus of the facility will be to meet the unique interests and needs of older adults. It emphasizes the welcoming and respectful attitude of the current Senior Center and stresses that the goal is to engage, value, and empower older adults to do what they wish to do in accordance with their individual wishes and strengths.

The second paragraph states that community programming will be done *after* the programming for older adults has been set up. Such community programming will happen in spaces and time slots that are free. During daytime hours on weekdays, it is expected that most programming will be for older adults. In evenings and on weekends, spaces and time slots will open up for the community. It is important that some community programming will be multigenerational. This means that the programming will be designed to enable older adults to participate.

In February 2019, the **NewCAL Guiding Principles** were issued. These guidelines were intended to further clarify matters:

1. The Center will be designed to promote and support the Mission Statements of the Senior Services and Parks and Recreation Departments.
2. Spaces within this facility will be clustered and programmed to preserve the wonderful sense of community that exists in the current Senior Center.
3. The Center will be age friendly, welcoming to everyone, and will be designed and programmed to meet the unique needs of seniors as well as the broader community.
4. The Center will ensure safety and accessibility both inside and outside the facility through thoughtful design and operation.
5. The Center will promote social equality and maximize access to programs and services to those who are unserved or underserved.
6. The facility will be environmentally conscious, strive to be carbon neutral, and will leave a legacy of responsible design and operation.

The Vision Statement and the Guiding Principles provide the context for planning the NewCAL facility and its spaces.

Note: The Parks and Recreation Department has been involved with NewCAL planning because 25% of the Newton residents that this department serves are seniors.

A Change in the Design Services Firm

Before we discuss the initial planning for the NewCAL spaces, we need to point out that there was a surprise change in the design services firm shortly after the public meeting of 3/14/19. The original choice for the design services firm was Steffian Bradley. This firm collaborated with the Working Group on the NewCAL space planning and created most of the slides presented on 3/14/19.

On 4/11/19, the business press in Boston reported that Steffian Bradley had abruptly closed the day before. This decision took everyone by surprise including the architects working with Newton on NewCAL. Although Newton had all of the work produced by Steffian Bradley to date, it was still necessary to find a new architect.

After thorough consideration, and with the recommendation of the Designer Selection Committee, Newton selected Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype [BH+A] as the new design firm. BH+A has had a substantial amount of experience in the design of both senior centers and community centers.

There is a second section of the senior center data site that we have not mentioned so far. This section is called: Links to the NewCAL Project. This section has three parts:

- A back link to the official NewCAL site
- The important vision and mission statements:
 - NewCAL Project Vision Statement
 - NewCAL Guiding Principles
 - Senior Services Department Mission Statement
 - Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement
- Links to the firms associated with NewCAL:
 - NV5: Project Management Services for NewCAL
 - BH+A: Design Services for NewCAL

It turns out that BH+A has an awesome track record for designing community buildings. On the senior center data site, you will find:

- 8 links to BH+A facilities for seniors or seniors and the community
- 6 links to BH+A facilities for adults and youth
- 5 links to BH+A facilities for youth
- 1 link to a center for the arts

We mention this because BH+A is currently advising Newton regarding changes to the initial plans of Steffian Bradley (3/14/19) and preparing for in-depth design of the NewCAL facility.

Initial Planning for the NewCAL Spaces

The initial planning for the NewCAL spaces was developed during early 2019 and presented at a Community Update Meeting on 3/14/19. There were 3 documents posted from this meeting.

[Community Update Meeting, 3/14/19, Presentation](https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Presentation.pdf)

https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Presentation.pdf

[Community Update Meeting, 3/14/19, Additional Information](https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Addl-Info.pdf)

https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Addl-Info.pdf

[NewCAL Program Proposed Rooms / Spaces, 3/14/19](https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Proposed-Program.pdf)

https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/download/presentations_newcal/2019-03-14-NewCAL-Community-Meeting-Proposed-Program.pdf

The third document is actually page 6 of the second document separated out. This document is the detailed spreadsheet with space plans.

In the Presentation document, there are three important points made in the summary slide (slide 4):

- A potential increase of 22 – 52 hours / week the building will be open.
- Some centers see the number of senior visits more than triple when new facilities are provided.
- An enormous potential for increase in older adult program hours.

The remaining slides in the Presentation document show concept diagrams that describe the kind of spaces envisioned for the NewCAL facility.

We now proceed to an analysis and discussion of the Proposed Rooms / Spaces document. The table below summarizes the overall data. The headings in the Space column are copied from the document.

Space	Net Sq Ft	Subtotal
Multi-Purpose Activity Spaces	8400	8400
Common Space	750	9150
Kitchen & Café	1040	10190
Admin. / Support Services	2100	12290
Support	2285	14575
Gymnasium	13800	28375
Building Net Sq Ft	28375	
Grossing Amount	8513	30% factor
Building Gross Sq Ft	36888	

To put these numbers into perspective, 1 acre = 43560 sq ft. Thus, the facility itself requires 85% of an acre if everything is on one floor. The reason that larger acreage has been quoted for the NewCAL project is that space was being reserved for onsite parking since the site location was not known. If most parking can be accommodated via on street parking, then the requirements for the project space go down. Additionally, our program called for, and seniors benefit from, directly adjacent green space. Site pedestrian and vehicular circulation, van drop-off, and setbacks were also factors.

The 30% factor is called the grossing factor and is an increase in the size of a building to allow for corridors, walls, stairways, and elevators.

The Gymnasium space is listed last because there are some issues that require more detailed discussion. We first discuss the other spaces beginning with the Multi-Purpose Activity Spaces.

Multi-Purpose Activity Spaces		
Fitness/Exercise Room with bench/coat hooks	1,500	
Activity Room with coat alcove (shared moveable wall with Dining)	1,500	Clubs/Movies/Stage
Dining with coat alcove (shared moveable wall with Activity Room)	1,500	lunch program
Chair Table Storage	120	shared by both rooms
Ping Pong Room with coat alcove	600	
Billiards & Game Room	600	2 competition billiard tables & game
Activity Room	400	
Art Room 1 with coat alcove (shared moveable wall with Art Room 2)	300	Water Color, Drawing, Ceramics
Art Room 2 with coat alcove (shared moveable wall with Art Room 1)	400	Water Color, Drawing, Ceramics
Art Storage Room	70	shared by both rooms
Computer Lab Room / Meeting Use with coat alcove	160	Tutorials, Vigorous Mind
Library/Reading Room	400	Comfortable Chairs & Tables
Classroom/Meeting Room med	450	tables and chairs
Classroom/Meeting Room small	150	tables and chairs
Conference Room / Meeting Room	180	Conf table and chairs
General MP Storage	70	Supplies
Subtotal		8,400 NSF

There are three 1500 sq ft spaces.

- The Fitness/Exercise room is not intended as a room with fitness machines. It is intended as a large open room in which various exercise classes may be held where it is important for the class to follow the lead of an instructor. It is likely that this room will have mirrors along at least one wall.
- The large Activity room will permit more general free form activity. There may also be performances of music, song, theatre, or film. Performances may be done by groups in the NewCAL center, by student groups from the high schools, or by local semi-professional groups.
- The Dining Room will serve the daily lunch provided by the center for older adults. The tables and chairs should be easy to set up and store so the room may also serve the role of an activity room, or performance venue.

There are a variety of smaller rooms.

- There are two rooms for games, Ping Pong and Billiards.
- There are two rooms for Art.
- There is a Library/Reading room to hold the current Senior Center book collection and to provide a space for quiet reading or quiet conversation.
- There are four spaces for meetings or tutorials.

The Common Space is small in area but important.

Common Space		
Lobby /Lounge /Art & Cultural Displays	600	Lobby/Lounge Area - Visit/Read
Library Pick Up/Drop Off Area (sim size to conf table)	50	
Store	100	Store
Subtotal		750 NSF

The Lobby /Lounge area would provide a space for people to meet and chat. The lounge would be an expanded version of the first-floor lounge of the current Senior Center that has become a critical place for social interaction. The lobby would provide space for art displays from local artists including those who attend the center. Many citizens of Newton have requested a space for art displays.

Kitchen & Café		
Juice Bar/Café	200	
Vending	60	
Kitchen (commercial / teaching)	500	Kitchen/Serving Counter
Pantry	200	
Receiving	80	
Subtotal		1,040 NSF

The primary purpose of the Kitchen is to serve lunch. The Kitchen may be used for cooking classes for older adults.

The plan envisions a small cafe which is another informal social space. The cafe will have beverages and snacks available for purchase.

Admin. / Support Services		
Receipt/Sign In (also for volunteer Staff & Customer Service)		
Dir Office with Conf./Meeting Area		
Shared Work (Exec. Admin., Admin Asst., Admin Volunteers)		
Parks & Recreation Coordinator		
Department of Senior Services Program Coordinator		
Department of Senior Services Asst Program Coordinator		
Outreach & Engagement Coordinator		
Social Work		
Support Services: Shine, AARP Tax, Parking Stick., Art Community, etc.)		
Vol Coordinator + Visiting Staff		
Family Conference Room		
Health Room		
Durable Medical Equipment (DME)		
Copy Work Room		
Coat Closet		
Staff Lounge		
Subtotal	2,100 NSF	

The Admin / Support space is the central place where the NewCAL center will perform its service role for older adults. These services will be provided both by paid professionals and by volunteers. Several rooms will be required for these services. The area will also provide offices for the Senior Services director and staff and for a Parks & Recreation coordinator when that person is in the building.

Support		
Toilet Rms - Accessible (2 per floor)	100	Public/staff use
Family Toilet with Shower	85	Public/staff use
Women's Room (2 stalls each floor)	240	first floor
Women's Shower/Dressing Room adj (near gym)	110	first floor locate next to gym
Men's Room (2 stalls + Urinal first floor)	240	first floor
Men's Shower Room adj (near gym)	110	first floor locate next to gym
Mech/Elec/Tel-Data/Sprinkler	800	
General Storage	500	Storage
Custodial Space	100	Storage
Subtotal	2,285 NSF	

The Support space contains all of the mundane spaces a building must have: toilets and equipment (mechanical, electrical, telephone, internet, sprinkler systems). There is also provision for a small number of showers but whether or not these shower facilities will be included in the building is still under discussion.

Gymnasium		
Gym (may be used for more than one activity at a time)	9,800	114' x 86' includes retractable bleachers
Gym Walking Track (second Floor)	3,700	114' x 86' gym below w/10' perim. Walk above
Gym Storage	300	
Subtotal	13,800 NSF	

Recall, that all areas in the NewCAL space plan were subject to a 30% grossing factor. For the gymnasium, this increment amounts to:

$$13800 \times 30\% = 4140$$

Hence, the space being allocated for the gymnasium is:

$$17940 = 13800 + 4140.$$

In a recent Working Group meeting, BH+A suggested that this space allocation is much too large. There are two reasons:

- The walking track is suspended above the gymnasium floor. One must account for the track in the building costs but not in the gymnasium footprint. The correct footprint = $9800 + 300 = 10100$ sq feet.
- Second, the grossing factor of 30% is much too high. The primary stairs and elevators to the walking track will be inside the main NewCAL center and will be accounted for by the grossing factor of the center. At most, there will be extra stairs along an outside wall and these stairs will require only a small grossing factor.

BH+A *was not ready to give a specific gymnasium design for Newton* but one may get a good idea of their thinking by studying the BH+A gymnasium design for the Randolph Intergenerational Center and for other centers they have designed.

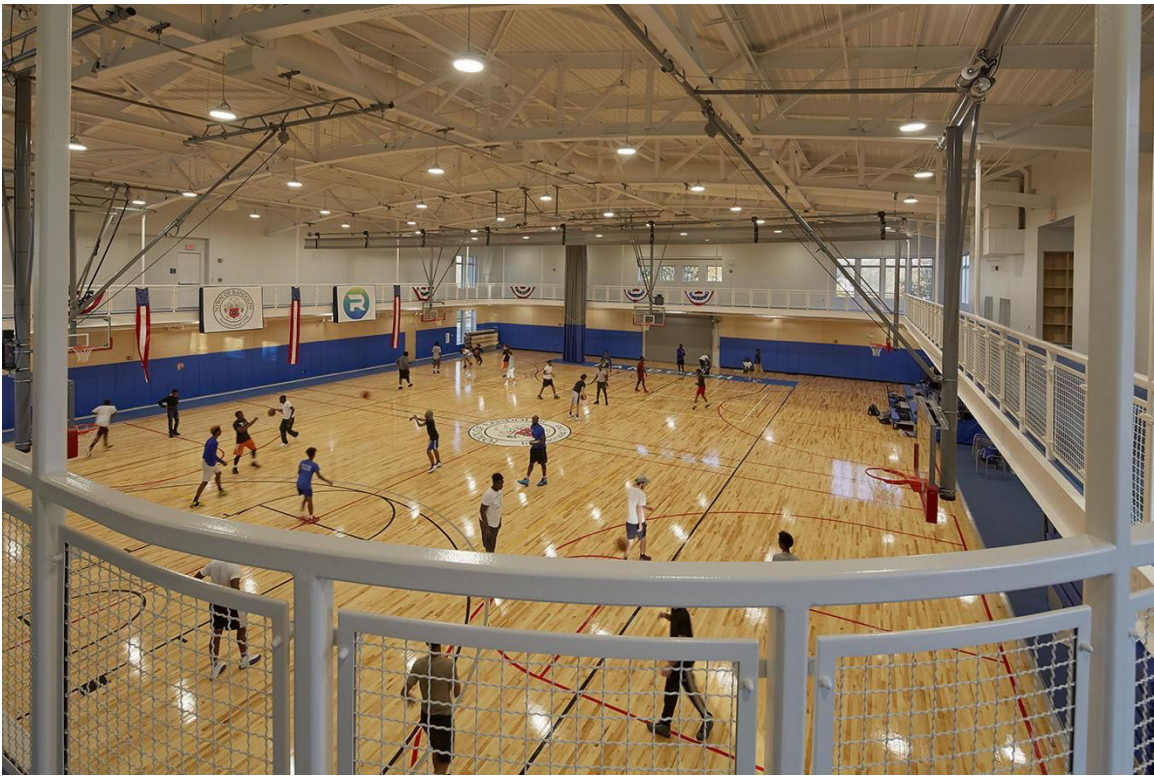
The BH+A gymnasium design for the Randolph Intergenerational Center

The direct link to the BH+A web site about Randolph is:

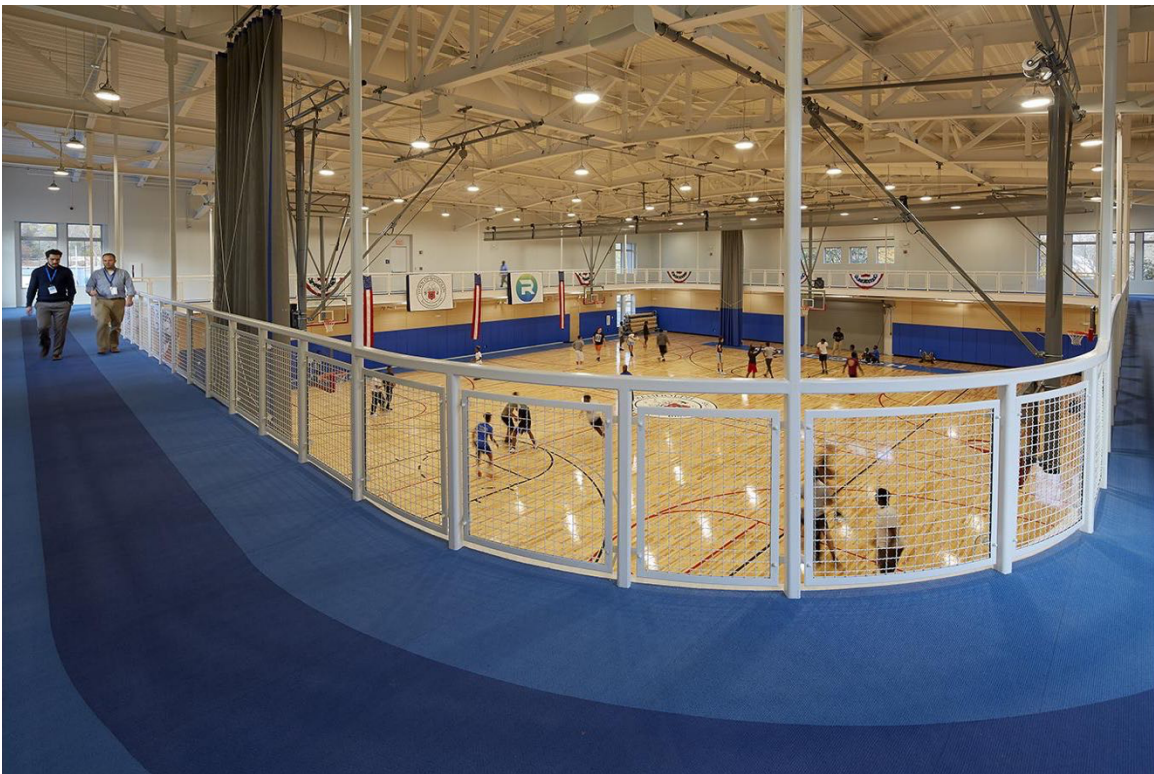
[BH+A on the Randolph Intergenerational Center](https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/intergenerational-community-center)

<https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/intergenerational-community-center>

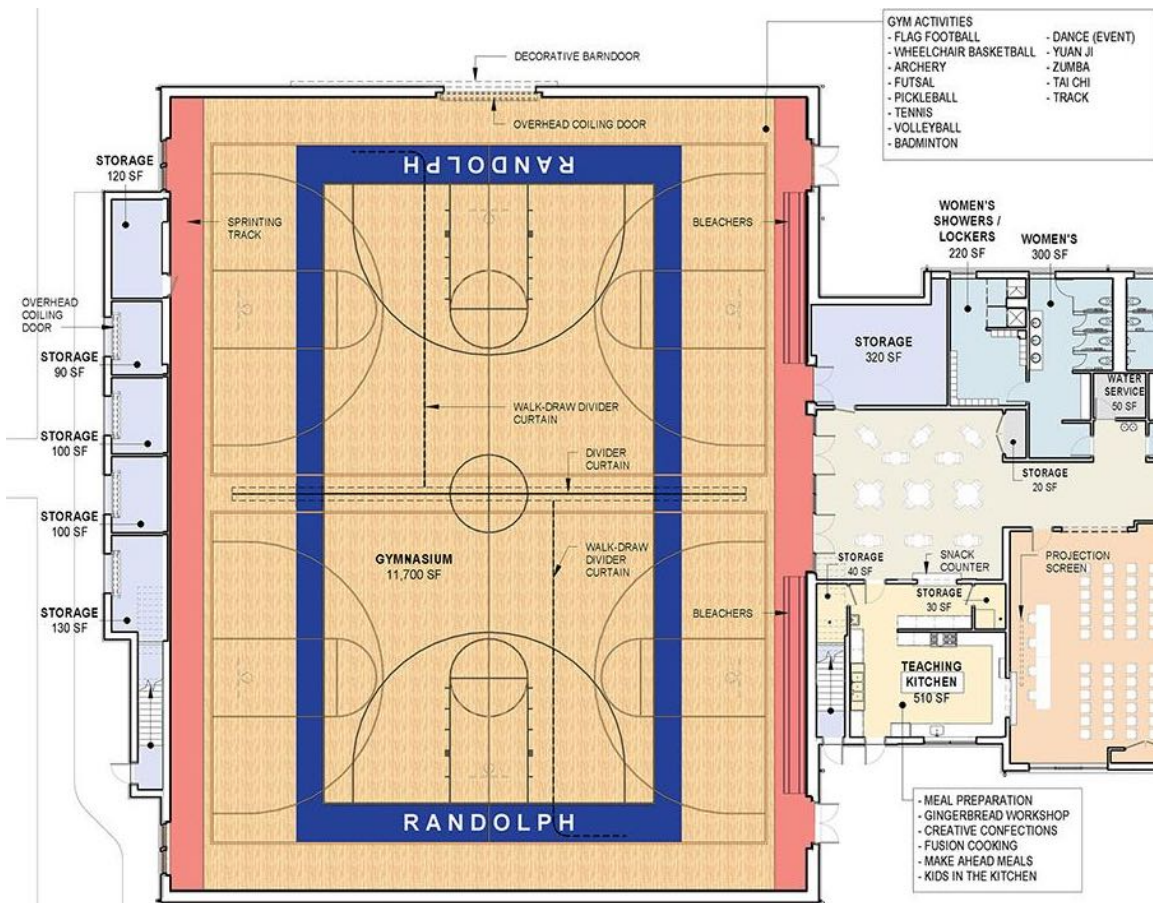
We first extract photographs and floor plans from this presentation. For this, we skip to the next page.



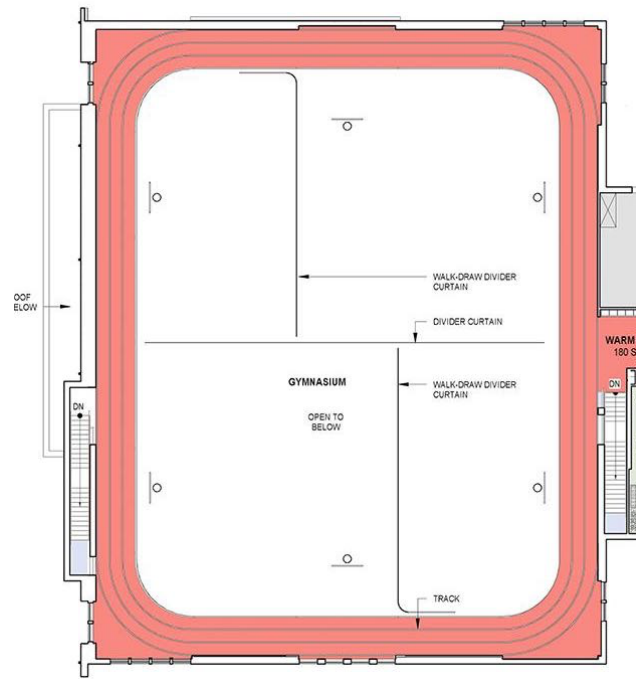
View of the Randolph Gymnasium #1



View of the Randolph Gymnasium #2



Randolph Gymnasium Floor Plan for Floor 1



Randolph Gymnasium Floor Plan for Floor 2

Let us make some comments based on this data about the Randolph gymnasium.

The gymnasium is beautiful. Further, the activities listed on the first-floor plan include many suitable for older adults.

GYM ACTIVITIES	
- FLAG FOOTBALL	- DANCE (EVENT)
- WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL	- YUAN JI
- ARCHERY	- ZUMBA
- FUTSAL	- TAI CHI
- PICKLEBALL	- TRACK
- TENNIS	
- VOLLEYBALL	
- BADMINTON	

The gym allows for 6 basketball hoops, 1 each on the short walls and 2 each on the long walls. The gym space may be partitioned by screens that descend from the ceiling. See the second-floor plan. The main partition divides the gym into two halves along the midline of the gym. Each half may then be further partitioned. Randolph happens to choose an asymmetrical secondary division scheme. Newton might adopt this scheme or might decide to make the secondary partitions 50-50. In either case, screen partitions allow the gym to be used for any number of distinct activities from 1 to 4.

The first-floor plan shows that the gym has retractable bleachers along part of the wall that connects to the rest of the center. These bleachers are not shown in the photos.

The area of the gym as listed on the first-floor plan is 11700 sq ft. Assuming a more modest grossing factor of 10%, the gross footprint of the gym is **12870 sq ft**. This is quite a bit smaller than the gym estimate in the NewCAL presentation of 3/14/19. In terms of acres, this amounts to 30% of an acre. Ultimately, the exact dimension of the gym has yet to be set, but this if anything this number is likely to be reduced to some extent as we refine the design.

Let us briefly summarize three other BH+A centers that have gymnasiums.

Kittery ME

[Kittery Community Center at Frisbee Common: Kittery ME](https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/kittery-community-center-at-frisbee-common)

<https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/kittery-community-center-at-frisbee-common>

This center has a gymnasium similar to Randolph with a track. There do not appear to be bleachers. Adjoining the track is a room with fitness equipment and glass windows that face the track and overlook the gym.

The center also has a multi-purpose space that may serve as a performance space.



Kittery: MP Space as Performance Space



Kittery: Seating Shown Open



Kittery: Seating Shown Closed

This room might be an interesting model for the large Activity Room in NewCAL.

Roxbury MA

Shelburne Community Center: Roxbury MA

<https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/shelburne-community-center>

This center has a gymnasium similar to Randolph with bleachers but no track.

Malta NY

David R. Meager Community Center: Malta NY

<https://bhplus.com/our-work/recreation-community-centers/david-r-meager-community-center>

This center has a gymnasium similar to Randolph with no bleachers and no track.

Thoughts about Gymnasium Design

Considering the four examples discussed, the 6 basketball hoop design seems advantageous and forms a common design thread.

Considering the questions of a track and bleachers, the four examples cover all four options:

- Randolph has both a track and bleachers.
- Kittery has a track but no bleachers.
- Roxbury has bleachers but no track.
- Malta has neither a track nor bleachers.

During community meetings, Newton seniors expressed interest in some form of track for walking exercise either within a gym or as an external covered balcony around the second floor of the building. The option of "within a gym" seems to be the much better option.

Kittery provides a creative approach to seating. Instead of bleachers in the gym, Kittery has a specific multi-purpose space with comfortable retractable seating that makes an excellent space for performances.

The Town of Harwich provides interesting information about the use of its gym and the bleachers. This is an excerpt.

The Gymnasium is used for exercise classes, recreational events, afterschool programs, elections, Town Meetings and special events for the Town of Harwich ... Hosting four sets of bleachers, the gymnasium can seat between 400 and 500 adults, or approximately 600 children. Rows of folding chairs are added to seat larger groups for special events, such as Town Meeting.

The conclusion that may be drawn from these varying examples is that *it is quite advantageous for a community building to have at least one space in which a substantial amount of seating may be quickly deployed and quickly removed.* This provides flexibility for all kinds of events.

The Importance of a Gymnasium for the NewCAL Project

A key design goal for the NewCAL project is *to plan for enough spaces in the building so that many offerings would be possible when the building opens and then 10, 20, 30, 40 years into the future.* The Working Group is under no illusions that a NewCAL building can be built now and then expanded later in the future. The constraints on land use in Newton will only increase. Siting can be done in a way that allows future growth, but our plans are focused on designing the new facility in a way that will absorb that growth within the facility due to ample flexible multipurpose spaces that a can evolve over time.

Members of the Working Group visited many new senior/community centers in the state. Talking to building directors, there was one constant refrain: "We built it too small". The Working Group is determined not to forward a proposal that makes this mistake. Hopefully, the city will agree that it is better to build large than to build small and regret later.

Earlier, we have discussed the six kinds of spaces proposed, especially, the Multi-Purpose Activity Spaces. The three 1500 sq ft spaces are a big improvement over the tiny spaces in the current Senior Center.

The most fundamental role that the gymnasium plays for the NewCAL project is that it is the *ultimate multi-purpose space.* As is evident from the list of activities in the Randolph gymnasium, a gym can provide space for older adult activities quite apart from the fact that it can also provide space for more athletic activities for more active people.

In the planning of 3/14/19, the gym can accommodate one full court basketball game, two volleyball courts, or four pickle ball courts. If we follow the larger layout of the Randolph gym, we will be able to have two full court basketball games at once or 6 separate basketball games using one hoop each.

The NewCAL gym was allocated 9800 sq ft in the 3/14/19 plans. The Randolph gym is 11700 sq ft. As we have discussed, it seems wise to go with the larger size. In that case, 1/4 of the gym is 2900 sq ft.

The 2900 sq ft size is a perfect next stage when activities using the 1500 sq ft spaces in the main center grow more popular and need larger space. For instance, Zumba is extremely popular now and we might envision Zumba as one of the first

activities to move into a space of 2900 sq ft = 1/4 of the gym. We might also imagine at least one pickle ball court being set up in another 1/4 of the gym during weekday daytime hours. These are of course just possibilities.

Another reason to have a gymnasium is to *attract a larger proportion of older adults to utilize the center*. Many older adults consider themselves to be in reasonably good physical shape and, as we have said, do not wish to go to a place that they see as only for the "old and decrepit". *Having a gymnasium sends the message that NewCAL supports older adults who are physically active*. Once an older adult starts to come to NewCAL, they may learn about other activities offered including sessions on health and wellness, talks and discussions, games, art, music, film, etc. This participation will then permit them to integrate into the social milieu of the center.

Another reason to have a gymnasium is to *promote multigenerational activity*. There is no reason why older adults and younger adults cannot participate in some athletic activities such as volleyball together, or play pool together in a game room, or make art together. Some activities have no age boundaries.

Finally, all Working Group planning has been based on cooperation between the Department of Senior Services and the Parks & Recreation Department. The internal discussions have been smooth and respectful. We have summarized the NewCAL mission in the brief phrase:

A hybrid senior center that is focused on older adults but welcomes community activities in appropriate spaces and at appropriate times.

Parks & Recreation has carefully explained that its gymnasium space is maxed out on evenings and weekends. This was confirmed with the analysis posted on the project website which shows that gym utilization rates for city and school gyms.

A Footprint Calculation for the NewCAL Facility

In this section, we calculate the footprint for the NewCAL building. We have already done this for the gymnasium, and we will recall the numbers in a moment. For the main building, the footprint depends on what percentage of the area is on the first floor and what is on the second floor. We will do three scenarios: 50-50 split, 60-40 split, and 70-30 split. The actual split depends on what is the best grouping of spaces on each floor to best meet the needs of the older adults who will use NewCAL.

We summarize the earlier gymnasium footprint calculation:

Gymnasium	Sq Ft	Factor
Inner Footprint	11700	
Grossing	1170	10%
Outer Footprint	12870	

We next compute the total area of the main facility using the value 14575 for the sum of the inner areas of the spaces besides the gymnasium [see page 15].

Main Facility	Sq Ft	Factor
Inner Area	14575	
Grossing	4373	30%
Total Area	18948	

We next compute the footprint of the building under the three scenarios. The Total Area column is the starting point for the three split computations. The gymnasium footprint is constant whereas the main facility footprint depends on the split.

Main Facility + Gym	Total Area	50-50 Split	60-40 Split	70-30 Split
Main Facility Footprint	18948	9474	11369	13263
Gymnasium Footprint	12870	12870	12870	12870
Total Footprint	31818	22344	24239	26133
Total Footprint as % acre	73%	51%	56%	60%

The results of this calculation are quite interesting. Even with a 70-30 split of area between the first and second floors, the building will occupy only 26133 sq ft or 60% of an acre. The figure of 2.0 to 2.5 acres mentioned for the NewCAL project site is primarily taken up by land for on-site parking, site circulation and surrounding green space. If little or no on-site parking is needed and if NewCAL is placed next to green space, the area needs for the NewCAL project are dramatically smaller.

Postscript

1. In recent months, the Working Group has been occupied with the difficult task of site selection. Since this topic is the focus of several large memoranda already posted on the NewCAL web site, nothing will be said here about site selection.
2. Some senior/community centers officially rent spaces to the public and set formal policies for this rental. Currently, the Newton Senior Center does a small amount of informal rental activity. The Working Group has yet to have a discussion about whether or not NewCAL will offer rental in a formal manner.