

SERVICES & FACILITIES

The Services and Facilities chapter acts as the guiding compass for the Town's service delivery and the well-being of its residents. This chapter assesses current services, including those provided by police and fire departments, waste management, road infrastructure, and community services. It provides a blueprint that can be used to ensure the efficient delivery of essential government functions, thereby sustaining quality of life, and shaping Barre's future.

Barre residents' top services and facilities priority is the construction of a new Fire Department headquarters. There is also a strong desire for increased capacity in the Highway

Department and Town administrative services, and for the Town to offer more recreation opportunities. Looking to the future, the resiliency of Town services is a key concern. Strong water and sewer infrastructure, efficient emergency management, and effective communication are all key strategies to maintain Town operations in the face of climate change.

There is a need for social services and programs in addition to basic municipal services. Specifically, a designated youth space and additional senior services would improve quality of life and strengthen Barre's sense of community.

THEMES

- Fostering community
- Resilient infrastructure
- Quality facilities and equipment
- Government services and communication



SERVICES & FACILITIES CONDITIONS

Quabbin Regional Schools

Quabbin Regional Schools serve the Town of Barre and neighboring communities. Two Quabbin facilities are in Barre. Ruggles Lane Elementary School features a baseball diamond and a soccer field. Quabbin Regional Middle and High School boast a range of recreational facilities, including a football field with a quarter-mile track, multiple soccer fields, and three baseball fields of varying sizes, alongside indoor basketball and athletic courts. The quality of the regional school system was an important factor in choosing to live in Barre for a sizeable percentage of residents.

DID THE QUALITY OF THE BARRE AND QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS FACTOR INTO YOUR DECISION TO LIVE IN BARRE?	
Yes	30%
No	59%
Other	4%
None of the above	7%

Figure SF1: Survey Question Add Survey Reference "Did the quality of the Barre and Quabbin Regional School Districts factor into your decision to live in Barre?"

Woods Memorial Library

The library is a staple in the community of Barre. The building has undergone multiple renovations, doubling in size since its construction in 1886. The library staffs a library director, an adult and technology services librarian, a youth services librarian, a cataloging librarian, and three part-time library assistants. The library is owned and maintained by the Barre Library Association, composed of donors and volunteers. Ongoing facility maintenance is performed through a partnership between the Library Association and the Town. The library offers programs and events for all ages. Made possible through grants, local collaboration, and donations, the programs are always free and open to the public. The library also offers digital resources for recreation, education, and research.

Although the building was expanded in the past, the library is at capacity spatially. There is potential to renovate the foundation and drainage to repurpose space currently used for storage and convert it to public uses.

71% OF RESIDENTS SATISFIED WITH LIBRARY SERVICES

70% OF RESIDENTS SATISFIED WITH LIBRARY FACILITY

(2023 Community Survey)

The number of teenagers attending the library is rapidly increasing alongside additional programming geared towards youth. The library is looking to add a Teen Coordinator position to allow the Youth Services Librarian to shift focus to juvenile services. To accompany this focus, a teen space is also planned.

Open Space

The Town of Barre has a variety of open spaces and recreational areas. The recreational parks in Barre provide





Would love to see a nice well kept community playground.

(2023 Community Survey)

playgrounds, sports facilities, walking and biking trails, picnic areas, and natural areas. Rice Park is home to basketball courts, a skateboard park, and a climbing wall and there is a baseball field located on the corner of Maple Lane and Wheelwright Road. Felton Field on Old Coldbrook Road was first established as fairgrounds in 1865. Barre has added three outdoor tennis courts, an outdoor basketball court, three soccer fields, and a baseball diamond. Felton Field is also used for horseback riding.

Thirty-four percent of survey respondents were dissatisfied with recreation facilities, and thirty percent were dissatisfied with parks. Maintaining and investing in open space and recreation aligns with residents’ desires for outdoor recreational amenities.

The Town maintains the Common as the civic and cultural center of the community. The Barre Farmers’ Market

has been in operation since 1985 and runs every year from May to October.

The Barre Player’s Theatre is operated as a non-profit for summer youth productions and is located on the Town Common. The Town Common, its grass fields, and adjacent development offer potential for the town as a central meeting place.

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works encompasses the Highway, Sewer, and Water Divisions.

The Highway Division plays a crucial role in Barre’s municipal services. It is responsible for the upkeep and repair of town-owned properties, maintenance of streets and roads including tasks like repaving, drainage, snow and ice removal, and street sweeping, as well as brush clearing along roadsides and rights-of-way. The division also oversees the maintenance of town parking lots, storm sewers, and sidewalks.

The Sewer Division includes a full-time Chief Operator, Assistant Chief Operator, and Assistant Operator. The treatment facility center is currently at sixty percent capacity. The Sewer Division needs a Vactor sewer cleaner

truck and upgrades to the facility. In the future, the system will need to be expanded to increase flow to reduce the financial bearing on ratepayers.

Police Department

Located at 655 South Street, the Police Department is committed to collaborating with residents, businesses, and community organizations to make Barre a safe, comfortable place to live, and a welcoming destination for visitors. The police facility was built in 2018. Eight police cruisers are used by ten full-time officers and one part-time officer. The facility could be improved with the addition of a carport for police vehicles and solar panels for the roof and carport to reduce utility costs. The Department expects to increase staffing to eleven members.

Henry Woods Municipal Building

The Town Hall building was built in the early 1900s and requires maintenance for continued use. The three-story building has an elevator for accessible use, but its fire escapes are not up to code. Bringing the third floor up to code so it can be used by the public offers potential new meeting or office spaces.



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An adequate fire station needs to become top priority before any other facilities are considered...The existing fire station is inadequate and downright dangerous.

(2023 Community Survey)

Fire Department

The Barre Fire Department operates out of two stations. The department operates four engine companies, one ladder company, one heavy rescue company, two ALS ambulances, and various support equipment. The department has a total of fifty staff.

- The Department Headquarters is located at 61 North School St. Originally the highway department, the building was retrofitted to serve as a firehouse in 1995.
- Fire Station 2 is located at 50 Main St. in South Barre.
- Previously Fire Station 3 was located at 30 Wheelwright Rd. in Barre Plains; however, it has been condemned.

The two buildings currently housing the fire department were not designed to serve as fire stations and lack the essential features necessary for modern firefighting operations. The central headquarters lacks firefighter bunk rooms for around-the-clock service. Space constraints also limit storage for firefighting equipment. The station’s size and age render it incapable of housing modern fire machinery without extensive and costly renovations tailored to each apparatus.

The two existing stations should be consolidated into one newly constructed station equipped for the staffing, vehicle, and safety needs of the department. Construction will reflect suggestions from the Fire Station Feasibility Study, completed in 2021, to ensure the new building meets modern firefighting standards and community needs.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging (COA) serves 1,500 seniors by coordinating and creating services for the Barre’s aging population, as well as advocating for the needs of older residents. Housed in the Barre Senior Center, the COA partners with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and

92% SAY SERVICES FOR SENIORS ARE IMPORTANT IN BARRE

(2023 Community Survey)

the Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging.

The Senior Center is about twenty years old and is beginning to show signs of wear and tear. In particular, the bathrooms require updates. The building also requires an emergency generator to function as a cooling and warming center in crises. Regarding staffing, a full-time director and one part-time staff member perform all COA functions. Limited staffing hinders the program’s ability to expand resources, classes, and assistance for senior residents.



SERVICES & FACILITIES PRIORITIES

Enhance Community Services and Facilities

The narratives collected from residents paint a vivid picture of a community that values its history and cherishes residents of all ages. Barre residents dream of a future where generations connect through the ongoing progress of the town. The desire for inclusivity and community spaces resonates strongly, manifesting in calls for dedicated youth centers, enriched recreational programs, and enhanced parks and public services.

Invest In Resilient Infrastructure

Specific mentions of South Barre and Barre Center reveal residents' deep interest in enhancing recreational opportunities within their neighborhoods and improving infrastructure, including better sidewalks and utility services. The proposal for a shuttle between the town center and the senior center reflects a thoughtful approach to enhancing connectivity and accessibility for all residents. Comments captured during this process also include discussions about extending sewer services to rural parts of the town.

Improve Quality Facilities and Equipment

Survey responses indicate a strong concern about emergency response, with eighty percent of respondents identifying this as a critical concern. Resident suggestions, spanning from the optimal locations of fire stations to the need for additional facilities, demonstrate a shared commitment to efficient and accessible emergency services. Concerns about infrastructure constraints, such as the steep driveway at the police station, underscore the community's attention to practicality and functionality in public facilities.

Photo source: Town of Barre Facebook page



FINAL DRAFT



SERVICES & FACILITIES FINDINGS

Resilient Infrastructure

Barre's infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades. With Barre undergoing evolution and population growth, proactive and considerate planning and infrastructure improvements are indispensable to accommodate these changes. The goal is to ensure equitable access to essential services for all residents, fostering an environment that supports the well-being and prosperity of the diverse Barre population.

Community members desire improvements to the water and sewer systems. The Town should consider the expansion and modernization of water and sewer systems to prepare for resiliency and population changes. About half of Barre is covered by the public water supply. As the state government continues to monitor harmful chemicals, water quality, and contaminants, concerns should be sensitively responded to by the Water Division. Nonprofits such as Clean Water Action can partner with the Town to educate residents on safety measures and contaminant science.

For those served by private wells, education on groundwater preservation is necessary to prevent future contamination. If Barre's groundwater is not protected, the Town may need to provide costly public water mains to affected areas.

Fostering Community

Barre residents expressed a desire for additional community services to enhance their quality of life. Through community engagement, we heard the desire for additional parks, playgrounds, library space, and community centers. Specifically, the lack of space and services geared toward youth is a major concern. Most likely to come through

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Senior services are very important. The senior center is a lovely, yet underutilized building...I'd love to see that building used for youth programs and also be more welcoming to all.

(2023 Community Survey)

private investment, Barre residents also requested healthcare providers.

Feedback from residents underscores a collective aspiration for inclusive spaces and a robust sense of community. The envisioned future for Barre involves the creation of a dedicated youth center, enriched recreational programs, and enhanced parks and playgrounds. This not only aligns with the community's vision but also emphasizes the Town's commitment to improving the quality of life for all residents, ranging from the needs of children to the efficient provision of senior services.

The slow but steady increase in population has been accompanied by a growing need for programming that brings residents together, fosters inclusivity, and creates meaningful shared experiences.

Quality Facilities and Equipment

The prevailing sentiment among survey respondents and workshop participants is that many government facilities in Barre are outdated or lack essential amenities and features. Such





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(We need) more emergency management education so that in emergencies citizens and surrounding communities understand what Barre provides for in such situations.

(2023 Community Survey)

conditions create challenges for service providers and residents. Upgraded fire stations, advanced EMS services, and modernized vehicles will enhance safety and convenience.

The Town of Barre is committed to providing high-quality physical and technological infrastructure. This includes maintaining and modernizing critical buildings to offer accessible and efficient facilities, and equipping emergency response and public works teams with state-of-the-art tools and machinery to enhance their work and ensure safety.

This commitment lays the groundwork for a community that not only addresses its current shortcomings, but also proactively prepares for a sustainable and prosperous future.

Government Services and Communication

The Town of Barre is committed to enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness of government services. Improving communication between the Town and the community, such as broadening the dissemination of emergency management information, will improve confidence in local government. Modernizing and streamlining Town Hall services and extending existing capacity will help meet the community’s expressed desire for updated processes and responsive services.

The community survey results indicated a widespread desire for the local government to involve, and communicate with, its constituents more actively. Residents note opportunities to streamline billing services and to provide more accessible town hall hours. Upgrades to the town website and paths of communication for residents, such as social media, should be assessed.



GOAL 1: PROVIDE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BARRE'S CURRENT AND FUTURE POPULATIONS.

Barre residents rely upon town departments for access to many critical services. Providing these services requires sustained investments in town facilities and equipment. Barre can take the following steps to ensure it has the assets necessary to meet its population's current and future needs.

STRATEGY 1.1. STRENGTHEN THE CAPITAL AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCESS.

Barre's Capital Planning Committee has been inactive since 2017. The Committee should be reinstated to undertake capital planning, retooling mission, responsibilities, and engagement with other municipal bodies as necessary.

- 1.1.1. Appoint a Capital Planning Committee to hear capital expenditure requests from town boards and departments and help align spending with the Master Plan vision and goals.
- 1.1.2. Draft a new Capital Improvement Plan to guide the Town's

capital expenditures over five-year periods. Work closely with the Town Administrator, Town Accountant, and Finance Committee to create and maintain the plan.

- 1.1.3. Develop a dedicated finance team to integrate financial metrics, such as property assessments, town accounting, and tax collection, to inform budgeting, purchasing policy, and long-term planning.

STRATEGY 1.2. PROACTIVELY PLAN FOR AND UNDERTAKE MAINTENANCE, UPGRADES, AND REPLACEMENT OF TOWN FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.

Planning for maintenance and repairs mitigates the need for most costly interventions down the line or service disruptions due to facilities or equipment failure. The following steps will help the Town bolster its planning process and create a strategy to stay ahead of routine maintenance and capital projects.

- 1.2.1. Hire a part-time or shared facilities director overseeing facility planning maintenance, repair, renovation, and construction for town-owned buildings and properties.
- 1.2.2. Conduct a facilities maintenance plan that includes all town-owned facilities and properties.
- 1.2.3. Undertake maintenance and upgrades necessary to preserve



and protect town assets, especially those of historical and cultural significance, such as the Town Hall.

- 1.2.4. Construct a new fire station that meets contemporary firefighting needs and standards.
- 1.2.5. Plan for the replacement of the Town's aging vehicle fleet.

STRATEGY 1.3. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF TOWN-OWNED FACILITIES.

In 2022, Barre completed an ADA Accessibility Plan to determine its level of compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA Accessibility was also noted as a concern among residents in the Master Plan Survey.

- 1.3.1. Review the 2022 ADA Accessibility Plan and identify priority projects focusing on accessible approach and entrance violations, which were noted at nearly all town facilities.
- 1.3.2. Prioritize adding a water source and an accessible bathroom at Nornay Park, allowing the Town to expand the type and length of events held at this popular gathering area.
- 1.3.3. Incorporate priority ADA improvement projects into the Town's next Capital Improvement Plan.

STRATEGY 1.4. INVEST IN RESILIENCY UPGRADES TO TOWN FACILITIES.

In the event of natural or other disasters, the town will require buildings that can serve as command centers, emergency shelters, and storage locations for rescue and survival equipment. At present, the Quabbin Region High School is the town's only designated emergency shelter. The following steps can help the town weather significant events better.

- 1.4.1. Equip every municipal building with lightning rods to protect people and buildings from lightning strikes.
- 1.4.2. Invest in backup generators for Police, Fire/EMS, DPW, Senior Center, Housing Authority, and School District facilities, as identified in the 2020 Barre Municipal Vulnerability Plan, so these buildings can generate the necessary backup power to serve as potential emergency shelters.
- 1.4.3. Explore the feasibility of building a micro-grid for the Town Center, providing the town with a reliable capacity to sustain emergency communications and operations during power outages.



GOAL 2: PROVIDE RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF BARRE'S CURRENT AND FUTURE POPULATIONS.

The Town of Barre should strategically plan for upgrades to town infrastructure. Modernized town infrastructure ensures Barre is prepared for climate events and anticipated population growth.

STRATEGY 2.1. IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH BARRE.

South Barre's infrastructure needs repair and modernization. In 2024, the town undertook a South Barre infrastructure study to quantify and document public water, sewer, drainage systems, roadway surfaces, and sidewalk needs. The town should review and implement the study's findings and recommendations.

- 2.1.1. Review, prioritize, and implement the South Barre Infrastructure Study findings and recommendations.
- 2.1.2. Engage with the study authors, CMRPC, and the State to identify and apply for funding to address recommended projects.

STRATEGY 2.2. UPGRADE AND EXPAND BARRE'S WATER, SEWER, AND DRAINAGE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Barre's water, sewer, and drainage systems require upgrades and maintenance to meet the challenges of climate change, population growth, and the desire for broader service coverage.

- 2.2.1. Conduct a comprehensive infrastructure assessment using GIS mapping and stakeholder insights to identify improvement areas, ensuring strategic upgrades align with community priorities for public services and facilities.
- 2.2.2. Upgrade the Wastewater Treatment Facility; build a new pump station and force main.
- 2.2.3. Outfit the town's water and

sewer pumping stations with alternate power sources as a resiliency measure.

- 2.2.4. Develop a policy to upsize culverts in expectation of climate-change-related precipitation increases.
- 2.2.5. Assess the feasibility of expanding sewer and water service to areas of town beyond the village centers.

STRATEGY 2.3. EXPAND PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Enhancing streetscapes to allow walking and cycling in areas dominated by car travel can improve health, safety, and sustainability. Pedestrian infrastructure can also improve the quality of life for rural residents who





lack access to personal vehicles and boost the local economy by drawing in visitors and raising property values. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure needs are detailed in the 2017 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

- 2.3.1 Review and continue implementing the 2017 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.
- 2.3.2. Adjust zoning regulations where appropriate to require sidewalks, connections to bike paths, bike parking, and other pedestrian and bicycle amenities in new developments.
- 2.3.3. Identify areas for bicycle rack placement around village centers.
- 2.3.4. Identify roads with excess shoulder capacity and consider how to use the space more effectively.

STRATEGY 2.4. PROVIDE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY POWER SOURCES AT TOWN FACILITIES.

Investing in green power sources and charging infrastructure will position the Town to save money on energy costs and encourage EV use and decarbonization throughout the community.

- 2.4.1. Conduct a feasibility study to identify town facilities suited for installing solar panels on their roofs.
- 2.4.2. Upgrade or supplement existing level 1 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at Town facilities and public places with at least level 2 EV chargers.
- 2.4.3 Identify and promote new equipment, programs, and methods to decarbonize municipal operations.



GOAL 3: ENHANCE AND EXTEND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Barre residents value their access to services and programming; however, local government services are provided by a small staff and volunteers. Residents would like enhanced government services like extended Town Hall services, programming, and extended hours and access. The following strategies will enable Barre to expand services while minimizing financial outlays.

STRATEGY 3.1. LEVERAGE EXISTING RESOURCES TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING.

Barre can draw on existing facilities and staff to enable more programming for residents, particularly youth and older adults.

- 3.1.1. Explore opportunities to use school district or community organization spaces for town-sponsored activities and events, such as library or recreational programming.
- 3.1.2. Expand the use of underutilized town properties. Address barriers to use, such as non-ADA compliance, aesthetics, or outdated uses (e.g., old storage).

- 3.1.3. Expand town services through regionalization and inter-municipal job shares. Revisit the 2018 Quabbin Educational and Municipal Partnership Recommendations Report to identify other areas of opportunity for regionalization between the Towns of Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, New Braintree, and Oakham.
- 3.1.4. Consider further regionalization, resource sharing, and joint events for the Town of Barre and Hardwick Senior Center and senior centers in neighboring communities.
- 3.1.5. Explore opportunities for inter-municipal agreements with neighboring communities to provide after-school or summer recreational programming for youth and teens.
- 3.1.6. Study the feasibility of hiring a

town planner to be shared with one or more neighboring municipalities.

- 3.1.7. Expand and continue using regional partners for grant writing and administration. This includes identifying opportunities for coalition applications with neighboring municipalities when practical.
- 3.1.8. Foster conversations among regional stakeholders around forming a community development corporation to serve the Quabbin region.

STRATEGY 3.2. EXPLORE NEW PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES.

As a rural community with a small



population, Barre does not have fixed public transit routes. This creates challenges for residents who cannot drive or cannot access a car. To better accommodate these individuals, the town can raise awareness about existing services and explore alternatives such as micromobility and microtransit.

- 3.2.1. Raise awareness of existing paratransit and demand response services, such as those run by the South-Central Massachusetts Elderbus (sponsored by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority) and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART).
- 3.2.2. Explore the creation of more flexible demand response or microtransit models, such as the Quaboag Connector, to provide increased transit options for Barre residents to

travel within the region.

- 3.2.3. Introduce a volunteer program utilizing mutual aid to provide longer-distance, less frequent trips.

STRATEGY 3.3. IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS.

Robust communication between Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Barre residents is critical to building and sustaining public trust and a sense of community. Town entities should seek to improve their communications in several areas.

- 3.3.1. Ensure that town departments have a presence on social media platforms and post content regularly to better disseminate information to residents.

- 3.3.2. Increase the availability of live-streamed and recorded board and committee meetings for the viewing of residents. Currently, only Select Board and Finance Committee meetings are livestreamed on YouTube.
- 3.3.3. Educate residents about Barre's SMART911 emergency alert system and how to subscribe to the service.

Photo source: CMRPC

QUABBIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

