CITY OF EASTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

PARK STREET CAMPUS

Senior Center & Recreation Complex

Feasibility Study, Program Plan & Voter Approval Strategy

Senior Center with Scenic Views • Full-Size Gymnasium • Parks & Recreation Offices • Equipment Garage

226 Park Street, Easthampton, MA | Prepared February 2026

Executive Summary

The City of Easthampton has a compelling opportunity to build a purpose-built, two-program municipal campus at 226 Park Street — combining a new Senior Center and a Recreation Complex on a publicly owned wooded site adjacent to Nonotuck Park. This focused facility responds directly to the City's most pressing municipal space needs: a senior center worthy of its users and a recreation complex that finally provides staff with proper offices, a functional equipment garage, and a full-size gymnasium.

The site offers exceptional natural attributes — wooded character, adjacency to Nonotuck Park, potential views of Mt. Tom, and a planned multi-use path connection to downtown along Park Street. The design approach preserves the woodland setting while delivering a civic building that justifies community investment and earns lasting public pride.

Project at a Glance

Facility Size: ~42,000–48,000 SF | ROM Cost: $22M–$34M | Site: 226 Park St., adj. Nonotuck ParkFunding Strategy: Proposition 2½ Debt Exclusion | Recommended Bond: ~$27M–$30MEstimated Tax Impact: ~$27–$36/month on average home | Timeline to Opening: ~4.5–5 years

Key findings and recommendations:

- A connected two-wing building — Senior Center wing and Recreation Complex wing — sharing a central lobby, mechanical plant, and parking field is the most cost-effective and operationally sound configuration.
- The Senior Center dining and social lounge should feature floor-to-ceiling northwest-facing windows framing views of Mt. Tom and the wooded landscape. This signature design gesture is both the project's most powerful design feature and its most persuasive voter-campaign image.
- The Recreation Complex must include a full-size regulation gymnasium, dedicated Parks & Recreation offices with conference space, an equipment maintenance garage with vehicle bays, and a flexible meeting/event room for community use.
- A Proposition 2½ Debt Exclusion requires two approvals: a two-thirds vote of the City Council to appropriate funds, and a simple majority of voters at a Special or Annual City Election. A well-organized, transparent community engagement campaign is the single most important factor in success.
- State and federal grants — including EOEA capital grants, MassWorks, USDA Community Facilities, and federal IRA solar incentives — can reduce the required bond amount by $2M–$5M, meaningfully lowering the per-household tax impact.
- Removing the food pantry and general community center from scope reduces total project cost by approximately $4M–$7M compared to the prior broader concept, improving voter approval prospects while keeping the project focused on two clear civic priorities.

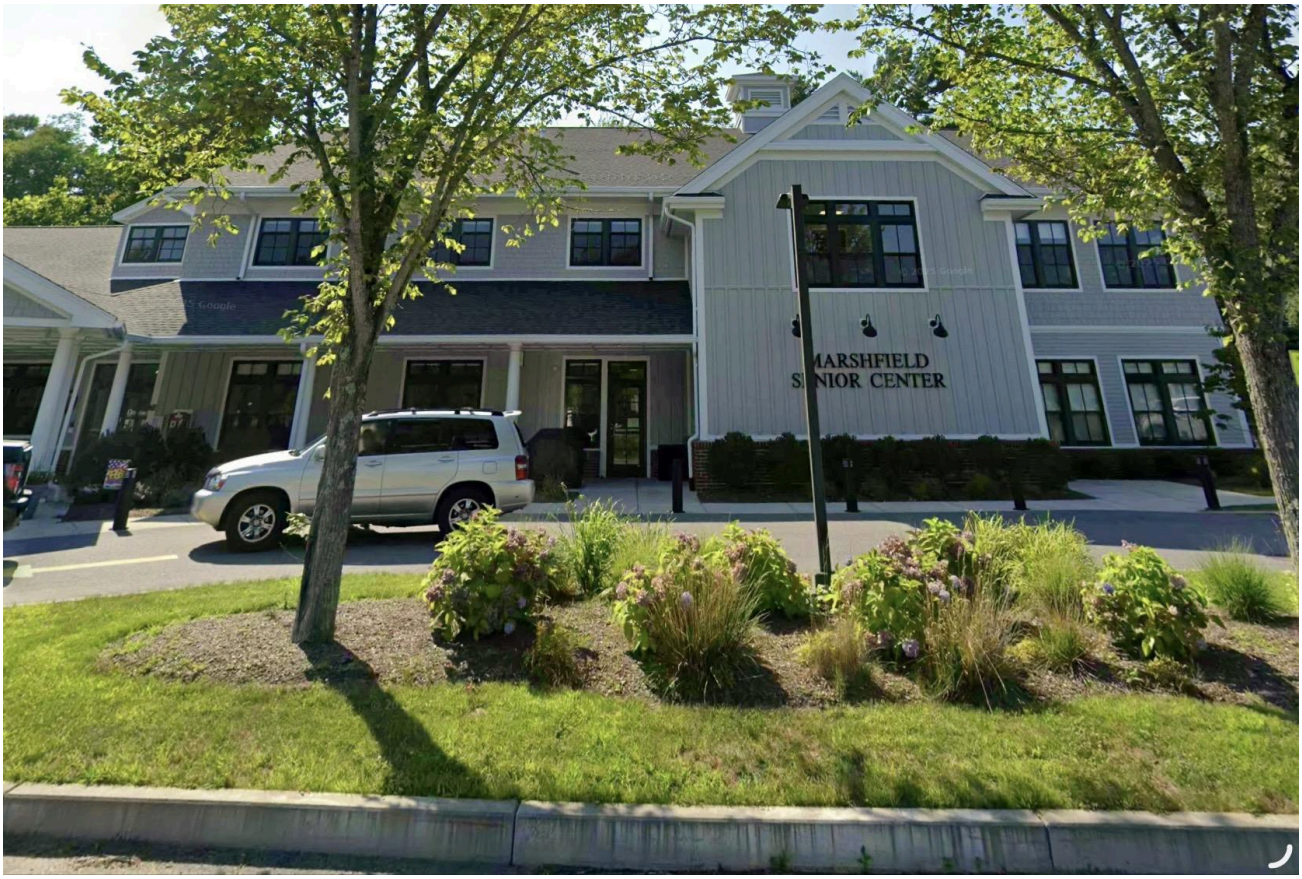
Section 1: Case Study Examples

The following examples from Massachusetts and New England illustrate best practices for combined senior center and recreation facilities. These informed the programming, design, and approval strategy recommendations in this study.

1.1 Marshfield Senior Center & Recreation Complex

Marshfield, MA successfully combined its Council on Aging senior center and Parks & Recreation department into a connected campus sharing a parking field, entry lobby, and maintenance staff. The senior wing features views to adjacent conservation land and floor-to-ceiling glass in the gathering/dining space — a direct design precedent for Easthampton's Park Street project.

- Total facility: approximately 28,000 SF
- Shared: lobby, restrooms, HVAC plant, maintenance staff, parking
- Separate: program rooms, COA offices, Recreation offices, gymnasium, storage
- Funded via: Debt exclusion + Community Preservation Act funds + EOEA capital grant
- Key lesson: Shared entry and visible transparency between programs increased cross-use and community buy-in



1.2 Westfield Senior Center

Westfield's senior center, opened in 2019, is a 24,000 SF standalone facility featuring a full commercial kitchen, fitness room, multipurpose activity rooms, a health services suite, and a prominent dining/lounge with landscape-oriented windows. Construction cost was approximately $8.5M in 2019 — escalated to today's market, that represents roughly $500–$540/SF, consistent with this study's cost benchmarks.

- Signature feature: large south-facing dining windows became the visual anchor of the building and the campaign
- Lesson: Investing in a distinctive design element pays dividends in voter enthusiasm and post-opening community adoption

1.3 Easton, MA — Combined Municipal Facilities Debt Exclusion (2023)

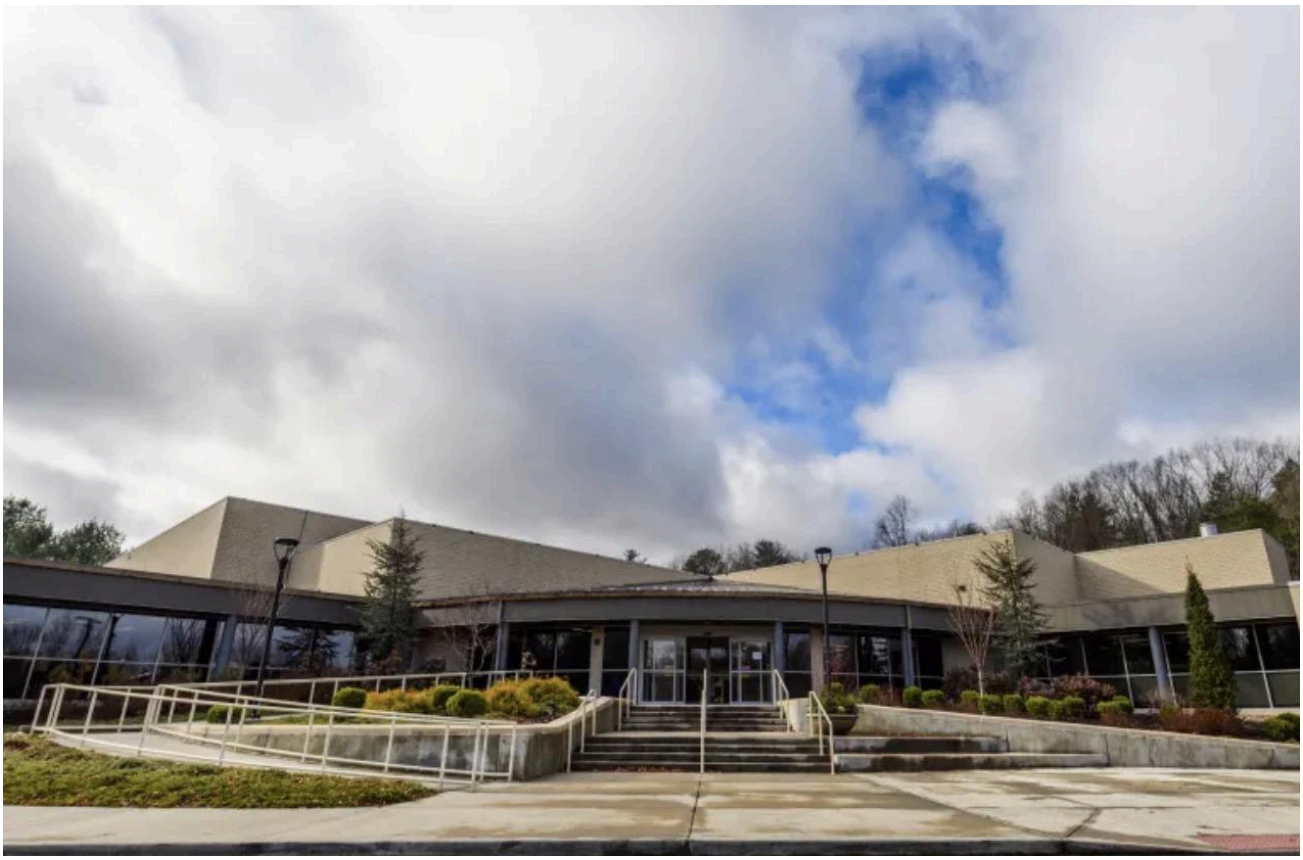
While Easton's project combined Police, Fire, and DPW facilities rather than senior/recreation uses, it is the most instructive recent Massachusetts example for the voter approval process. Easton's campaign included a dedicated project website, detailed FAQ documents, multiple public hearings, a citizen-led YES Committee, and rigorous financial transparency — all of which Easthampton's campaign should replicate.

- Approved at Special Town Meeting (October 2023) and Debt Exclusion Election (November 2023)
- Campaign duration: approximately 18 months from feasibility to election
- Key lesson: Voters approve projects when they trust the numbers and believe the need is genuine — not just when the project is popular

1.4 West Hartford, CT — Cornerstone Community Campus

West Hartford's multi-generational community center provides a national model for integrating senior services with active recreation. The facility combines a senior center, fitness wing, gymnasium, and flexible event space under one roof with a shared lobby that encourages cross-program interaction. Intergenerational programming — seniors in fitness classes alongside residents of all ages, shared event space — is a key operational model for Easthampton to consider.

- Facility size: approximately 55,000 SF
- Design principle: shared entry and visible connection between senior and recreation wings reduces stigma and increases senior center usage
- Lesson: Facilities designed to feel 'alive' and multi-generational rather than segregated see substantially higher membership and program participation



Design Takeaway from Case Studies

The most successful combined senior/recreation facilities share a single prominent entrance, invest in a signature architectural gesture (views, natural light, distinctive materials), and create wayfinding that feels intuitive and welcoming to users of all ages. These qualities translate directly into voter enthusiasm during a debt exclusion campaign.

Section 2: Site Analysis — 226 Park Street

2.1 Site Overview

The proposed site at 226 Park Street is a municipally owned parcel of approximately 30+ acres, largely wooded, with a brook traversing the southern portion. Based on the parcel map and aerial imagery reviewed, the following site characteristics are identified:

Site Factor	Observation & Implication
Address	226 Park Street, Easthampton, MA 01027
Parcel Size	Approximately 30+ acres; only 4–6 acres required for building footprint, parking, and service drive — leaving substantial wooded buffer intact
Topography	Moderate slope rising westward from Park Street; White Brook traverses southern portion — creates stormwater asset and trail opportunity
Woodland Character	Mature secondary-growth forest; selective clearing only — preserving tree canopy is a design priority and community expectation
Mt. Tom Views	Northwestern horizon allows framed views of the Mt. Tom range — Senior Center dining/lounge oriented NW with floor-to-ceiling glazing to capitalize on this signature view
Solar Orientation	South-facing roof planes ideal for photovoltaic array; south/southeast faces provide passive solar daylighting in activity rooms
Nonotuck Park Adjacency	Eastern/rear boundary connects to Nonotuck Park — pedestrian trail link from building to park should be incorporated into site design
Park Street Frontage	Fronts Park St.; planned multi-use path upgrade will connect campus to downtown and regional bike path — primary pedestrian and bicycle access route
White Brook	Brook in southern parcel area. 50–100 ft. riparian buffer required under MA Wetlands Protection Act. Wetlands delineation and Conservation Commission Notice of Intent required before construction
Vehicular Access	Primary access from Park Street; internal drive loops to allow drop-off, ADA parking near entry, and separate service/garage access at rear
Neighboring Uses	Treehouse at Easthampton Meadows (residential) to north; Button Rd. residential neighborhood to NW; solar array on adjacent parcel — verify easements
Utilities	Water, sewer, gas accessible from Park St. corridor; electrical service will require upgrade for a facility of this scale

2.2 Site Opportunities

- Large parcel allows building placement well away from White Brook, wetland buffers, and neighboring residences
- Mt. Tom views to the northwest create the project's signature design and voter-campaign opportunity
- Nonotuck Park connection enables outdoor walking trails, fitness stations, and passive recreation programming without land acquisition
- Park Street multi-use path creates safe, car-free access to campus from downtown and the regional bike network
- Mature woodland provides natural buffering from residential neighbors; minimal visual and noise impact
- South-facing roof area is ideal for a rooftop photovoltaic array — sustainability statement and long-term operating cost reduction

2.3 Site Constraints

- White Brook and associated wetlands require formal delineation, 50–100 ft. no-build buffer, and Conservation Commission Order of Conditions — limits buildable area in southern portion of parcel
- Moderate slope requires grading and sitework — estimate $15–$25/SF on disturbed area; geotechnical borings needed
- Wooded site requires selective clearing and stump removal — design must minimize clearing footprint
- Traffic study required for Park Street access; left-turn movements may require turning lane improvements
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and subsurface investigation required before design

Conservation Commission Note

White Brook and any associated wetlands are subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, §40). A Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Easthampton Conservation Commission is required before any site work. Wetland boundaries must be delineated by a certified wetland scientist. Work within the 50-foot buffer zone is prohibited; work within the 100-foot buffer zone requires Conservation Commission approval.

Section 3: Program & Space Needs

3.1 Program Philosophy

The program for the Park Street Campus is intentionally focused on two municipal departments: the Council on Aging (Senior Center) and Parks & Recreation (Recreation Complex). Easthampton needs a real senior center and a real recreation facility — this project delivers both.

Senior Center Wing

Space / Room	SF Range	Notes
Dining / Social Lounge — Signature Space	2,800–3,600	Floor-to-ceiling NW windows; Mt. Tom views; flexible for events; connects to outdoor terrace
Commercial / Serving Kitchen	700–1,000	Full commercial kitchen eligible for Title III-C congregate meals funding
Multipurpose Activity Room A	1,000–1,400	Arts, crafts, classes; operable partition; natural daylighting
Multipurpose Activity Room B	800–1,100	Lectures, small meetings, quiet activities; AV system
Fitness / Wellness Room	1,200–1,600	Cardio, strength, balance equipment; can be shared with Rec Complex users
Health Services Suite	500–800	Leasable space for VNA, visiting nurse, physical therapist, or SHINE counselor
Computer Lab / Tech Room	400–600	8–10 stations; digital literacy and senior programming
COA Director & Administrative Offices	500–700	Director, assistant, reception/waiting; file storage
Social Services / Case Manager Offices	400–600	2 private offices for case manager and outreach worker
Lounge / Game Room / Reading Nook	600–900	Informal gathering; billiards, cards, quiet reading; natural light
Restrooms — Senior Wing	500–700	Men's, women's, and universal/accessible; fully ADA compliant
Storage / Janitor / Support	300–500	Program supply storage; janitorial closets
SENIOR CENTER SUBTOTAL	**9,700–12,500 SF**	

Recreation Complex Wing

Space / Room	SF Range	Notes
Full-Size Gymnasium	11,000–13,000	Regulation basketball court (94'x50'); retractable bleachers 150–200; curtain divider for two half-courts; high-bay LED lighting; maple wood floor
Gymnasium Storage / Equipment Room	600–800	Portable goals, bleachers, floor mats, sports equipment, AV rack
Flexible Meeting / Event Room	1,800–2,400	Adjacent to gym; operable partition to gym for large events; rentable for community meetings, classes, indoor markets
Parks & Recreation Offices	1,000–1,500	Director, program coordinators, administrative staff; reception; conference room for 8–10
Staff Break Room / Locker Area	300–400	Staff kitchen; lockers for recreation and maintenance staff
Equipment Maintenance Garage	3,500–5,000	3–4 vehicle bays; vehicle lift or pit; workbench; compressed air; parts storage; exterior fuel island access; insulated overhead doors
Garage / Fleet Coordinator Office	200–300	Work order desk and computer; connects directly to garage floor
Locker Rooms / Showers	1,000–1,400	Men's/women's/universal with showers for gym and fitness room users
Concession / Vending Alcove	200–350	Adjacent to gymnasium lobby; service window; refrigeration
Public Restrooms — Recreation Wing	350–500	ADA compliant; accessible from gym lobby and exterior for park users
Mechanical / Electrical / IT Rooms	700–900	Shared where possible with Senior wing; separate high-bay electrical for gym lighting loads
RECREATION COMPLEX SUBTOTAL	**20,650–26,550 SF**	**Garage included at ~3,500–5,000 SF**

Shared / Connector Spaces

Space / Room	SF Range	Notes
Main Lobby / Entry Atrium	1,200–1,600	Shared entry for both wings; greeter/reception desk; display cases; accessible from parking and multi-use path
Covered Drop-Off Canopy	600–800	Weather-protected entry; ADA path from accessible parking

Space / Room	SF Range	Notes
Public Restrooms — Lobby	250–400	Supplemental public restrooms visible from lobby
IT / Security / Building Systems Room	150–250	Network hub, camera system, building controls
Outdoor Terrace / Patio — Senior Wing	1,200–2,000 (outdoor)	Connected to dining room; ADA accessible; screened from parking; seating 20–30; pergola for shade; views to landscape
Trail Connection to Nonotuck Park	Trail + signage	Accessible, lit trailhead at rear of facility; marked path to Nonotuck Park trail network; fitness stations optional
SHARED SPACES SUBTOTAL	**2,200–3,050 SF**	**(Interior; outdoor terrace not counted in gross SF)**

Program Summary — Total Gross Square Footage

Program Component	Low SF	High SF
Senior Center Wing	9,700	12,500
Recreation Complex (incl. Garage)	20,650	26,550
Shared / Connector Spaces	2,200	3,050
Circulation, Walls, Grossing (~15%)	4,883	6,315
TOTAL GROSS SQUARE FOOTAGE	**~37,400 SF**	**~48,400 SF**
RECOMMENDED DESIGN TARGET	**42,000–45,000 SF**	

Section 4: Design Concepts

4.1 Building Configuration — Two Connected Wings

The recommended configuration is a single connected building with two distinct wings joined by a shared central lobby. This approach provides cost efficiency through shared infrastructure, operational efficiency with one building to maintain and staff, and clear community identity as a unified civic facility.

4.2 Conceptual Site Layout

Zone	Description
Front (East)	Main parking field on Park Street side; 70–90 accessible parking spaces; ADA drop-off canopy at main entry; bicycle parking; potential bus pull-off
Center	Main Lobby / Entry Atrium — visible from Park Street; connects Senior and Recreation wings; shared restrooms nearby; community display cases
Northwest Wing	SENIOR CENTER — oriented northwest toward Mt. Tom; floor-to-ceiling glazing in Dining/Social Lounge; outdoor terrace accessible from dining room; warm materials (wood accents, natural tones)
Southeast Wing	RECREATION COMPLEX — gymnasium and flexible event room fronting Park St. side; Parks & Rec offices adjacent to gym lobby; locker rooms and mechanical in center
Rear (South)	EQUIPMENT GARAGE — 3–4 bay garage attached to Recreation wing at rear; separate service drive off main parking loop; exterior fuel island; screened from public entry by building mass
Rear (West)	NONOTUCK PARK TRAIL LINK — accessible, lit path from rear of building to park trail network; fitness stations; bioswale stormwater feature integrated into landscape

4.3 Signature Design Features

- Floor-to-Ceiling Northwest Windows — Senior Dining/Lounge: A 40–60 ft. glass wall facing Mt. Tom and the woodland. Automated solar shading controls glare. This single gesture defines the project's identity and becomes the visual centerpiece of the voter approval campaign.
- Covered Outdoor Terrace — Senior Wing: Directly accessible from the dining room; ADA compliant; pergola or trellis for summer shade; seating for 20–30; screened from parking by native plantings.
- Gymnasium with Flex Room Partition: Retractable operable partition between gymnasium and flexible event room creates a combined 13,000–15,000 SF event floor for tournaments, indoor markets, graduation celebrations, and community events.
- Equipment Garage — Functional and Dignified: The garage should be designed as an integral part of the building, not an afterthought. A well-lit, insulated, properly ventilated garage with a supervisor's office improves staff safety, productivity, and equipment longevity.

- Trail Portal to Nonotuck Park: A marked, accessible trailhead at the rear of the facility connects the campus directly to the Nonotuck Park trail network — adding outdoor recreation value at minimal cost.
- Rooftop Photovoltaic Array: South-facing roofs offer 100–200 kW of solar generation potential; offsets 15–25% of building energy use; eligible for federal IRA direct pay incentives.

4.4 Sustainability Strategies

- Passive solar orientation — high-occupancy spaces (gym, senior dining) face south/southeast for daylighting
- High-performance building envelope — continuous insulation, triple-glazed northwest glazing, air barrier system
- Air-source VRF heat pump system — eliminates fossil fuel combustion; eligible for federal IRA direct-pay incentives for municipalities
- Native plant bioswales along White Brook buffer — manage stormwater on-site; no new impervious runoff to brook
- Permeable paving in secondary parking areas; green roof over low connector building
- EV charging stations — 4–6 Level 2 chargers in main parking field (DCFC grant programs available)

Section 5: Cost Estimation

5.1 Massachusetts Construction Cost Benchmarks — 2025–2026

Massachusetts is one of the highest-cost construction markets in the United States — typically 25–40% above national averages due to prevailing wage requirements, dense subcontractor markets, and regulatory requirements. The following benchmarks apply:

Building Type	Low $/SF	High $/SF	Notes
Senior Center (community scale)	$420	$560	MA prevailing wage; community finish level
Recreation / Gymnasium (standard)	$380	$520	Wood floor gym; high-bay; standard finishes
Flexible Community / Event Space	$350	$480	Operable partition; AV; resilient floor
Equipment / Vehicle Garage (finished)	$220	$320	Steel structure; epoxy floor; HVAC ventilation
Shared Lobby / Connector	$400	$550	Elevated finish; feature glazing
Weighted Average (43,000 SF campus)	~$400	~$530	Blended across all uses

5.2 Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) Cost Estimate

Cost Category	Low	High	Notes
Senior Center Wing (11,000 SF @ $420–$560)	$4,620,000	$6,160,000	Incl. kitchen, health suite, fitness rm.
Recreation / Gym Wing (23,000 SF @ $380–$520)	$8,740,000	$11,960,000	Gym, event rm., offices, locker rms.
Equipment Garage (4,000 SF @ $220–$320)	$880,000	$1,280,000	3–4 bays; attached to Rec wing
Shared Lobby & Connector (3,000 SF @ $400–$550)	$1,200,000	$1,650,000	Entry atrium, restrooms, wayfinding
Construction Subtotal (Hard Costs)	$15,440,000	$21,050,000	

Cost Category	Low	High	Notes
Site Work: Clearing, Grading, Drives, Utilities	$1,500,000	$2,800,000	$15–$25/SF on ~3 acres disturbed
Landscaping, Trail, Outdoor Terrace	$300,000	$600,000	Incl. trail link to Nonotuck Park
Stormwater / Wetlands Mitigation	$150,000	$400,000	Bioswales, NOI compliance
Parking Field (80 spaces)	$480,000	$800,000	$6–$10K per space with lighting
Photovoltaic Array (150 kW)	$300,000	$500,000	Before incentives; ~$200–350K net after IRA direct pay
AV / Technology / Security Systems	$250,000	$400,000	Gym scoring, cameras, PA, IT infrastructure
Construction Contingency (10–15%)	$1,842,000	$3,908,000	Strongly recommended for wooded/sloped site
HARD COST SUBTOTAL	**$20,262,000**	**$30,458,000**	
Architecture & Engineering (9–12%)	$1,824,000	$3,655,000	Design, engineering, CA, commissioning
Owner's Project Manager (OPM)	$400,000	$700,000	Required by MA law for public projects >$1.5M
Permitting, Legal, Surveys	$120,000	$250,000	Building permit, wetlands, traffic, title
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E)	$450,000	$900,000	Senior center furnishings, gym equip., kitchen
Move-In / Commissioning / Transition	$80,000	$200,000	Staff training, systems startup, punch list
Soft Cost Subtotal	$2,874,000	$5,705,000	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET — LOW SCENARIO	**$23,136,000**		**~$23M (lean scope, minimal contingency)**

Cost Category	Low	High	Notes
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET — HIGH SCENARIO		**$36,163,000**	**~$36M (full scope, full contingency)**
RECOMMENDED BONDING TARGET	**$27,000,000**	**$30,000,000**	**Midrange; assumes $2–4M in grant offsets**

Cost Escalation Note

Construction costs in Massachusetts have escalated approximately 35% since 2019. Apply a 3–5% annual escalation to all estimates from this study date (February 2026) through anticipated construction start (~2028–2029). A 4% annual escalation over 3 years adds approximately $3.3–$4.5M to the estimates above — budget accordingly when setting the bond amount.

5.3 Potential Grant Offsets

Grant Program	Potential Award	Eligibility Notes
USDA Community Facilities Grant	$500K–$2M	Easthampton may qualify as rural; senior/recreation facilities eligible
MassWorks Infrastructure Grant	$500K–$2M	Site infrastructure, parking, utilities, access improvements
EOEA Senior Center Capital Grant	$250K–$500K	Executive Office of Elder Affairs; capital grants for senior center construction
CDBG — Community Development Block Grant	$200K–$500K	Serve LMI population; senior center and health services suite strengthen application
AARP Community Challenge Grant	$25K–$200K	Outdoor spaces, trail connections, accessibility improvements
Federal IRA Direct Pay — Solar	$60K–$150K	30% of solar array cost as direct payment to municipality (no tax credit needed)
ESTIMATED TOTAL GRANT POTENTIAL	**$1.5M–$5.4M**	**Directly reduces required bond amount**

Section 6: Planning, Zoning & Approvals

6.1 Required Approvals

Approval / Permit	Authority	Timing & Notes
Site Plan Review	Easthampton Planning Board	Required for new buildings >5,000 SF; submit after schematic design; allow 60–90 days
Special Permit (if required)	Planning Board / ZBA	Verify whether Recreation/Municipal use requires special permit in this zoning district
Notice of Intent — Wetlands	Conservation Commission	Required for work within 100 ft. of White Brook; formal wetland delineation first; allow 90–120 days
MEPA Review	EOEA (state)	May be triggered if project exceeds $5M in state funding or disturbs >25 acres; consult environmental counsel
Traffic Impact Assessment	MassDOT / City DPW	Required for new facility generating >50 new peak-hour trips; Park St. access TIA needed
State Building Code (780 CMR)	Building Dept.	9th edition; assembly occupancy for gym; separate review for garage (F-1 occupancy)
ADA / 521 CMR (Architectural Access Board)	AAB	Massachusetts standards exceed federal ADA; full compliance required throughout
Public Procurement (MGL c.149, c.7C)	OSD / AGO	QBS designer selection; public bidding for GC; OPM required by law
City Council Appropriation	Mayor / City Council	Two-thirds majority vote to authorize bonding; typically as contingent appropriation pending debt exclusion vote
Debt Exclusion Ballot — Prop. 2½	Easthampton voters	Simple majority at Special or Annual City Election; placed on ballot by Mayor with City Council authorization

Section 7: Debt Exclusion — Voter Approval Strategy

A Proposition 2½ Debt Exclusion is a temporary increase in property taxes sufficient to cover annual debt service on bonds issued for a specific capital project. Unlike an operating override, the tax increase is not permanent — it expires when the bonds are paid off, typically 20–25 years from issuance. This is the standard financing mechanism for major Massachusetts municipal building projects.

7.1 The Two-Step Approval Process

How a Debt Exclusion Works

Step 1 — City Council: The Mayor and City Council vote (by two-thirds majority) to make a contingent appropriation — authorizing the project cost and borrowing, contingent on voter approval. The City Council also votes to place the debt exclusion question on the ballot.Step 2 — Voter Ballot: A simple majority (50%+1) of voters in a Special or Annual City Election must vote YES. The ballot question cannot state the dollar amount, but the City can distribute informational materials showing the full cost.

Key legal requirements (M.G.L. c. 59, §21C):

- City Clerk must receive written notice of the referendum at least 35 days before the election
- City Council must vote the question exactly as it will appear on the ballot
- Municipal funds and resources cannot be used to advocate for the question — only to inform voters
- An independent citizen YES Committee may campaign, fundraise, and advocate
- If the vote fails, it may be returned to voters within 120 days on a subsequent ballot

7.2 Sample Ballot Question Language

Sample Ballot Question (per M.G.L. c. 59, §21C(k))

"Shall the City of Easthampton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition Two and One Half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to pay costs of designing and constructing a new combined Senior Center and Recreation Complex located at 226 Park Street in Easthampton, Massachusetts, including all costs incidental or related thereto?"

7.3 Estimated Tax Impact

The following estimates assume a $28.5M bond at 4.0% interest over 25 years, producing average annual debt service of approximately $1.83M. Actual figures depend on prevailing interest rates at time of issuance and assessed property values (confirm with City Assessor and bond counsel).

Assumption	Low ($23M bond)	Mid ($28.5M bond)	High ($32M bond)
Bond Amount	$23,000,000	$28,500,000	$32,000,000
Interest Rate (est.)	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Term	25 years	25 years	25 years
Annual Debt Service	~$1.47M	~$1.83M	~$2.05M
Avg. Home ($350K value)	+$278/yr	+$346/yr	+$388/yr
Per Month	+$23/mo	+$29/mo	+$32/mo
Duration	25 years	25 years	25 years

Note: Every $1M in grants reduces the required bond amount by $1M, saving approximately $9–$12 per year per average household over the bond term. A successful $3M grant package reduces the midrange tax impact from $29/month to approximately $22/month — a meaningful difference in voter perception.

7.4 Voter Approval Campaign Strategy

Based on successful Massachusetts debt exclusion campaigns — Easton (2023), Brewster (2024), Wayland (2018), and others — the following elements are essential:

Phase 1 — Education & Trust Building (18–24 months before election)

- Launch a dedicated project website with transparent cost data, renderings, FAQ, and tax impact calculator by home value
- Conduct 4–6 community listening sessions across different neighborhoods — listen first, present second
- Present to COA Advisory Committee, Recreation Commission, youth sports leagues, PTOs, faith communities
- Publish a one-page financial summary showing tax impact at multiple home values — not just 'average'
- Engage local media (Hampshire Gazette, Reminder Publications, MassLive) proactively and early
- Secure endorsements from COA Advisory Committee, Recreation Commission, and local non-profit partners

Phase 2 — Coalition Building (12 months before election)

- Form an independent citizen-led YES Committee — separate from City government
- Recruit business community champions — frame campus as workforce attraction and quality-of-life investment
- Partner with senior advocacy organizations, disability advocates, and youth sports organizations
- Develop yard sign, door-hanger, and social media campaign materials
- Seek endorsements from state legislators and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Phase 3 — Campaign Execution (3–6 months before election)

- Mail informational brochure to every registered voter (City may fund informational — not advocacy — materials)
- Phone bank and door-to-door canvassing by the YES Committee in final 4 weeks
- Host a public 'tour' of the current inadequate facilities to demonstrate genuine need
- Hold a virtual town hall for working residents who cannot attend evening meetings
- Get-out-the-vote operation on election day — rides to polls, social media reminders, absentee ballot outreach to elderly and disabled voters

Keys to Winning

- Transparency wins: Publish every cost assumption and revise openly if estimates change
- The Mt. Tom view sells the project: The floor-to-ceiling window rendering becomes the campaign's visual identity — invest in a high-quality AI architectural visualization for this view as early as possible
- Frame as investment, not expense: $29/month is less than a basic streaming subscription — and it delivers a permanent community asset
- Address opposition directly: Prepare clear, data-backed responses to 'too expensive' and 'wrong time' objections before they emerge
- Pick the right election: Annual City Election in November typically delivers higher turnout, which generally favors bond questions in engaged communities
- Focused scope helps: Two clear programs (Senior Center + Recreation) are easier to explain and defend than a broader multi-program campus

Section 8: Operations & Financial Sustainability

8.1 Operational Model

Both wings of the campus should be operated as City departments, consistent with Easthampton's existing structure:

- Senior Center: Operated by the Council on Aging (COA), a City department. COA Director and staff are City employees. Revenue from state formula grants (EOEA, Title III), city appropriation, and program fees.
- Recreation Complex: Operated by the Parks & Recreation Department. Staff are City employees. Revenue from gym memberships, league fees, event room rentals, and program registrations. Garage staff are Parks & Recreation maintenance employees.
- Health Services Suite: Leased at market or below-market rate to VNA, elder care provider, or behavioral health partner — generates rental revenue and enhances senior center programming without adding City staff.

8.2 Projected Revenue Streams

Revenue Source	Annual Estimate	Notes
Recreation program fees & memberships	$70,000–$130,000	Day passes, fitness, youth leagues, classes
Gymnasium / event room rentals	$35,000–$70,000	Weekend tournaments, community events, private rentals
Health services suite lease	$15,000–$30,000	VNA, behavioral health, or elder care partner
EOEA / Title III-C nutrition grant (COA)	$25,000–$55,000	Congregate meals funding; based on meal count
COA program fees & donations	$8,000–$20,000	Classes, trips, fitness programming
Solar energy savings (net metering)	$15,000–$35,000	150 kW array; net metering credit against utility bill
TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE ESTIMATE	**$168,000–$340,000**	**Offsets operating costs and debt service**

8.3 Estimated Annual Operating Costs

Based on comparable Massachusetts two-program municipal facilities of similar scale, estimated annual operating costs are approximately $750,000–$1,150,000, including:

- Staffing — COA Director, 1–2 senior center staff, Recreation Director, 2–3 recreation staff, shared custodial/maintenance: ~$420,000–$650,000
- Utilities (electricity, heat pump, water, sewer): ~$120,000–$200,000 (reduced by solar)
- Insurance, liability, workers' comp: ~$50,000–$85,000
- Repairs, maintenance, and janitorial supplies: ~$70,000–$130,000

- Programming supplies and contracted instructors: ~$40,000–$70,000
- Vehicle fleet maintenance (garage materials, parts, fuel): ~$50,000–$15,000 (net savings vs. outsourcing)

Net annual municipal contribution (operating costs minus revenue): approximately $410,000–$810,000 per year. This cost is partially offset by eliminating operating expenses at existing inadequate facilities and by the value of consolidated services.

Section 9: Implementation Roadmap

9.1 Phased Timeline

Ph.	Activity	Duration	Key Milestones
1	Pre-Feasibility & Authorization	3–4 mo.	City Council authorizes study; Mayor's Office leads; engage PVPC; commission boundary survey and Phase I ESA; confirm site control
2	Feasibility Study & Community Engagement	6–9 mo.	This document; 4–6 public sessions; program validation; site analysis; ROM cost estimate; tax impact analysis; grant identification; community survey
3	OPM & Designer Selection	3–4 mo.	Issue RFQ for Owner's Project Manager; select OPM; issue RFQ/RFP for architect under MGL c.7C QBS process; select design team
4	Schematic Design & Cost Refinement	6–9 mo.	Architect develops SD documents; value engineering; updated cost estimate with OPM; grant applications submitted; voter campaign begins
5	City Council Vote & Debt Exclusion Election	3–5 mo.	Two-thirds Council vote for contingent appropriation; Mayor places debt exclusion on ballot; YES campaign active; ELECTION DAY — simple majority required
6	Design Development & Permitting	9–12 mo.	Full DD/CD drawings; Conservation Commission NOI; Planning Board site plan review; building permit; final grant awards; bond counsel engaged
7	Construction Bidding & Award	3–4 mo.	Public bid per MGL c.149; open bids; City Council awards contract; notice to proceed issued
8	Construction	18–24 mo.	Monthly OPM reports to City Council; public milestone updates; groundbreaking ceremony; topping-off; substantial completion
9	Fit-Out, Commissioning & Opening	3–4 mo.	FF&E delivery; systems commissioning; staff training; soft opening for Senior Center; grand opening celebration and ribbon cutting
	TOTAL ESTIMATED TIMELINE	**50–65 mo.**	**~4.5 to 5.5 years authorization to opening; targeting 2029–2031 if authorized in 2026**

9.2 Immediate Next Steps — First 90 Days

1. Authorize the Feasibility Study: City Council votes to fund a formal feasibility study ($50,000–$80,000); engage PVPC or a municipal planning consultant to lead; Mayor's Office coordinates.

2. Confirm Site Control: Verify that 226 Park Street is under clean municipal control with no encumbrances; commission a boundary survey and Phase I Environmental Site Assessment; engage a certified wetland scientist to delineate White Brook boundaries.
3. Engage Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC): PVPC supports Franklin and Hampshire County municipalities through similar facility planning processes and may offer cost-sharing on planning services.
4. Launch Community Needs Survey: Distribute via COA, Recreation Dept., City website, and social media to document demand and build the public record supporting voter approval.
5. Meet with Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA): Discuss capital grant programs and congregate meal funding for the new senior center; early state buy-in signals credibility to voters.
6. Commission AI Architectural Visualizations: Produce compelling site-specific renderings of the Senior Center dining/lounge with floor-to-ceiling Mt. Tom views, the shared lobby, and the Nonotuck Park trail link. These images are indispensable for the voter approval campaign.

Appendix: References & Resources

Massachusetts-Specific Resources

- Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs — Senior Center Capital Funding: www.mass.gov/elder-affairs
- Massachusetts Municipal Association — Prop 2½ Guide: www.mma.org
- Division of Local Services — Proposition 2½ Ballot Procedures: www.mass.gov/dls
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission: www.pvpc.org
- Massachusetts Councils on Aging — Senior Center Standards: www.mcoaonline.org
- MassWorks Infrastructure Grant Program: www.mass.gov/massworks

National Best Practice References

- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) — Facility Development Guides: www.nrpa.org
- National Council on Aging (NCOA) — Senior Center Standards: www.ncoa.org
- USDA Rural Development — Community Facilities Grants: www.rd.usda.gov
- AARP Community Challenge Grant Program: www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge

Cost Data Sources

- RSMeans Construction Cost Data 2025–2026 — standard reference for Massachusetts public construction
- Sports Facilities Companies — Recreation Facility Cost Benchmarks: sportsfacilities.com
- Massachusetts OSD Benchmark Data for Public Construction Projects

Disclaimer

All cost estimates are Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) figures based on comparable facilities and published industry data as of February 2026. Actual costs will be established through a formal design and competitive bidding process. Estimates should be updated annually until bids are received. This document is a planning tool for internal City use and public information — not a financial commitment or design specification.

— END OF REPORT —

City of Easthampton, Massachusetts | Park Street Campus: Senior Center & Recreation Complex | February 2026