

# Weston Senior Activites Center

## Space Planning Analysis

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(updated)



ARS ARCHITECTURE

*Ezer  
Keller  
Becky  
Baldwin  
Gravest*



ARS ARCHITECTURE

## **Weston Senior Activities Center: Space Planning Analysis**

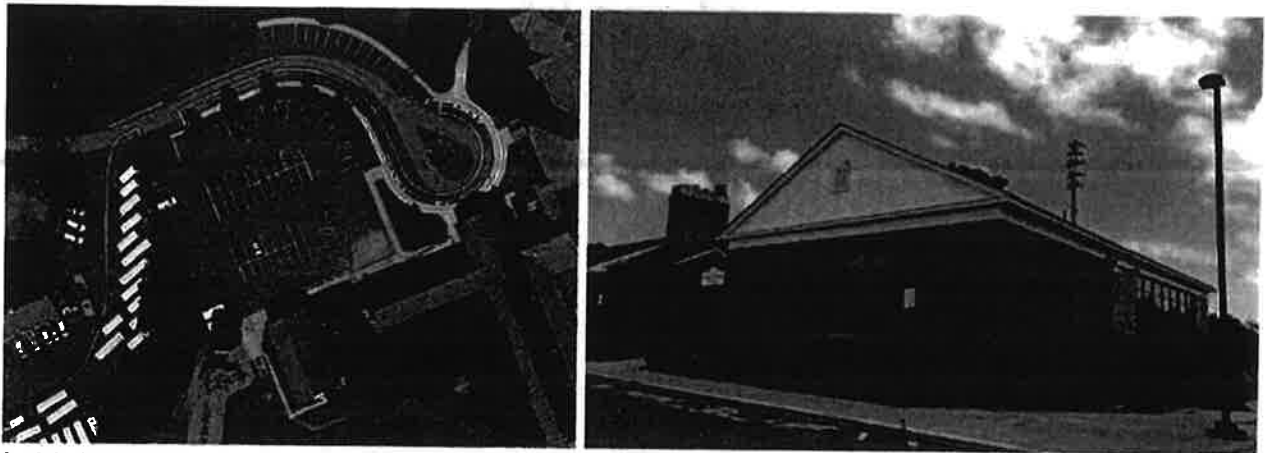
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### **Introduction & Background**

The Weston Senior Activities Center commissioned ARS Architecture to review their current location at 9 School Road in Weston, Connecticut, and to help them evaluate, analyze, and develop a program of rooms and spaces that would meet their current and future needs.

The senior population in Weston is growing, and as such, the need for space for senior activities is growing as well. Weston's goals for its senior center mirror what is happening throughout the country and specifically in Connecticut, as the population continues to age and seniors want to stay active, healthy, and remain culturally and intellectually engaged. Currently, Weston has approximately 22% of its households with an individual 65 years of older (Milone & McBroom Report). In addition, approximately 30% (3,075) of Weston's residents are 55 years and older (CT Economic Resource Center). This is the age group that the center is designed to serve.

ARS Architecture presents this report of its findings based on: tours of the existing senior activities center building; observations of many of the activities in progress; review and analysis of existing plans; meetings with senior activities center staff; review of the staff-provided needs and projections for current and future programs; local demographics; as well as our previous professional experience with municipal senior activity center planning and construction.



*Aerial photo and main entry of the existing Weston Senior Activities Center*

### **Executive Summary**

While the current center is structurally sound, properly maintained and staffed, and centrally located to town activities, this report summarizes that it does not adequately meet the needs for the population at present (or future). Proposed recommendations for planning include holistic renovation & expansion of the existing structure or construction of a stand-alone building—both with sufficient parking and space for outdoor activities.

## **Weston Senior Activities Center's Existing Building**

The Weston Senior Activities Center currently occupies approximately 10,300 square feet of space within a single-story wing at the west end of the Hurlbutt Elementary School building. The center is directly adjacent to school uses on the school and municipal campus, which is situated along the westerly center of Weston, Connecticut, a residential community of approximately 10,250 people. The center also shares parking with the school, with 31 spaces dedicated for senior center use (although less is available during school events). Hours of operation are between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The center offers a variety of activities for seniors—from arts & crafts, presentations, films, and lectures to yoga, pickleball, and wellness, as well as reduced-price luncheon on Wednesdays. Outdoor activities are limited, due to safety regulations of being directly adjacent to a school with children.

The building's wing is divided as might be expected within a typical school layout, with eight-foot-wide concrete-block-wall corridors, classroom spaces on both sides, and a small gym. There is a 32-inch change in elevation along the corridor, approximately midway, where there are stairs and a temporary metal ramp.



*Photos of the existing Weston Senior Activities Center (during non-operational hours)*

## **Finding a Place for Senior Activities Centers**

Throughout the country, senior activities centers can be found in a variety of locations. A center that is near public activity at a municipality's core has many benefits. In a central location, seniors feel more connected to their communities, and the possibilities exist for shared community use, intergenerational programs, and ease of transportation.



It is not uncommon for a center to utilize part of municipal or school building, particularly as a center initially develops. These public structures typically fall under the jurisdiction of, or are within, a town-owned or operated facility, where there can be an economy of shared use, supervision, and reduced operational cost. However, a drawback with this model often arises as the senior center population grows, programs become more popular, and seniors realize the physical, mental, and social benefits in engaging in active senior center use. Buildings that were originally designated for another purpose frequently fall short of meeting those needs.

In particular, school buildings may have some of the larger classroom spaces that a center requires, but they usually are not laid out to support the interactive spaces desired. Open areas—such as a main entry reception point, a welcoming lobby with seating, a game room, and a social lounge—offer locations where multiple beneficial, often unplanned, interactions occur. In these areas, seniors meet and greet other seniors as well as staff members, who can offer guidance on programs, provide support, and easily direct them to (and supervise) activity areas.

Other elements routinely absent in school buildings include both the small and the large spaces—from smaller office and consult rooms to larger multi-use rooms that can be separated or joined together for a variety of functions, lectures, classroom, fitness activities, and events. In an ideal scenario, these larger spaces are joined to a cafeteria-type space near the main entry, with an adjacent kitchen where fresh healthy food is prepared and served on-site on a daily basis.

ARS Architecture observed several of these types of shortcomings in our analysis and evaluation of needs with the staff at the Weston Senior Activities Center. Given the original school infrastructure, the center is laid out as well as possible, but with numerous omissions. Missing components include many of those cited above: a welcoming and safe entry space, offices and private consult spaces, and multi-use spaces that can be joined or separated. An overall sense of directional wayfinding is also absent, as is the ability for staff supervision over multiple program areas. In addition, the existing building does not provide ample space to support all of the projected programs, as described later in this report, including the ability to have dedicated outdoor space for health and well-being.

## Current Building Program

As part of this analysis, ARS Architecture quantified the current/existing space of the Weston Senior Activities Center. The following table lists those rooms and areas.

Room or Area	Area (sq. ft.)	Percentage of Total	Notes
Main Office	780	7.5%	
Café (including closets)	888	8.6%	
Gym	1,608	15.6%	
Gym Office	73	0.7%	
Art Room (including closets)	924	8.9%	
Office (Dial-a-Ride)	215	2.0%	
Theater	792	7.6%	
Lounge	600	5.8%	
Exercise Studio	1,217	11.7%	
Toilet Room (Main Office)	16	0.2%	
Toilet Room (Corridor)	42	0.4%	
Toilet Room (within spaces, 3 total)	84	0.8%	
Closet Spaces (throughout building, not included in rooms above)	284	2.7%	Cumulative area of closet spaces
Corridors/Circulation	1,693	16.2%	
Subtotal Interior Area	9,216	88.70%	
Walls/Shafts	1,157	11.3%	
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>10,373</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Current Parking: 31 spaces allocated (see note 1 below)**

### Notes:

- 1. Parking Note: This report recommends 1 parking space per 250 sq. ft. of building area, which equates to 41 dedicated spaces recommended if the size of the center remains unchanged.*
- 2. Mechanical, Electrical, & IT Note: The current building program does not include mechanical, electrical, or IT rooms because those spaces are already part of the overall school building. For example, a boiler room that is 1,092 sq. ft. lies within the wing where the center is located, but is not counted in the table above.*

## Planning for Current and Future Needs

Based on the current patterns of use and suggested needs outlined by the center's director, as well as the results of our evaluation based on our own experience in this field, ARS Architecture has developed a proposed program that would enhance the facility and its potential to serve more senior residents in the future. These recommendations follow on the next three pages.

### Proposed Building Program

The following table quantifies the areas proposed for the Weston Senior Activities Center.

Room or Area	Area (sq. ft.)	Percentage of Total	Notes
Entry Vestibule	75	0.5%	
Lobby / Reception	350	2.4%	
Rec/Game Room	500	3.4%	
Storage Closet	20	0.1%	
Office, Director	120	0.8%	
Office, Dial-a-Ride	100	0.7%	
Office, Social Worker	100	0.7%	
Office, General (3 workstations, copier)	225	1.5%	
Consultation Room	120	0.8%	
Staff Toilet Room	50	0.3%	
Staff Closet	20	0.1%	
Café (seating for 50)	900	6.1%	
Kitchen (including Storage)	450	3.1%	
Kitchen Janitor's Closet	20	0.1%	
Gym	2,400	16.3%	Pickleball court
Gym Storage	80	0.5%	
Fitness Room (equipment)	500	3.4%	
Exercise Studio (activities)	1,200	8.2%	Match exist. size
Fitness/Exercise Storage	80	0.6%	
Arts & Crafts	900	6.1%	
Arts & Crafts Storage	150	1.0%	
Theater/Media Room	900	6.1%	
Activity / Lounge (with small library)	800	5.4%	
General Storage Rooms (2)	300	2.0%	
Toilet Rooms (2 rooms, multi-stall)	560	3.8%	
Janitor/ Custodian Storage	50	0.3%	
Mechanical	200	1.4%	See note below
Electrical	60	0.4%	See note below
IT Closet	40	0.3%	See note below
Corridors/Circulation	2,000	13.6%	
<b>Subtotal Interior Area</b>	<b>13,270</b>	<b>90.00%</b>	
Walls/Shafts (approx 1% of total)	1,470	10.0%	
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>14,740</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Proposed Parking: 59 spaces**

*Note: Mechanical, electrical, and IT rooms indicated for planning if the center will be in its own building.*

## **Room Descriptions for Proposed Program**

The following list describes some of the key features of each of the spaces in the proposed program.

### Entry Vestibule

- 2 sets of double doors (weather break), glass (for visibility), automatic/power-assist doors, walk-off carpet, fire alarm panel

### Lobby / Reception

- 1 receptionist, sign-up area, information/pamphlets, lobby seating, view to Rec/Game Room and down corridor(s) and main activity spaces, carpet/carpet tiles

### Rec / Game Room

- Open to Lobby / Reception, 2 tables with chairs, pool table, ping pong, board games, carpet/carpet tiles

### Storage Closet

- Coat storage, game storage, adjacent to Lobby / Reception and Rec / Game Room

### Administration Area

- Director's Office: desk & chair, computer/data/phone, credenza, 2 visitor chairs, lateral files
- Dial-a-Ride Office: desk & chair, computer/data/phone, file cabinet
- Social Worker Office: desk & chair, computer/data/phone, file cabinet
- General Work Area: 3 workstations, computers/data/phones, copier, cabinets, printer, files
- Consultation Room: table & 4 chairs, base cabinet with shelving, computer/data/phone
- Staff Toilet Room & Staff Closet

### Café

- Tables & chairs for 50 people, coffee & condiment & serving station/counter, resilient flooring, potentially multi-use space, adjacent to Lobby / Reception and possibly outdoors

### Kitchen Area

- Preparation & storage of food (cold, dry), dish-wash, dedicated janitorial, cleanable finishes, adjacent to Café and possibly staff area (toilet), potential culinary class space

### Gym Area

- Sized for pickleball (20 ft wide x 44 ft long court, 34 ft wide x 64 ft long area recommended for play), circulation and viewing space, resilient homogeneous flooring, high ceilings, storage for sports equipment

### Fitness Room

- Fitness equipment (including treadmills, exercise bikes, bench & weight area), water cooler, bench & coat rack, rubber floor, emergency call button

## Room Descriptions for Proposed Program (continued)

### Exercise Studio

- Fitness activities & classes, including dance, chair fitness, yoga, stretching, multi-use space, resilient floor

### Fitness / Exercise Storage

- Storage for exercise balls, portable and miscellaneous equipment for yoga blocks, hand weights, Pilates straps, and mats.

### Arts & Crafts Area

- Tables & chairs for 20-25, tall & base cabinet storage, demonstration table/counter, sinks station, marker-surface, projection capability, variable lighting, accommodations for drawing, painting, ceramics, knitting, multi-use space for larger meetings & overflow events, storage with deep adjustable shelves for art supplies and larger artwork

### Theater / Media Room

- Movable seating for up to 50 chairs, dimmable space with room darkening, built-in screen & projection, computer/data/phone and podium hook-up (electrical & voice), counter / table space near door, coat rack or alcove, carpet/carpet tiles

### Activity / Lounge (with Small Library)

- Game tables and chairs for backgammon, cards & bridge, sink counter & undercounter refrigerator, massage table, comfortable chairs for reading, shelving, coat rack or alcove, carpet/carpet tiles, somewhat close to Lobby / Reception

### General Storage Rooms

- Approximately 2 rooms, distributed throughout the programmed areas

### Toilet Rooms

- Multi-stall, centrally located, with adjacent water coolers, near custodial/janitor

### Information Technology (IT)

- Appropriate technology & infrastructure as well as Wi-Fi throughout the building

### Outdoor Seating

- Seating for 12-15 people

### Parking

- Weston Zoning Regulations do not specify an amount of spaces required for this building type. This report recommends 1 space per 250 sq. ft. of total area, which amounts to 59 spaces, and would be subject to review and approval by the Planning & Zoning Commission



## **Conclusion**

The Weston Senior Activities Center provides a safe and sound location for the seniors of the Weston community to gather, eat, socialize, play games, attend lectures and classes, take part in fitness activities, and generally improve their quality of life while maintaining vital connections to their community and fellow seniors. The existing school structure is clean and well-maintained, and the staff is caring and of high quality. The Town of Weston wisely evaluated available uses to offer unused school space for the senior population in a location that is central to the town's hub of activity. This wisdom is shared by the staff and those deeply connected to the center by beginning the process of analyzing the future needs of the center as the programs increase in popularity and the senior population grows. This report hopes to serve as an effective tool in that planning process.

The current center contains approximately 10,300 square feet of area, which, during the center's current operating hours, does not provide the type of spaces, or the size of spaces, that are needed to support a full range of programs. The overall space is also limited by the school building's originally designed purpose, which consists of classrooms around a central solid-walled corridor (e.g., no internal windows). Components that are absent and are typically part of a well-functioning and safe senior activity center include an entry control point, a lobby, dedicated and right-sized office and consult space, multi-use spaces, a café supported by a kitchen, as well as immediate and building-wide wayfinding. Some key social spaces are provided at the current center, but they are located in a non-ideal location, such as the lounge, which is situated at the far end of the building, away from the main entry.

This report identifies approximately 14,700 total square feet of proposed program space to meet the needs identified by, and reviewed with, the center's staff. This number considers current and projected demographics and represents about 4,400 more square feet of area than the current center. If the planning process considers expanding the amount of space allocated to the senior center from within the existing school building, ARS Architecture recommends that the space be studied holistically, versus merely adding on, with an emphasis on renovating the entire area to provide right-size spaces in a layout that is as effective as possible. Likewise, opportunities for outdoor activities and an increased amount of dedicated parking (59 spaces recommended) should be considered.

Of course, a stand-alone building is a consideration as well, which can be planned with a senior activities center use in mind, and may be ideal, but we recognize that budget must be weighed along with potential renovation, leasing, and long-term operating costs. If a new building is planned, the process should evaluate utilities, parking, access, and overall location. As mentioned earlier in this report, centers that are located near the core of their communities carry many benefits for seniors and municipalities alike.

The Weston Senior Activities Center is a positive and vital part of the Town of Weston, and with proper planning, it can continue to serve as a physical, social, and economic strength of the community, both today and in the future.