

## Design Considerations for Senior Centers

Parking	Van or emergency access. One parking spot/100 gsf.; less <b>if</b> good public transport or easy walking. <b>If</b> parking islands, use plantings! Covered ramp, enclosed (lit) entryway & e-v-e-n entryway lighting. <b>Safety cameras to monitor side/walkways.</b>
Entry, Enclosure	→ Enhance visibility & identification of center. 42" (assisted/automatic) doors suggested for flow. Consider <b>separate exits for home delivered meals, durable medical equipment loan closet.</b>
Greeting/ Waiting	<b>PROMINENT</b> sign-in registration/security area. High/ <b>low</b> countertops, horizontal cubbies for brochures, flyers and handouts. <b>Open coat storage (not behind doors)!</b> Seating area for departing groups.
Information	Display screens, bulletin board/display racks, cork strips... Volunteer recognition! Heights for wheelchair users(?). Sensitive materials (e.g., elder abuse brochures) in lavatories. <b>Re-sale shop(pe) -- revenue.</b>
Recreation & Assembly	Multi-use for meals, presentations, assembly, (chair) exercise/fitness, dance/zumba instruction etc. Chairs (with & w/o arms); interlocking arms <b>may</b> be required by code. Seniors to test chair samples!
Auditorium/ Main Room	Noiseless/ball-bearing hinged doors. Electrically operated panels (ideal). <b>Divisible</b> , soundproof partitions (60/40 or 1/3rds) w/ exits, pass-thru's & overhead adjustable sound. Floor plugs/jacks on both sides of partitions near center of wall (if feasible). <b>Storage</b> for chairs, dollies, tables & <b>high</b> cots (for emergency overnight use!).
Stage	Ramp access, incl. <b>storage</b> , toilets, wheel-in shower, dressing room/s.
Dining	Non-institutional: round/mixed folding tables [for <b>six</b> ; wheeled legs], colorful decor, "café" canopies and wheelchair space & service. Consider: access to outdoor areas. "Picture rails" in halls, rooms.
Kitchen	Refrigerated, dry and temporary <b>storage</b> . Adequate ventilation!! Plastic DIY shelving OK. "Pass thru" for serving/food return. Restaurant style appliances, sinks, dishwasher. Sep-a-rate the clean from the soiled dishes, utensils. Store service/dishes in dining room. Broom closet & add'l <b>small function</b> prep space helpful. Use a <i>Food Service Manager</i> or <i>professional chef</i> for kitchen design consult!
Classes Arts & Crafts	Multi-use space: adult ed; training; rehearsals, music, sink/s, lockers. Seasonal <b>storage</b> . Dedicated space: pottery/kiln, classroom/movement space may need to hold 30-40 participants each.
Lounge and Quiet Spots	Cards, reading, puzzles. <i>PT/OT/design</i> for firm, stable, seats/sofas. <b>Washability</b> , #250, no protruding legs. Elders <b>pre-test</b> seats & sofas!!
Lavatories	Locate "handicapped/unisex" units near function room, in middle of long corridors, near front entrance &/or elevators. <b>Consider</b> assisted doors, <b>emergency-call lights/devices (!) in lavs</b> ; walk-in shower helpful. <b>Contrasting</b> wall color for standing commodes.

**Fitness/Equipment** *Non-carpet flooring* in exercise room (& **storage** for mats). Allow **is very popular...!** (some) visibility for passers-by. Walk-in shower/s. Storage cubbies.

Supportive Day 50 sf per participant. Walk-in shower, washer/dryer (and hairdressing sink!) may be helpful! Keyed/coded doors, digital recording.

Site movement Encourage walking (e.g., to lavs) that pass activities. Use translucent/clear panels in walls, solid doors to reduce collisions. Interior blinds for support groups/programs. Use "chair/hand"rails/bump-outs. Corridor 8' wide—for two wheelchairs to pass! (Use linoleum tile w/ regular patterns; if carpeting, color change at walls.)

Building Services **FM assist, loop, enhanced surround sound in one (divisible) largish room!!** (Recessed) benches/alcoves? HVAC adjustable for **fitness(!)** Photo-sensitive lights? Volunteer lockers. Tool **storage!** → **Signal plate away from automatic door plate!** Two-hour(?) firewalls + doors (multilevel buildings). Sound-proofing if "noisy" activities about "quiet" ones. Automate windows/partitions: janitors not always funded!! Large meeting room/s **often** serve non-senior community purposes. Consider an **emergency generator(!)** Very helpful amenity.

Administration (Secure) copier/storage; board meetings; private consult space! Use glass/blinds/curtains for seeing "through" rooms. Private LAV for admin staff; fridge/microwave break room in administrative "wing." Storage: esp. if/as emergency **overnight alternative for seniors....**

Out/In-door Recreation Fitness path, stretching stations, wheelchair/raised garden beds, bike path, labyrinth.

## **OTHER**

From recent construction feedback, we suggest **at least four (gross) square feet (GSF) per elder.** The population basis is the municipal **2010** federal census (**60+**) x **1.20+** to approximate 2018 needs (which will grow). **Use more GSF** if < than 1000 seniors, **less** for 5000+ seniors). **Add 1 SF per senior for self-prep kitchen, supportive day programs.** If possible, "stub" utilities to facilitate expansion: **if you build it, they will come.**

Make use of movable (floor to ceiling) panels with matching sound system capacity. Allow up to 30% of designed space for **storage(!)** (This avoids outside pods or garage space elsewhere: rarely is space converted to storage!)

Cathedral ceilings appeal, but consider energy costs (reversible fans) and **light bulb** changing! Re-check "elder" lighting levels. Use *commercial* wiring specs.

**Building committee:** engineer, architect, interior designer, disability commissioner.... **Visit other (new) sites...and ask... "What would you have done differently then, knowing what you know?"**

Check architect's current/recent projects and permission to speak with the principals at those sites. Project manager/clerk of works required by law.

## Special, Non-typical or Occasional Uses Found at Senior Centers in Massachusetts

Supportive Day Care (or Adult Day Health – medical model) Standalone/integrated space.  
Aquarium (esp. in conjunction with supportive day/adult day programs)

**Fitness Center** (equipment *may* require assistance with operation). Popular w/younger srs.

Arts & Crafts (kilns not common; dedicated storage/lockers helpful)

Woodworking (Carving has fewer OSHA issues)

Small household items repair workshop space.

Private counseling and group support – see design suggestions

Computer training (may need separate room, but can be integrated)

Greenhouse

Kitchen for “cooking for one”—or large scale ovens;  
also café style enclosure (low bookcase/planters & awnings)

Durable Medical Equipment Loan “closet”

Pool popular; table tennis

Bowling alley (in community center)

Diving/swimming pool (in community center)

Cable/Video production – very good for outreach, esp. chair yoga

Stage (accessible)

Gym (with Park/Rec or community center); Lockers; Showers – wheel in type.

Police sub-station (bicycle or regular patrol—good for elder abuse reporting issues, scams & related matters, RUOK telephone reassurance calls)

Memory Café (program option); Other health & human service agencies, or “Friends of COA” space (rental)

Resale Shop(pe). Can be mobile/movable...carts on wheels!

Library (lending -- including DVDs, videos: may be good for outreach)

Emergency Support (heating/cooling—“cooling/warming shelter”); defibrillator; generator

Breakfast services (e.g., “coffee shop” – run by COA)

Exterior spaces (e.g., dining, raised bed gardening, labyrinth)