

Why 12,000 Square Feet?

After careful and long-term analysis of past and current building use, and in looking forward to meeting the program needs of our young people in the decades to come, the Williamstown Youth Center's Board of Directors, Building Committee, and staff determined that a new building with an area of 12,000 sq. ft. is the minimum necessary for us to continue fulfilling our mission.

We reached this conclusion making certain assumptions. First, that the Youth Center will continue to use existing community spaces – including Williamstown Elementary School and Williams College facilities – to the extent that they are available. Second, that the WYC will be creative and flexible in creating multi-use areas within our own building, as we always have. Third, *that average after school attendance will remain at 45*, even though we are confident that an adequate facility will attract more families to WYC programs.

Even on average days, however, and even with all of the rooms in the Youth Center available, overcrowding is a problem. In part, this is due to the building's poor layout. But a simple lack of space is also largely to blame. Space is even more of an issue on busy days (particularly Wednesday afternoons), when as many as 80 children attend the after school program. Our new building proposal addresses these problems by laying out rooms more efficiently, and only adding space where absolutely necessary (we describe these additions later in this document).

The Youth Center on Cole Ave. has 10,000 sq ft. of usable space, including:

- Office/Administrative Area – work areas for executive director and assistant directors.
- Learning Center – Up to 30 children spend part of their day working in the learning center, doing homework, reading quietly, etc. (library will be located in this room).
- Art Room – Multiple work areas support art projects taking place on a daily basis. for up to 20 children. Often outside artists come to work with children, increasing the number of children using the space at the same time.
- Common Room - This is the space for whole-group meetings, presentations, performances, and games.
- Game Room – Ping-pong, pool, foosball, air hockey.
- Gymnasium/Multi-Purpose – This is the gross motor area for the Youth Center. The gym/multi-purpose room allows children to exercise even during inclement weather.

- Movement Center – Used for dance, drama, yoga, and music. This room generates rental income from instructors, as well as being used by the afterschool program and vacation camps.
- Teen Room – Dedicated space for middle and high school students to socialize, game, and create.

To help visualize the actual size of these spaces, consider that the standard classroom size in the elementary school is 1,000 sq. ft., and that these classrooms were designed to accommodate between 25-30 children engaged in largely stationary, quiet activities. By contrast, only two rooms in the new Youth Center – the Learning Center and, to a lesser extent, the media/technology room – are comparable in the way they'll be used, and both are considerably smaller than a WES classroom (the media/technology room, for example, will be less than 1/3 the size.) In addition, WYC rooms are used by as many as 75 children at a time, during a time of the day when young people are bursting with the energy they've contained for the previous six hours. With this in mind, we've made the following additions to our space:

- Kitchenette (for preparation and distribution of snacks) = 200 sq. ft.
- Game Room – additional 100 sq. ft. (the existing WYC game room can only accommodate games being played on 4 of the 5 tables simultaneously.)
- technology/media room (given the prevalence of technology in so many aspects of our children's lives – academic, creative, and social – any new building serving young people should provide a safe, well-supervised place for them to learn how to use available tools to collaborate on school as well as self-directed projects. As with every area of the new Youth Center, the technology/media room will be available for WES use during school hours.) = 275 sq. ft.
- parent/staff conference room (for privacy; conversations with parents now take place in the executive director's office, and are subject to interruptions and displacement.) = 150 sq ft.
- dedicated k-1 space (for games and activities appropriate for our youngest members) = 425 sq. ft.
- increase to our gross motor area (which will allow for safer indoor physical activity, and also make it unnecessary for the after school program to compete for WES gym space with other groups) = 850 sq. ft.
- staff bathroom = 60 sq. ft.

Taken together, these spaces add up to the approximately 2,060 sq ft. of additional program space the new youth center will have over the old.

These space needs we describe reflect the reality that children are unevenly distributed in different areas of the building, and that they are constantly moving from activity to activity. In this the Youth Center is quite different from a school or day care center, where activities are more staff-directed, and space is scheduled accordingly.

The Youth Center is unique among our area's service providers in that every day children are engaged in academic, creative, athletic, and other recreational activities throughout our facility. We are not solely a daycare provider, or a recreation commission, or an after-school tutoring program, but rather all of these things simultaneously. Our building must accommodate these different uses if we are to maintain existing services.

We feel this is a modest yet reasonable increase, far less than what we originally conceived, and well below the 15,000 sq. ft. limit set forth in the RFP.