

Brookline School and Town Services Study Committee
(STSSC)

Growth Management Study
and
Committee Findings

Peter D'Agostino, Chair

Colleen Micavich, Vice Chair

Scott Grenier, Secretary, Planning Board Representative

Charlie Corey, Town Department Representative

Steve Russo, Selectboard Representative

Ken Haag, School Board Representative

Michele Decoteau, Member

September 29, 2021

Table of Contents

Background	3
Summary of Growth Management Study	4
Committee Findings and Recommendations	9
Growth Management Dataset	11
Workforce Housing Dataset	1963
Well and Water Dataset	1980
Additional Information Dataset	2634

Background

The Brookline School & Town Services Study Committee (STSSC) was formed by the Brookline Planning Board pursuant to a warrant article passed in March of 2021 by the citizens of Brookline.

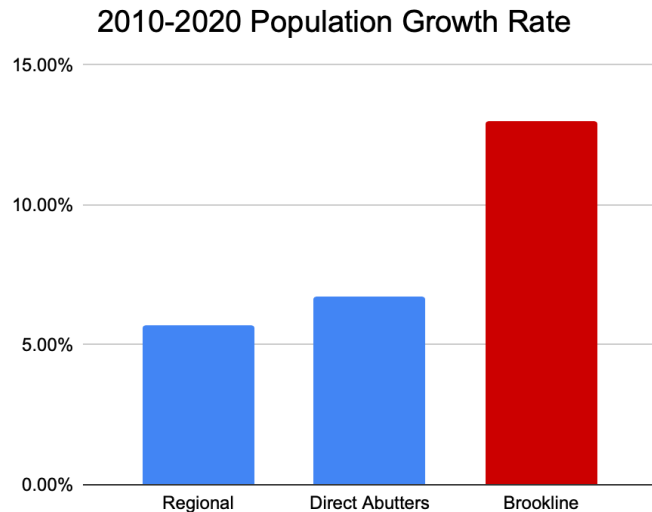
The STSSC began its work on May 27, 2021 and conducted approximately 20 public meetings including but not limited to, as a full Committee, subcommittee activities and Planning Board meetings. The committee put in hundreds of hours of combined meetings, research, and consultation time. Members of the STSSC consulted with Brookline community entities, including but not limited to, the Brookline School District, the Brookline Fire Department, the Brookline Police Department, the Brookline Ambulance Department, Brookline Public Works and the Well Water Committee.

Additionally, members of the STSSC consulted with outside entities, including but not limited to; the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), the New Hampshire Office of Strategic Initiatives (NH OSI), and the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA). Members of the STSSC reviewed data from New England School Development Council (NESDEC), and reviewed Ordinances and Bylaws from towns within the State of New Hampshire.

Summary of Growth Management Study

The Brookline School & Town Services Study Committee (STSSC) reviewed thousands of data points included in the datasets below. The culmination of the review of datasets resulted in a determination that Brookline’s growth is outpacing the Town’s ability to scale school and town service capacities.

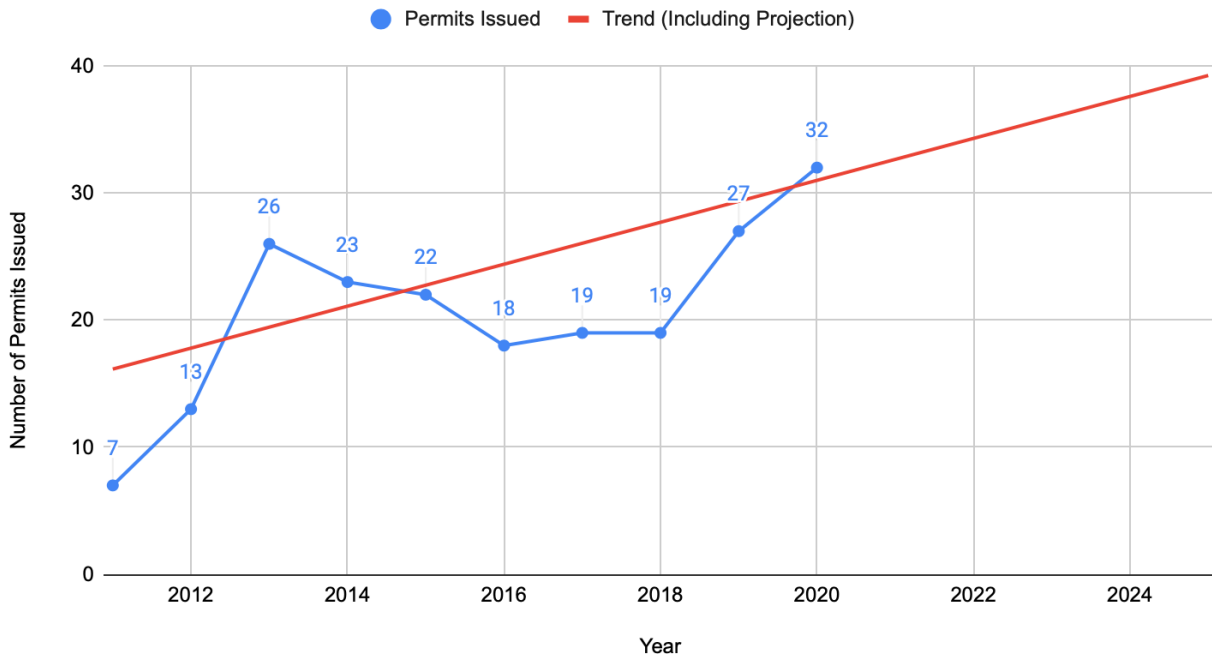
Brookline’s growth is demonstrated by several datasets. The population data from 2020 U.S. Census Bureau shows that Brookline grew at a rate of 12.98% over the last 10 years, which is the highest growth rate in the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region. Brookline’s growth exceeded the regional average growth rate of (5.7%) by approximately 227%. Even more indicative of outsize growth, Brookline’s growth rate exceeded its direct abutters average growth rate (6.7%) by approximately 194%. The increasing issuance of building permits provides further evidence of Brookline’s rapid growth. Between 2011 and 2020, new home building permit activity increased from 7 to 32 new home permits - a 457% increase.



When the Growth Management Ordinance sunset in 2011, the Town had issued seven (7) building permits for that year. The number of building permits subsequently increased to fourteen (14) in 2012 then to twenty-six (26) in 2013, nearly 100% growth sustained for two years in a row.

In 2020, the Town issued thirty-two (32) building permits. This rate of development reflects an annual average growth rate equal to approximately 320% greater than the annual average growth rate of the NRPC region.

Permits Issued By Year with Linear Trendline



In 2021, it appears there are approximately 30 pre-approved subdivision lots where a building permit has not yet been issued. If these homes were to be developed in the next year along with the building permits already issued for 2021 Brookline would reach an all-time high annual average growth rate of approximately 430% greater than the annual average growth rate of the NRPC region.

A linear trendline (figure above) is calculated by looking at all the data points and determining an equation that best predicts how many permits will be issued in a given year. This won't be entirely accurate – but it does provide a reasonable estimate of future increases in permits based on what Brookline has issued in new home permits in the last ten years. Based on the trendline calculation above, if Brookline took no action related to controlling growth, Brookline would issue approximately 179.75 building permits between 2021- 2025. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau Data of an average of 3.08 people per household in Brookline. The corresponding population increase just from new development would be approximately 553.63 people or 344% greater than the current annual average growth rate of the NRPC region. This population increase does not include organic growth through the expansion of families already in town or from homes which are sold and more people move into town than moved out of town.

While the Town of Brookline is currently under a moratorium for 2021, it is important to note that the 2021 annual average growth rate indicated above reflects building permits issued prior to the moratorium taking effect (approximately five (5) issued prior to the moratorium). Ten (10) building permits have been issued since the moratorium took effect, each deemed exempt from the moratorium. The remaining approximately 30 pre-approved subdivision lots where a building permit has not yet been issued are also exempt from the moratorium and could be built at any time, at the discretion of the developer.

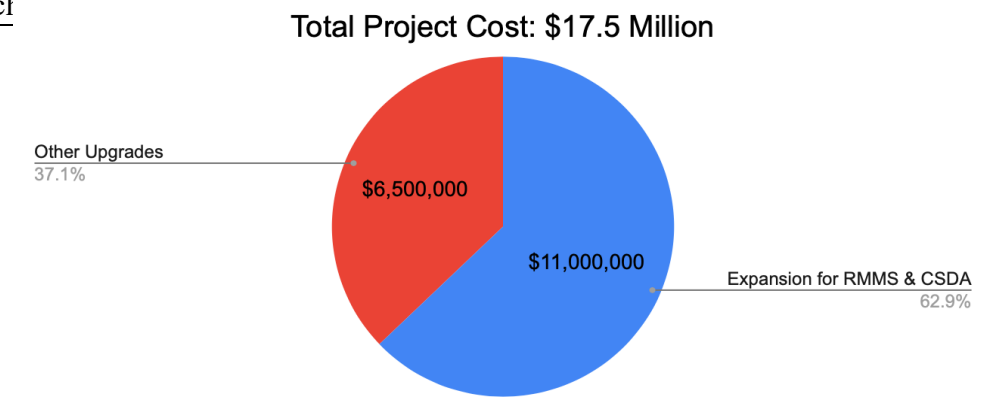
In order for Brookline to manage its average annual growth rate to meet the annual average growth rate of the NRPC region under the current circumstances of pre-approved subdivision lots yet to be built, Brookline would have to stop issuing all building permits for a period of three (3) years, providing exceptions only for the pre-approved subdivisions. This would allow the effect of the average annual growth rate to stabilize.

The growth rate demonstrated above (12.98%), along with an enrollment increase of 14.2% from 2017 (514) - 2021(587) has had significant impacts on the Brookline School District. School data began to indicate that the Brookline School District was rapidly approaching capacity. In the 2020-2021 school year Brookline added a 4th full day Kindergarten class. In the 2021- 2022 the next school year (current school year) Brookline added a 5th full day Kindergarten class and 5th 1st grade class.

In response to the rapid growth rate, the strain being placed on the classroom space within the school buildings and the fact that children new to the school system are primarily entering the district in Kindergarten and First Grade, the Brookline School Board engaged the engineering firm Energy Efficient Investments, Inc. to conduct an analysis of the current capacity and potential capital improvements that the school district would require. Energy Efficient Investments, Inc. findings (Sep 2021) found a lack of physical space for education in both district buildings. The Brookline School Board is currently evaluating the findings to determine what if anything can be done to reduce the cost of the project.

Energy Efficient Investments, Inc. findings are summarized below.

Brookline Sch



1. Total costs for both school district buildings repairs, upgrades and expansion are projected to be approximately \$17.5 million
2. Costs strictly related to expansion for both school district buildings to accommodate growth in student populations, are projected to be approximately \$11 million

- a. Expansion for RMMS was proposed to be five (5) additional classrooms at a cost of approximately \$8 million
 - b. Expansion for CSDA: 6750 feet of classroom space; five (5) additional classrooms at a cost of approximately \$3 million
3. Other upgrades in the estimated project cost not related to expansion include ADA compliance (elevator, RMMS), boiler, and HVAC repairs amongst others.

Brookline School District

1. Current Number of Students Enrolled: 587
2. Current Number of classrooms being utilized at CSDA & RMMS: All
3. RMMS and CSDA could not support an additional class at this time based on the current School Board Policy IIB without reconfiguration of the building space.

Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS)

1. Specialist teachers do not have their own classrooms and are now teaching “off of a cart.”
2. Library had to be split to facilitate additional classroom space.
3. There is an overall lack of space in the building for education needs.
4. There are needed ADA and code upgrades.
5. Building lacks a sprinkler system.
6. Building has three (3) inefficient oil boiler furnaces.
7. Ventilation systems are at the end of life.
8. No elevator for ADA access for lower level.
9. Main office is separated from the main entrance creating a security risk.
10. School lacks a modern kitchen and a dedicated cafeteria.

Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA)

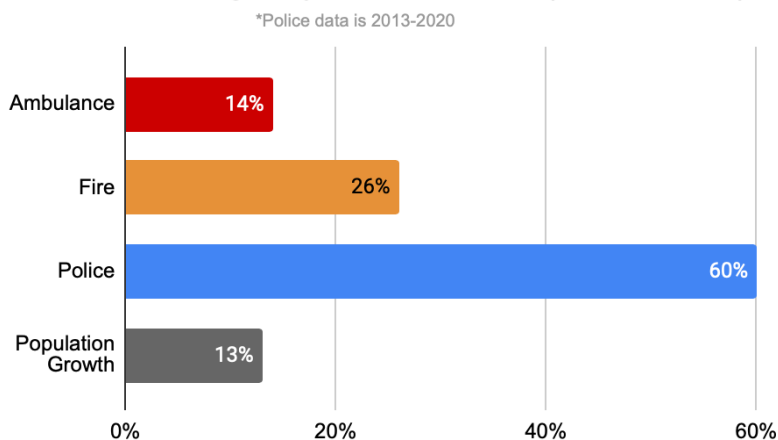
1. School relies on modular classrooms as space inside the building is strained.
2. HVAC controls and fire alarm system nearing end of useful life.
3. HVAC system does not allow for dehumidification or recommended ASHRAE filtration.
4. Building has inefficient fluorescent lighting.
5. Cafeteria is undersized for student usage.
6. Building lacks a sprinkler system.

The rapid growth demonstrated above has also started to impact the availability of a potable water supply for residents. Residents in Brookline began reporting well-water issues immediately after new developments were added to their neighborhoods. In response, the Planning Board created a Well Water Committee (2020) to study how the Town could address the issue. The Well Water Committee published a report with findings and recommendations in the fall of 2020. The STSSC has incorporated those findings and recommendations into its findings.

Other town services have been similarly impacted. Data from 2020 US Census Bureau Data demonstrates that there was a 12.98% increase in Brookline’s population from 2010 - 2020. The STSSC analyzed the emergency services dataset included as part of the Growth Management Dataset and was able to determine the following correlating increase of Emergency Services:

- a. Brookline Fire Department: 26% increase in calls
- b. Brookline Ambulance Department: 14% increase in calls
- c. Brookline Police Department: 60% increase in calls (2013 – 2020)

Increase in Emergency Service Calls (2010-2020*)



The data shows that emergency services are being impacted at a rate even greater than the population growth rate.

Finally, growth in the town has resulted in the Town transitioning from a Road Agent to a full time Brookline Department of Public Works (BPW). The BPW is currently significantly understaffed, forcing the town to continue to rely on subcontractors. Based on research conducted by the STSSC, a town should have approximately one (1) BPW employee for every ten (10) miles of roads. Brookline has approximately sixty (60) miles of roads, requiring six (6) full time employees. Brookline is currently operating with only two (2) full time employees. Further, in 2020 Brookline Town Meeting approved the construction of a BPW building at a cost of \$2.67 million in response to the town’s growth and the corresponding need to provide public works services. The building is currently under construction, further hampering the Town’s ability to provide increased town services until such time that construction has been completed.

In summary, the STSSC reviewed thousands of data points included in the datasets below to compile the summary above. The culmination of the review of datasets resulted in a determination that Brookline’s growth is outpacing the Town’s ability to scale school and town service capacities. As a result of this determination, the Committee has made the following findings and recommendations.

Committee Findings and Recommendations

1. Reinstate the Growth Management Ordinance

- a. With the goal to pace the growth in Brookline to meet our region's annual average rate of population growth while allowing the Town to:
 - i. meet the demand for high quality education and school services while maintaining classroom sizes in accordance with the current and long-standing school board policies;
 - ii. provide the town time to conduct a town-wide hydrogeological study of existing well water capacity and to protect existing water resources; and
 - iii. plan for increases in Town services in an efficient manner.

2. Update the Workforce Housing Ordinance to allow Workforce Housing development when the Town falls short of its Regional Fair Share of Workforce Housing by

- a. Providing long-term sustainable affordability;
- b. Removing square footage limitations and aligning with affordability standards in accordance with RSA 674:58;
- c. Updating Applicability Section to expand where mixed developments may occur;
- d. Providing reduced lot size and frontage requirements for Workforce Housing;
- e. Encouraging Mixed Developments;
- f. Providing greater clarity with conforming definitions (IAW RSA 674:58) and resolving a conflict in definitions between Town and State definitions (aligned with the RSA's) to provide greater flexibility in the use of 2, 3 or 4 family dwellings;
- g. Aligning paragraphs under the appropriate sections; and
- h. Requiring an annual determination by the Planning Board on workforce housing to determine the Town's compliance with RSA 672:1, III-e and RSA 674:59 in accordance with the provisions of RSA 674:59 III.

3. Implement a Well and Water Ordinance

- a. Provide wells that are able to supply long term sustainable water yields of at least four (4) gallons per minute over a four (4) hour period; and
- b. Provide wells that are safe for drinking and meet minimum testing requirements for potable water.

4. Update the Zoning Ordinance (Section 600, 900, 1500)

- a. Changing the Residential/Agricultural District minimum lot size to be two (2) acres.

5. Update the Subdivision, Cluster Development & Site Plan Regulations

- a. Requiring a hydrogeological study before subdivision approval; and
- b. Ensuring that Reasonable Standards including, but not limited to, Environmental Protection, Water Supply, Sanitary Disposal, Traffic Safety, Fire and Life Safety Protection are met for all new developments in Brookline; and
- c. Add language to allow for maintenance bonds for any subdivision, cluster development, and Site Plan that includes residential uses.

6. Update the Master Plan

- a. Revising the Housing Chapter with 2020 U.S. Census Data and current information on housing goals and objectives; and
- b. Conducting a review of the CIP, in light of faster than anticipated growth.

7. Update Impact Fee Schedule

- a. Potential additions and renovations to the two elementary schools.

Committee Recommendations for Future Work

1. Review and revise Phased Development, if needed;
2. Establish an Independent Well Water Committee reporting to the Select Board;
3. Evaluate the need for a community well water monitoring survey/program;
4. Updates to the Zoning Ordinance to include, but not be limited to, Definitions; and
5. Review of Zoning Ordinance - Review/Recommendations by NRPC.