

Comfort Station FAQ's

Q. Why this location?

A: A comfort station sub-committee composed of your neighbors was formed in 2021 to agree on a design and location for the comfort station. The location behind the library was arrived at through a process of elimination. It could not be in the flood zone, which ruled out most of the Borough. The Wad Square location is the only location that does not have proximate neighbors. It is also a central location that is easy to find, and nearly all visitors pass by this location.



The committee explored locations throughout the Borough for the Comfort Station. Building anywhere within the 100-year floodplain would require elevating the building several feet above the surrounding ground, which would necessitate long ramps in order to make the building accessible. For example, if the Comfort Station were located at the Playground/Town Docks, it would have to be at elevation 12, which would be 4' above the surrounding grade with a 48' long ramp for wheelchair access. If the Comfort Station were located at the Point, the Comfort Station would have to be at elevation 15, 9' above the surrounding grade with a 108' long ramp for wheelchair access.

The committee then focused on Borough-owned properties outside of the 100-year floodplain, including Cannon Square, the West side of La Grua Park on Denison Ave, the North side of Wimpfheimer Park, and Wadawanuck Square. The North side of Wadawanuck Square quickly emerged as the best location because it is visible from the entrance to the Village with parking available, it has non-residential neighbors (the Post Office and St Mary's Church), and there are multiple events held on the Square throughout the year that would make use of the Comfort Station, such as the Village Fair, 4th of July Parade, Battle of Stonington 5K, Stonington Garden Tours, Stonington Sounds outdoor concerts, Holiday tree lighting and Stroll, and Library open mic nights, to name a few.

Q. Why not Town Dock, Wayland's Wharf, the Point, Fire House, or Mathews Park?

A: All of these locations are in the Flood zone and have proximate residential neighbors. To save money on not purchasing property, the sub-committee ruled out non-Borough owned properties such as Town Dock and Mathews Park. The Point, as well as Mathews Park, are too far away from the Borough's business district to be useful.

Q. Why not Borough Hall

A: Borough Hall is located in the AE floodplain, and the existing building exceeds the allowable coverage on the lot, so public restrooms would have to be inside the building, requiring substantial renovations to the interior. There is not enough space between the building and the property lines to create accessible access from the outside, so the building would need to be open to the public to allow access to the restrooms, which raised safety and security concerns. Borough Hall was considered, but the committee and architect could not come up with a way to isolate the comfort facility from the offices of Borough Hall. In addition to ensuring security for the building, meeting accessibility codes would also be extremely difficult. Plus, Borough Hall does have residential neighbors.

Q. Why is it a brick building and not a New England-styled building?

A: The library, St Mary's Church, and the Post Office are all brick buildings. The brick design and shade will blend the new building with the existing buildings so that it looks like it has been there for 50 years. It felt both contextual and appropriate to extend the brick material to the Comfort Station.

Q. Why is the comfort station designed as it is?

A: The proportions of the Comfort Station are derived from the original 1900 Stonington Free Library, and the lighter brick borrows from the surrounding buildings. The edge of the roof and the concrete base relate to the granite, limestone, and copper on the original Library structure. A clerestory ribbon of windows wraps around the building for natural light, ventilation, transparency through the building, and a connection to the outdoors from the interior. A green roof promotes sustainability and connects to Greater Stonington's Pollinator Pathways Project, reduces roof run-off, offsets the loss of greenspace on the Square, and acts as a teaching tool. The wooden elements in the benches, screens, and overhangs soften the exterior, provide a material that will age over time, and relate to the predominantly wood-framed buildings in the Borough.

Q. Who will maintain the interior of the comfort station once it's built? Will it be cleaned multiple times a day? Will a phone number be posted in case of an issue that needs immediate attention?

A: The Borough will be responsible for cleaning, maintenance, hours, etc. These details will be determined at the appropriate time in the future and will change based on usage.

Q. Who will maintain the green roof? How will it be watered in case of drought? How will flat roof handle snow & ice? What about potential ice dams? Again, who responsible?

A: The green roof would be planted with native, drought-tolerant plants that would need to be watered for 1-2 years after installation as a part of general building maintenance. After the plants are established, only monthly or quarterly plant maintenance should be required. Below the green roof assembly, the roofing membrane will be installed on a slight slope that will lead water and melting snow to a roof drain, and the copper scupper on the rear side of the building will divert any overflow to the planting bed below. The Borough will be responsible for the maintenance of this building and the green roof just as it is for the Firehouse and Borough Hall.

Q. What hours will it be open? How would security/safety concerns be handled?

A: These details will be determined at the appropriate time in the future and will change based on usage. Technology exists to automatically manage lighting, lock doors etc.