

Westwood, MA Town Administrator



Photo by Doug Hyde

Community & Position Profile



COMMUNITY PARADIGM ASSOCIATES, LLC

The Community

The Town of [Westwood](#), Massachusetts, is an attractive community of approximately 15,000 residents located 12 miles southwest of Boston. Westwood, situated at the junction of Routes 95/128 and 93, provides an excellent location for its residents with easy access to Boston, Amtrak trains, and commuter rail along with all the elements of a beautiful suburban community. Westwood has a strong sense of community as well as a tradition of highly responsive government service and strong financial management. *CNN/Money* and *Money* magazine have ranked Westwood 13th on its list of the 100 Best Places to Live in the United States. Westwood Public Schools have been nationally recognized for excellence. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Westwood High School as 13th in its 2019 list of best Massachusetts high schools. To continue its tradition of excellence, the Town is seeking a highly communicative, community-focused, results-driven, and strategic leader to serve as its next Town Administrator.

History: The Town of Westwood was originally known as West Dedham, until it was officially incorporated in 1897. An early account of the formation of Westwood can be found in the [Dedham Historical Register](#) of April 1897. As stated in the Dedham Historical Register, “The formation of a separate town by the



division of the Town of Dedham is not a question of recent or sudden growth; it has been discussed at different intervals for many years.” The final petition that resulted in the incorporation of the Town of Westwood was suggested in November of 1896. The petition was quickly prepared and circulated once the residents of West Dedham realized that they must act quickly to receive consideration from the Legislature in 1897.

The Dedham Historical Register makes no mention of the reasons for separation, but water rights to Buckmaster Pond have long been identified as fueling West Dedham residents to separate from Dedham. The Dedham Westwood Water District (DWWD) which can be traced back to the Dedham Water Company incorporated in 1876, provides a [history](#) of the district. It details how Buckmaster

Pond was considered for a water supply for Dedham but was discounted because of the cost to transport the water from West Dedham to Dedham’s town center almost four miles away. Dedham then gave the water rights of the pond to the Town of Norwood in 1885. The residents of West Dedham lost a water supply close to their land which might have presented at least one reason for separation. Additionally, the residents of West Dedham did not feel that they were gaining any benefit from the tax dollars being spent on infrastructure in central Dedham.

Census Data: According to American Community Survey (ACS) estimates of 2013-2017, the Town of Westwood’s racial makeup is approximately 89.5% white, 7.6% Asian, 1.9% Hispanic or Latino, 1.6% two or more races, and 0.3% Black or African American. The median household annual income is \$145,799, which is substantially higher than the state median household annual income of \$74,167. Approximately 1.9% of Westwood households have incomes below the poverty level compared to about 10% statewide, according to U.S. Census and ACS data.



The Town is demographically dissimilar to the state regarding resident age cohorts with differences in, for example, the under-18 years cohort with Westwood at 26.8% in the ACS versus 20.0% for the state. This is likely attributable to Westwood's strong public education system which attracts young families to the community. In the under-5 years cohort, Westwood has 4.1% of its population which is slightly lower than the state's 5.3%. Westwood has a higher percentage than the state in its senior population with the 65 years and over cohort in Westwood at 19.3% of its population compared to the state's 16.2%. The median age of residents in Westwood is 45 years, which is a bit older than the state's 39.4 years.

Geography: Westwood is 11.1 square miles in size, including 11.0 square miles of land and 0.1 square miles of water. There are approximately 89 road miles in Town.

Westwood is in eastern Massachusetts and is bordered by Needham to the north, Dedham to the east, Canton to the southeast, Norwood to the south, Walpole to the southwest, and Dover to the west. Westwood has two commuter rail lines and full MBTA bus service on Routes 1 and 1A. Westwood has easy access to Route 95/128 and I-93, and Logan International Airport is located in nearby Boston.



Photo by Doug Hyde

Westwood consists of residential properties as well as a variety of commercial, business and retail districts. Westwood is known throughout the state for its beautiful areas of open space and rambling New England stone walls.

Assessed Values: Westwood's total assessed value is approximately \$4.57 billion in FY19. Residential properties account for about \$3.84 billion of the Town's total assessed value, while commercial properties account for \$549.16 million, industrial properties for \$93.7 million and personal property for \$85.7 million, according to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services. The average residential single-family property assessment in Westwood for FY19 was \$771,233 and the average single-family tax bill was \$11,299. The FY19 property tax rate was \$14.65 per \$1,000 valuation for residential properties and \$28.24 for commercial, industrial and personal properties.

Business: The Town is home to more than 200 businesses in established commercial areas. Redevelopment is continuing at the University Station mixed-use project located near the Route 128 train station, which has a commuter rail stop, and along University Avenue. The rail station is the sole regional stop for Amtrak high-speed rail service from Boston to Providence, R.I., and New York City. The highway business district, Route 1, is also comprised of commercial properties. The two Town centers on High Street and Washington Street (Islington Center) provide retail services and library facilities for residents that enhance the quality of life in Town.

Principal employers in Westwood include MEDITECH, New York Life Investment Management, Roche Bros., and Wegmans, according to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Citizens Bank will soon join this list as one of Westwood's largest employers. A [video](#) detailing the benefits of living and working in Westwood is accessible online.



Government and Finance

Select Board: The Town of Westwood is governed by the [Select Board](#), formerly known as the Board of Selectmen*, which is made up of three members who are elected for three-year overlapping terms. The Town adopted a Home Rule Charter, which provides for the Select Board, Open Town Meeting, and Town Administrator form of government. The Select Board makes policy decisions as well as formulates guidelines for all Town agencies, oversees licensing, and makes appointments to Town offices, boards, and committees. A list of [appointments](#) made by the Select Board can be viewed on the Town's website as can the Town of Westwood [organization chart](#). The [Town of Westwood Charter](#) and the [Town Code](#) can also be viewed online.

Committees: An elected five-member [School Committee](#) oversees the long-range policies of the Town's public school system. Other elected positions in Town include the Board of Assessors, Board of Library Trustees, Housing Authority, Planning Board, [Blue Hills Regional Technical School District Committee](#) (one seat), Sewer Commission, Town Clerk, Town Collector, Town Moderator, and Town Treasurer. In addition, the Town utilizes many other appointed boards and commissions to conduct municipal operations. The [2018 Town of Westwood Annual Report](#) is available online.

Town Administrator: The Select Board appoints the Town Administrator to serve as chief administrative officer of the Town. The Town Administrator is responsible for executing the policy directives of the Select Board and for managing the operations and activities of the Town. Details regarding the qualifications and powers and duties of the Town Administrator can be found in [Chapter 6](#) of the Town Code. The Town Administrator is responsible for various [appointments](#).

The [Town Administrator](#) is specifically responsible for providing support to the Select Board; supervising all departments under his/her jurisdiction; financial management and budgeting; handling personnel and benefits administration, hiring and firing of personnel, employee performance reviews, and collective bargaining; purchase of supplies, materials, and equipment; attending Select Board meetings; inventory of all Town property, maintenance and use of all Town facilities; and coordinating the activities of all town agencies serving under the office of the Town Administrator and the office of the Select Board.

Financial Snapshot: Westwood is in a strong financial position. The Town holds a Standard and Poor's rating of [AAA](#) with a stable outlook, as stated in an August 2016 rating action. Standard and Poor's noted that the Town has a very strong underlying economy, ongoing economic developments, and very strong management as well as a very strong debt and liability profile, and strong budgetary performance and operating flexibility. Local property taxes generate 77.83% of revenue, while state aid is 7.70%, local receipts bring in 9.27%, and other available revenue brings in 5.21%.

Westwood's [FY20 Overall Budget](#) is \$103.2 million. This includes a [\\$21.7 million municipal budget](#), which consists of general government, public safety, public works, community and economic development, human services, culture and recreation, software/hardware maintenance, and communications systems. It also includes the proposed [Westwood Public Schools FY20 budget](#), which is approximately \$46.7 million.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services, Westwood had a FY18 stabilization fund balance of \$6,163,509. The Town's FY19 free cash balance was \$5,854,683 and its FY19 overlay reserve balance was \$586,416. Westwood has excess levy capacity of \$1,097,661 and its new growth for FY19 was \$1,226,531. The Town's [Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan](#) for FY2020-2024 can be viewed on its website.

*The Town voted at the May 2019 Town Meeting to submit a home-rule petition to the State Legislature to formally change the name to Select Board in the Town Charter.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Education**

Westwood residents place a high value on education and the Town's schools have a tradition of excellence that has received national recognition. [Westwood Public Schools](#) operates a pre-school, five elementary schools, Thurston Middle School, and Westwood High School. The school budget for FY20 is approximately \$46.7 million. Students in grades 9-12 also have the opportunity to attend the [Blue Hills Regional Technical School](#) in Canton or the [Norfolk Country Agricultural High School](#) in Walpole.



Photo by Doug Hyde

Illustrative of the Town's strong support of education is the fact that 97.5% of Westwood's residents age 25 years and older have a high school diploma and 70.4% of the population ages 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. Ninety-four percent of Westwood High School's 2018 graduates enrolled in a four-year university immediately following graduation.

- **Finances**

Westwood has a Standard and Poor's rating of AAA with a stable outlook, according to an August 2016 rating action. The Town's goal is to manage its finances in a manner that will serve to maintain its high rating. The Town's FY20 Overall Budget is approximately \$103.2 million. The FY20 budget represents an approximate 3.5% increase over the prior year and includes a \$1.44 million appropriation for the OPEB liability fund. New growth for FY19 was \$1.22 million. Westwood's [financial management policies and objectives](#) and [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for FY18](#) be viewed on the Town's website. Westwood has received the state CAFR award for 19 years.

- **Economic Development**

Westwood is in the midst of an economic development boom. The three-year, \$35 million redevelopment of [Islington Center](#), which includes relocating buildings as well as new construction, is ongoing with Phase One nearing completion. The project is designed to revitalize properties, improve infrastructure, attract new retail stores and restaurants, increase opportunities for greater housing diversity, implement sustainable design and renewable energy elements, and increase property tax revenues. Additionally, University Station, which is a vibrant, two million-square-foot mixed-use development adjacent to the 128 MBTA commuter rail/Amtrak station, continues to grow. It includes 120 acres zoned for retail, restaurant, residential, office and hotel uses, and is located along the Route 128 and I-95 corridors. The Town remains interested in thoughtful economic development that will align with the community's character while increasing the vibrancy of Westwood. Current [economic development objectives](#) are detailed on the Town's website. A review and rewrite of the [Westwood Comprehensive Plan](#), which was created in 2000, is currently in process. Westwood benefits from its location near Boston, which is the economic engine of Massachusetts. Busy Routes 1, 1A and 109 bisect Westwood. Westwood commuters also have easy access to I-90 (Mass. Pike) and Routes 95/128 and 93. Logan International Airport is located a short distance away in Boston.



Photo by Doug Hyde



- **Citizen Engagement and Communication**

The Town embraces civic engagement and appreciates the high levels of participation and discourse residents provide. The next Town Administrator must be a skilled communicator with a strong belief in transparency. He or she should have a visible presence in the community, attending events and seeking out opportunities to increase engagement with residents. Citizens serve on a significant number of elected and appointed boards and committees as well as in other volunteer capacities. Maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship between residents, employees, and volunteers is vital to the success of the community. Ideas and recommendations regarding improved methods of communicating with and engaging citizens, including new technologies and use of social media, would be welcome. The [Westwood Community Newsletter](#) is mailed to residents' homes four times a year and is available on the Town's website. Additionally, the [Westwood Wire](#) news bulletin is published online by the Town each month.

- **Transportation**

There are two commuter rail stops in Westwood: the Route 128 station located on the Providence/Stoughton line and the Islington station on the Franklin Line of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority commuter rail system. The two rail stops allow commuters easy access to and from vibrant employment centers. Amtrak trains to Providence, R.I., and New York City also stop at the Route 128 station.

- **Capital Needs**

Westwood has a number of capital projects that are either ongoing or scheduled. As part of the Islington Center redevelopment project, the town's Islington Branch Library is being relocated with a community room to be added, and a church will be razed and its façade replicated elsewhere with a housing component included. A new high school, police station, fire station, and library were completed in recent years. Other projects underway or scheduled for the near future include a comprehensive update to three elementary schools and improvements to streets and sidewalks as well as maintenance to existing facilities. There is discussion of the need to renovate Town Hall at some point in the future. The [Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan](#) for FY2020-2024 can be viewed on the Town's website.

- **Green Community**

Westwood is a Massachusetts-designated Green Community. It received the designation by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources in 2012. The Town has received an approximate total of \$1 million in Green Communities grants, which have been used for such projects as installing LED lighting in the high school and middle school, converting all street lights to LED, updating the library with high efficiency lighting and a new control system, ensuring the Islington Fire Station and new police station are energy efficient, and installing a ventilation control system at the Downey School.

- **Housing**

Approximately 86% of the housing units in Westwood are owner occupied with a median value of \$663,000, according to U.S. Census data. Home values generally range from approximately \$400,000 to \$3+ million, according to Town statistics. Westwood provides a variety of housing options for residents. Currently, there are 4,532 single-family homes, 123 condominiums, 40 two-family homes, and two three-family homes in Town. There are two apartment buildings, one with 200 units and another with 100 units. There are also senior housing and affordable housing options available in Westwood. The Housing Partnership, with the support of the town's Housing & Zoning Division, is currently in the process of creating a [Housing Production Plan](#). The Town meets the state's 10% affordable housing mandate.



- **Open Space and Recreation**

Westwood has an abundance of open space, including woods and forests, wetlands, fields, and ponds. Westwood's Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest identifies 794 acres of protected open space owned by the Town and private owners. Additionally, [Hale Reservation](#) has 325 acres of unprotected open space (of a total 1,137 acres), another 198 acres are in use as public and private recreational facilities, and 97 acres have limited protection as Chapter 61, 61A and 61B land. Conservation of open space and natural resources is a priority for residents, both for recreational use via trails and for environmental preservation purposes. The Town has numerous playing fields and recreational land for youth and adult sports. The 2019 [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#) can be viewed on Westwood's website.

Westwood's [Recreation Department](#) offers a wide variety of programs for youths and adults. The Town also has a community pool located at Westwood High School. There are numerous special events held in Town, including the popular [Westwood Day](#) held in September.

- **Public Safety**

The Westwood [Police Department](#) will have 35 sworn officers as of July 2019. The department receives approximately 33,000 calls annually, making about 600 arrests and handing out about 6,000 citations and 3,500 verbal warnings each year. The department's FY20 budget is approximately \$3.3 million. A new \$13 million police station was built in 2017. The Westwood [Fire Department](#) has 44 full-time personnel. It operates out of one main station and one substation, with both operated on a 24/7 basis, and has a FY20 budget of about \$4.3 million. It also operates the ALS Ambulance Services/EMS. The Westwood Fire Department's Islington station was built in 2017. The police and fire departments share a combined dispatch.



Photo by Doug Hyde

- **Department of Public Works**

The Westwood [Department of Public Works](#) has 30 full-time employees. The department manages all construction on public ways, oversees recycling and waste management, removes snow and ice, maintains public grounds, oversees facilities and cemeteries, and is responsible for vehicle maintenance. The department's FY20 budget is approximately \$5.5 million.



Ideal Candidate Qualifications

Competencies: The Westwood Select Board seeks an energetic and talented Town Administrator with strong municipal management experience, effective communication skills, and who is highly proficient in citizen and community engagement.

The successful candidate:

- should be able to demonstrate prior success in leading a complex municipal and/or business organization.
- must be competent in all areas of senior-level management and operations, but especially in building project management, finance and budgeting, and economic and community development and civic engagement.
- should have experience with municipal construction projects.
- should be a strong and effective communicator both internally and externally and be comfortable using technology and newer methods for communicating, such as social media.
- should be highly visible in the community, enjoy attending local events, and seek to become actively engaged with the community.
- should have experience in sustainable economic development as well as an ability to cultivate and guide public-private partnerships.
- must be a visionary leader who can work effectively with various interests of the Town.
- is expected to work cooperatively and collaboratively with staff, citizens, volunteers, and the business community. He or she should make excellence in customer service a priority.
- should be highly approachable, accessible, and relatable.
- must have demonstrated competencies in implementing municipal management best practices.
- should be interested in working collaboratively with Westwood's experienced and motivated department heads and employees, including the School Department.
- must be inclusive, collaborative, ethical, and committed to transparency in government.
- must be able to delegate effectively, mentor department heads, and provide support and motivation to ensure continued high performance and professional growth for Westwood employees.
- must be a strategic and dynamic leader with demonstrated experience employing a teamwork approach.
- should be highly motivated, enthusiastic and strive to build morale.
- must be dedicated, organized, patient, have a strong work ethic, and inspire trust and confidence.
- must have the ability to effectively explain complex issues to officials, staff, and citizens.
- must be a strategic thinker, particularly in regard to budgeting, project management, and economic and community development.
- should be skilled in team building, and in developing and maintaining relationships.
- should be a creative problem-solver and active listener who is open to new ideas and is considered a consensus-builder.
- must lead by example, have conflict resolution skills, inspire respect, and be respectful.
- must be a community unifier who manages projects in a participatory manner.

Education and Experience:

- The ideal candidate should hold a minimum of a master's degree in Public or Business Administration or a related field, and have at least 7 years of progressively responsible management experience.
- Massachusetts experience is preferred, but not required.



Compensation Package

The Town of Westwood will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is highly market competitive, with a salary of \$195,000+/-, and is commensurate with qualifications. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Administrator's total compensation.

How To Apply

Interested applicants should submit cover letters and résumés, in confidence, by August 8, 2019, 5:00 p.m., via email to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Westwood Town Administrator Search

Please submit a single PDF containing both cover letter and résumé.

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. The Westwood Town Administrator Screening Committee will interview the most qualified candidates in confidence. Based upon these interviews, a selection of finalists will be chosen for further evaluation and reference checks and then forwarded to the Select Board. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is advanced to the Select Board. The Westwood Select Board will select the Town Administrator.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal
Community Paradigm Associates
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978-621-6733

The Town of Westwood, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.