



## **Franklin Food Pantry**

### **Building and Campaign Q&A**

**June 1, 2023**

#### **Why do you need such a big/fancy building?**

It's not about the building, it's about what we will do in the building!

We have been fortunate to enjoy our space at Rockland Trust for the last 13 years, but the space was not designed to be a food pantry and we have outgrown it. Our new and larger space will allow us to receive, store, and distribute food and other household items more efficiently and to increase client choice.

Our new building at 341 West Central is something of a landmark in Franklin and it will provide a warm and welcoming space for our clients, volunteers, staff and community members to come together to help each other out. It required quite a bit of renovation to transform it from a retail gift shop into a food pantry.

#### **Franklin is a wealthy community. Why do we even need a food pantry?**

The Pantry served more than 1,100 people in 514 families last year and the numbers have only increased since then. The week of Sept. 6 we served 156 families, and 6 months later, that number grew to 217 families. We have never had more demand for our programs and services and yet we know that there are more families who qualify for SNAP benefits or free/reduced school lunch than currently shop with us. Further, of the estimated 9,860 estimated people in extreme poverty (below 50% of the Federal Poverty Limit) in MetroWest, about half are in four communities: Framingham (2,168), Milford (1,139), Franklin (759), and Marlborough (747).

#### **Why did you replace the windows?**

Because the old windows were no longer energy-efficient and qualified to be replaced through MASS Development funding.

#### **Why did you replace the walkways at the front (West-facing) door?**

Because the old (brick) walkway was not ADA-compliant and qualified to be replaced through MASS Development funding.

We are also adding an interior lift and 2 ADA-compliant restrooms.

**Who is paying for all this renovation?**

The Pantry was awarded a MASS Development grant (under the Underutilized Properties Program) that pays for about half of the renovations, including those that bring the building into ADA compliance and make it more energy efficient. We are the grateful recipient of two MASS State Legislature grants in support of this project. Many local businesses are providing free or reduced-rate renovation services and donating in-kind products. The Pantry is in the middle of a campaign to raise the rest of the renovation funding, establish a rainy-day fund for future unanticipated building expenses, and expand programming. We are soliciting funds from foundations, businesses, and private donors for the campaign and are more than half-way toward our total goal of \$3.5 million. The Town of Franklin does not provide The Pantry with monetary support but does support The Pantry in other ways.

**When will you move in?**

We're in!!!

**When will the Grand Opening celebration be?**

We are planning a Ceremonial Opening Ceremony on June 12 at 8:30 am. There will be a brief speaking program, but no tours at this time. We are planning some small events to welcome our volunteers, clients, and campaign donors into the building over the summer and in the early fall. We hope to offer guided tours to the public beginning in the fall.

**What are you going to do with the iconic window facing Route 140 that Edwin's always decorated seasonally?**

We plan to use the window in a similar way, but we have not finalized our plans yet.

**Where should I park, and which door should I enter?**

If you are a volunteer, you should park on the east side of the building (where the loading dock is) and enter through the volunteer door to your far left looking at that side of the building.

If you are a community member coming to the building for a meeting, you should park on the east side of the building (where the loading dock is) and enter through the door in the middle of that side of the building.

We are hoping, to the extent possible, to leave the parking spaces on the west side of the building (where the ramp and Adirondack chairs are) free for clients so that they can enter through the main door directly into the shopping and client services area.

**Won't clients be embarrassed to be seen going in and out of such a visible public space?**

There will be many people going in and out of the building for a variety of purposes, so we think there won't be stigma about being seen there. We expect volunteers, staff, and community members will all be seen going in and out for many reasons. We will have a community room on the second floor where we will host training and meetings for community members as well as clients. We hope that the building will set the stage for coming together as a community to help each other out, and that community members will be proud of it. We will continue to offer services that allow for more discreet

access to services if desired by our clients, like curbside distribution and home delivery for those with mobility, health and transportation challenges.

**Aren't you going to cause traffic issues on Route 140 there?**

Because we own the land surrounding the building, which includes a large number of parking spaces around the building, we anticipate being able to direct traffic on busy days in such a way that does not cause traffic issues on Rte. 140.

**Can I volunteer to help with construction or other services, like painting?**

Our MASS Development grant requires that we use licensed, registered, construction professionals for the renovations. We have a qualified general contractor who makes all labor decisions on our behalf. When we are looking for volunteers for other assignments, we announce them on our web site and social media.

**Do you serve out-of-town clients?**

Yes, last year we had clients from (in descending order) Franklin, Bellingham, Milford, Blackstone, Wrentham, Medway, Norfolk, Framingham, Norwood, No. Attleboro, Hopedale, Mendon, Plainville, Uxbridge, Upton, Attleboro, Holliston, Millville. Clients usually shop with us if they can't use their own local pantries because of operating hours that are not convenient for them (e.g., if they work or have small children). We do not serve any out-of-state clients.