

## CHAPTER 6

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses some of Dedham's most important assets: the landscape, soils, woodlands, wildlife, rivers and streams, lakes and ponds, and groundwater. It provides an inventory of Dedham's natural resources, a discussion of their inherent significance, their stated importance to the community, threats and hazards to these resources, and possibilities for their protection and management. The term "natural resources" describes the features of the land that are perceived to be of value to society. These features include the land shape, geology, and soils, the surface water and groundwater, wildlife, including plants, animals, and rare species, and less obvious resources such as clean air, quiet, and the appearance or view of the land. Two other resources that are potentially beneficial components of the land are solar and wind energy.

Natural resources do not limit themselves to municipal boundaries. Dedham's resources are linked with those of the surrounding towns and the greater region, and vice versa. Rivers, streams, and groundwater flow across town boundaries, and the air, wildlife, and distant views do not notice town lines. All natural resources coexist on some scale, and all are affected by how people use the land, regardless of political boundaries.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Geology and Topography

#### BEDROCK GEOLOGY

The bedrock beneath Dedham was formed during tectonic plate collisions related to the forming of the Atlantic Ocean some 600 million years ago. The



*Mother Brook, East Dedham. Photo by Community Opportunities Group, Inc.*

bedrock formations in Dedham are principally igneous (Dedham Granodiorite, Westwood Granite, and Mattapan Volcanic Complex), with small areas of the sedimentary Roxbury Conglomerate (Map 6.1).<sup>1</sup> This bedrock played a key role in Dedham's economy during the 1800s when several granite quarries were active in town. Stone from these quarries was used in the construction of prominent Boston area buildings, including St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Memorial Hall, St. Mary's Church, the Boston Public Library, and Trinity Church in Boston.

#### SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

The last ice age ended approximately 10,000 years ago in Massachusetts and left distinctive patterns across the landscape. As the ice advanced and retreated, it scoured the ground surface, carved into bedrock, collected eroded debris, and deposited it

<sup>1</sup> Zen, E-an, ed. 1983. *Bedrock Geologic Map of Massachusetts*. Compiled by R. Goldsmith, N. M. Ratcliffe, P. Robinson, and R. S. Stanley, Reston, VA: U.S. Geological Survey; Scale 1:250,000.

elsewhere. The glacier flowed slowly south across all of New England, scraping and carrying soil and rock, smoothing hilltops, and gouging valleys. As the glacier rode over the surface, a compacted material called **glacial till** was left beneath it. This is a mixture of broken rock of various sizes, from boulders to silt, and is one of the two principal surficial deposits found in Dedham (Map 6.2) and the surrounding area. While glacial till serves as a stable base for building, it transmits water slowly making it poorly suited for groundwater supply or sewage disposal. A specific group of soil types have developed on glacial till. They are generally dense and stony, like the till, making it difficult for farming and yielding up the rocks colonial farmers used to build the stone walls that can still be seen in Dedham and throughout New England.

As the glacier receded, turbid meltwater filled with debris poured off the glacier ultimately forming rivers, lakes, dams, and deltas. This meltwater deposited sediment in valleys and depressions, generally in well-sorted (consistent grain sizes) layers called **stratified drift** or **glacial outwash**. This is the second principal surficial geologic deposit. These surficial material types correspond fairly well with the topography – till covers most of Dedham, particularly the upland sections, while sands and gravels fill the valley sections. By contrast, the well-sorted sediments in the lowlands are relatively loose and porous, and thus hold and transmit groundwater easily. Soils that developed on outwash deposits also have specific characteristics: they are generally level, free of large stones, sometimes good for farming, sometimes too sandy and fast-draining. The outwash deposits form productive aquifers and provide effective storage for seasonal hydrologic cycling and floodwaters. Some outwash deposits may be many tens of feet deep where they were deposited in valleys or deltas.

In Dedham and the surrounding area, glacial erosion modified the existing bedrock hills and valleys. The pattern of ice movement, generally northwest to southeast, is manifested by glacial striations on bedrock and the orientation of **drumlins** (formed by glacial erosion over and around relatively resistant bedrock cores). A drumlin's typical long orientation parallels the direction of ice move-

ment. Dedham's deglaciation followed the typical New England stagnation zone retreat: glacial lakes formed behind stagnant sections of ice. The resultant stratified glacial drift deposits are common throughout Dedham. As postglacial drainage progressed, **alluvium** was deposited along the rivers and streams. Windblown sediments from glacial drift were also deposited in some areas. Many smaller glacial lakes and ponds were gradually filled by sediment resulting in the town's wetlands and bogs, including the areas around Wigwam Pond and Little Wigwam Pond.

### TOPOGRAPHY

The region's topography manifests the glacial scouring of the relatively recent past onto the remnants of tectonic activity of the distant past, all modified by the ceaseless action of water. Dedham's landscape is one of very gentle hills, streams, and native forest trees interspersed by roads and structures of the human landscape. The major rivers that pass through town, the Charles and the Neponset, meander across wide flood plains. The erosion, weathering, and accumulation of organic materials on the land since the glacier receded have also created a diversity of soil types that blanket the land. The topography, or land shape, formed by millions of years of geologic history that is still evolving, provides the beauty of Dedham's rolling hills and places some constraints on the use of the land.

Dedham's proximity to the coast means it is part of the Seaboard Lowland physiographic region. Two physiographic subregions characterize the immediate area around Boston: the Coastal Hills and the Boston Basin. Dedham lies in the **Coastal Hills** subregion, which consists of gently rolling, low relief hills with subtle breaks between major landforms. In areas of shallow soils and surficial deposits, where rock outcrops are numerous, the irregular bedrock forms determine the shapes of the low valleys. In deeper soil areas, however, glacial deposits determine the shape of landforms.

The topography in Dedham and the Seaboard Lowland varies on several scales. A view of the surficial relief of this area of Massachusetts reveals higher-relief patches separated by low-relief, gla-

cial outwash-filled valley plains. The high-relief areas are filled with bedrock outcrops and rocky hilltops or smoother glacial drumlins. Level land not covered with water is uncommon.

Dedham lies at approximately 150 feet above mean sea level (MSL) on average. The highest point in town, Wilson Mountain, is close to 300 feet above MSL, while the Neponset River as it leaves town, is less than 100 feet above MSL. The town center lies at an elevation of approximately 110 feet above MSL. This fairly narrow range of elevations is typical of the seaboard lowland, where rivers draining the uplands to the north and west have smoothed over the landscape.

The historic town center of Dedham lies within a broad north-south flat glacial valley between the Wilson Mountain reservation to the west and the Stony Brook reservation and the rolling neighborhoods of Oakdale and Ashcroft to the east. The meandering floodplain of the Charles River occupies the northern part of this valley. Wigwam Pond, Little Wigwam Pond, and their associated vegetated wetlands occupy the southern part. The gentle hills surrounding the town center consist of land shapes and soils well-suited to farming. The floodplain of the Neponset River, which lies south of the relatively higher terrain in the Greenlodge neighborhood, is drained by Greenlodge Brook.

The Wilson Mountain reservation area is the highest terrain in Dedham and has the greatest topographic relief. As a result, this area of Dedham was not permanently settled, although portions of the reservation were historically cleared for farming. The reservation offers panoramic views of Boston, the Blue Hills, and surrounding areas and is the largest preserved open space within Dedham. The Massachusetts DCR acquired the 213-acre reservation in 1995. Much of the other remaining undeveloped land in Dedham consists of topographically low areas, principally wetlands.

## SOILS

Soil is a fundamental environmental resource; most other natural resources are in some way related to the soil. It is also a dynamic resource that is

linked closely with hydrology, supports plant life, controls biogeochemical cycles, influences plant and animal habitat, and supports human habitation. The soils of Dedham, like the topography, are a slowly evolving feature of the landscape. The unconsolidated rock materials overlying the ancient bedrock from the last glacier receded from the building materials of the soil. Drainage patterns evolved on the landscape left by the glacier and the soils developed slowly as the vegetation built up organic matter in the soil's shallow reaches.

Soils are fragile resources vulnerable to extreme events such as flooding and to human impacts. Soils can be easily damaged by erosion, disturbance, or covering over, thereby reducing their value for the natural environment and for human use. It is extremely difficult and costly to attempt to restore the values or uses of disturbed soils. And most importantly, soil development takes time. New England's soils are considered young soils because they formed only within the last 8,000 to 10,000 years, since the glacier retreated.

Soils have identifiable properties that allow their description and classification. Soils with broadly similar properties and profiles comprise a soil series; all the soils of one series have comparable major horizons, composition and thickness because they developed from similar parent materials in a similar environment. Soil map units are typically comprised of one or more components and consist of the soil series name modified by such factors as texture, slope, and stoniness (e.g. Woodbridge fine sandy loam, three to eight percent slopes, extremely stony). Soil map units are useful in determining the principal characteristics of the soil in a particular area and the suitability of the soil for specific uses. Detailed maps, reports, and information on soils and potential for certain site-specific decisions and uses are available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website at <http://soils.usda.gov/>.

The most common soil units in Dedham are the Hollis-Rock Outcrop-Charlton Complex (about 16 percent), the Merrimac-Urban Land Complex (11.8 percent), the Saco Silt Loam (9.5 percent), and the

Merrimac Fine Sandy Loam (6.5 percent).<sup>2</sup> Urban land comprises about 4.3 percent, and soil-urban land complexes also make up a significant fraction of the land. These and other soil units representing more than three percent of the soil area in Dedham are shown in Table 6.1. About three percent of Dedham's surface area is water.

Large areas of the town have been disturbed for development, some to the extent that the original soil type is no longer recognizable. These areas are now mapped as Urban Land. Other units contain the modifier Urban Land Complex. Site-specific soil evaluation is necessary for many uses, including stormwater management.

### PRIME FARMLAND

Dedham's historic origins include agriculture, as was the case with all settled land in the Commonwealth in the 1600s. While no considerable agricultural activity has occurred in town since the early 1900s, some of the land area remains suited to agricultural pursuits and indeed may still be used for family vegetable gardens. Soils particularly well-suited to agriculture are defined by the NRCS as Prime Farmland

A total of 644 acres, or about nine percent of the soil units in Dedham, are classified as Prime Farmland soils.<sup>3</sup> However, urban or built-up areas are not considered Prime Farmland, so a much smaller fraction of the town's soil units are actually Prime Farmland. The Prime Farmland soil units in Dedham are: Merrimac fine sandy loam (0-3 percent slopes and 3-8 percent slopes), Sudbury fine sandy loam (2-8 percent slopes), Woodbridge fine sandy loam (3-8 percent slopes), Scituate fine sandy loam (3-8 percent slopes), and Canton fine sandy loam (3-8 percent slopes). Most of the soil units classified as Prime Farmland are located in the center and northern parts of town since most of the town's center has been developed.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services, *Custom Soil Resource Report for Norfolk and Suffolk Counties, Massachusetts*, November 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Farmland Classification—Norfolk and Suffolk Counties, Massachusetts at <<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>>, [accessed 10 November 2007].

### What is Prime Farmland?

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. It must also be available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.

In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

*USDA Soil Conservation Service*

## Water Resources

### WATERSHEDS

The present land surface of Dedham has been formed in part by the action of water, including the present-day hydrologic cycle. **Watersheds**, also known as drainage basins, are divisions of the land surface into sections from which water drains to a common point or water body. Watersheds are somewhat analogous to a sink or bathtub, in which all the water flows toward the drain. The line dividing any two drainage basins is a topographic divide, or relatively higher area. In Dedham, all rain, snowmelt and streams eventually drain into either the Charles River or the Neponset River or percolate into the ground, in which case the water may also reach one of these rivers, but after a much longer period of time.

The term 'watershed' describes both the divide between two areas and the area itself, also known as a drainage basin or catchment area. Watersheds can be divided into subwatersheds and into progressively smaller subwatersheds or basins. Water-

**TABLE 6.1**  
**DOMINANT SOIL MAP UNITS IN DEDHAM**

Map Unit Name	Acres, Percent	Soil Depth	Topographic Setting	Parent Material and Environment of Formation
Hollis-Rock outcrop-Charlton complex	1090.3 ac 16.08 %	10"-20" to bedrock	Hills and hillslopes	Shallow, friable loamy ablation till derived from igneous and metamorphic rock
Merrimac-Urban land complex	799.5 ac 11.79 %	18"-30" to contrasting soil	Plains, hill shoulders	Friable coarse-loamy eolian deposits over loose sandy glaciofluvial deposits
Saco silt loam	644.7 ac 9.51 %	40"-80" to contrasting soil	Toe of slopes	Soft coarse-silty alluvium
Merrimac fine sandy loam	439.6 ac 6.48 %	18"-30" to contrasting soil	Slopes, plains	Friable coarse-loamy eolian deposits over loose sandy glaciofluvial deposits
Charlton-Hollis-Rock outcrop complex	419.4 ac 6.19 %	> 80"	Hills	Friable coarse-loamy ablation till derived from granite
Hinckley loamy sand	306.7 ac 4.52 %	> 80"	Hillslopes, kames	Loose sandy and gravelly glaciofluvial deposits
Urban land	291.5 ac 4.30 %	variable	Unspecified	Excavated and/or filled land
Charlton-Hollis-Urban land complex	286.3 ac 4.22 %	> 80"	Hills	Friable coarse-loamy ablation till derived from granite; disturbed
Canton-Urban land complex	267.1 ac 3.94 %	18"-36" to contrasting soil	Slopes, hills	Friable coarse-loamy eolian deposits over loose sandy and gravelly ablation till; disturbed
Woodbridge-Urban land complex	245.1 ac 3.61 %	18"-40" to dense material	Drumlins, slopes	Friable coarse-loamy eolian deposits over dense coarse-loamy lodgment till from granite, gneiss
Udortents, wet substratum	234.3 ac 3.46 %	> 80"	Footslopes	Sandy and gravelly human transported material over highly-decomposed organic material
Urban land, wet substratum	220.6 ac 3.26 %	variable	Unspecified	Excavated and filled land over organic material and/or alluvium and/or marine deposits
Freetown muck	220.5 ac 3.25 %	> 80"	Bogs, toe slopes	Highly-decomposed herbaceous organic material
Water	211.3 ac 3.12 %	variable	Topographic lows	Water

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services, Custom Soil Resource Report for Norfolk and Suffolk Counties MA, 2007.

sheds provide a useful perspective on the land because they manifest not only the topography and drainage patterns, but also to a large degree, variations in soils, natural vegetation cover, and even wildlife habitat patterns.

The U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Division (USGS) divides Massachusetts into 32 watersheds according to the state's major rivers.<sup>4</sup> Parts of Dedham are located within the watersheds of the **Charles River** and the **Neponset River**, both of which drain to Boston Harbor (Map 6.3). The Massachusetts Watershed Resources Commission (WRC) describes Dedham as within the Boston Harbor watershed.<sup>5</sup>

The land surface of all or part of forty-five municipalities drains into Boston Harbor. The Charles River Watershed drains an area of 308 square miles from its headwaters in Hopkinton east to Boston Harbor and includes thirty-five municipalities. The Neponset River Watershed to the south covers roughly 130 square miles as it leads to Boston Harbor, including parts of fourteen municipalities. Conservation organizations are associated with both the Charles River and Neponset River Watersheds. Watersheds are an excellent example of the interrelatedness of natural resources. Events and decisions elsewhere in the Charles and Neponset River watersheds upstream of Dedham affect the water resources of Dedham. Likewise, Dedham's actions affect the communities downstream.

The state's major drainage basins can be further described as connected sub-basins. Dedham includes parts of eight sub-basins. These have not been given geographic names by the USGS or the Massachusetts WRC, but correspond with significant hydrologic features such as Motley Pond and Mother Brook. Four sub-basins located wholly or

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, Massachusetts-Rhode Island Water Science Center at <<http://ma.water.usgs.gov/basins>>, [accessed November 2007].

<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Water Resources Commission at <<http://www.mass.gov/envir/water>>; <<http://www.mass.gov/envir/mwrc/default.htm>>.

partly within Dedham feed the Charles River watershed, while another four that are partly within Dedham lead to the Neponset River Watershed. Most of the town's land area lies within the Charles River watershed.

### SURFACE WATER

Surface water in glaciated New England follows the general irregular pattern of the topography. Major streams are fed by smaller ones and isolated ponds and wetlands are numerous. This is the case in Dedham and environs, where two major rivers and several minor streams drain the area. The Charles River and the Neponset River meander slowly through broad valleys and empty directly into Boston Harbor and Dorchester Bay to the northeast (Map 6.3).

The presence in Dedham of these two major Massachusetts rivers is a unique feature of the town and they are well-appreciated community assets. Several residents expressed a desire to restore boat and canoe access to the Charles River during a public meeting for this Master Plan on 15 November 2007. These rivers have played a key role in Dedham's history, serving as both a transportation resource as well as a power source for local mills. During the seventeenth century, a canal was built to take advantage of their proximity and difference in water level in order to power the mills. Today, their principal value for the community is as a recreational resource, in addition to their intrinsic value for such things as stormwater and flood control and plant and wildlife habitat.

**Charles River.** The Charles River is perhaps the most noteworthy river in eastern Massachusetts due to its size, its place in the landscape and history of the region, as well as its prominent passage between the cities of Boston and Cambridge. The Charles River is fringed with protected green space as it winds from its headwaters in Hopkinton through suburbs, cities, roads, and highways on its way to Boston Harbor. Large stretches of the Charles are owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and managed by the DCR. The Charles is fortunate to be guarded by one of the first and most active watershed protection organizations in the nation, the Charles River Watershed Asso-

ciation (CRWA). The river is approximately eighty miles in total length, with a vertical fall of approximately 350 feet.

In Dedham, the Charles River is a dominant feature in the northern third of town, bordered by floodplain wetlands and protected open space. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the native Americans used the river as an east-west transportation route. The settlers likewise used it for travel, and then in the industrial revolution, to power factory mills. The industrialization of the Charles, as with many other major rivers in the state, decreased the natural flow characteristics, introduced pollutants, and disrupted fish habitat.

Beginning with the nation's increasing environmental awareness in the 1960s, water quality in the Charles has greatly improved. The river is still threatened by existing and future development, particularly through groundwater withdrawals in the greater watershed area. The Charles River in Dedham meanders through a portion of Cutler Park, extends south toward the center of town, then winds north again toward Boston. Residents expressed agreement at the November 2007 public meeting (and at earlier times) the desire to construct canoe/kayak access points on the Charles River in Dedham. Such access points exist upriver, including landings in Needham, and in Boston and Cambridge, but Dedham's residents would enjoy closer access such as within Cutler Park or near Mother Brook. Creation of canoe access would require construction of a launching point, parking, and perhaps appropriate signage.

**Neponset River.** The Neponset River, the other major river (and watershed) in Dedham, flows from headwaters in Foxborough through the southern part of Dedham on its way to Dorchester Bay, and forms the eastern boundary between Dedham and Canton. The entire length of the River in Dedham is located within the **Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Area of Critical Environmental Concern**. A majority of this land is owned by DCR and is protected open space.

**Mother Brook.** The former East Brook was a small stream when Dedham was first settled in 1635, connecting East Dedham to the Neponset River. The watershed divide between the Charles and Neponset River watersheds is at a very low elevation in this area. It is also very close to the Charles River, approximately paralleling a section of the present VFW Parkway. The people of Dedham realized that East Brook and the Neponset River were noticeably lower in elevation than the Charles River in East Dedham. In 1639, the town constructed a ditch approximately 4,000 feet long across the watershed divide, connecting the Charles with East Brook, creating what is now known as Mother Brook.

The vertical drop from the Charles to the end of the ditch connecting to the natural (former) East Brook was about forty feet, draining some of the Charles River's water into Mother Brook, enough to power a mill to grind corn for the town. Mother Brook is believed to be the first canal constructed in the colonies, and was used to provide water power for many other mills over the next 250 years. Today, Mother Brook is controlled by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and functions as a flood control system for the Charles River. After many years of neglect, the brook is witnessing a resurgence. The recently formed Mother Brook Community Group has sponsored cleanup activities along the banks of the brook and the town is planning to seek historic waterway designation for the brook as well as assistance from various environmental organizations such as the DCR, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Neponset River Watershed Association to determine the level of industrial contamination and pollution and the scope of possible remediation efforts.

**Wigwam Pond** and **Little Wigwam Pond** in the southern part of town are surrounded by town-owned land under the care and management of the Conservation Commission. **Weld Pond** is east of Route 128 near Wilson Mountain and is surrounded by land owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Dedham Land Trust, and private residential properties. **Wight Pond** is surrounded by privately owned land.

## WETLANDS

Dedham is rich in the wetland resources known to be critical to human settlement and wildlife. Many wetland types, including forested swamps, marshes, bogs, and floodplain swamps are found along Dedham's rivers and in the lower elevations. Wetlands are critical for good water quality and they perform crucial functions such as flood storage, flood damage control, pollution filtration, and recharge of groundwater.

About three percent of Dedham's area is open water and about thirteen percent of the town's area is composed of wetlands.<sup>6</sup> Dedham has extensive and beautiful wetlands that are as valuable to the town as its major rivers, lakes, and ponds. The most common wetland types in Dedham are wooded swamps, where groundwater is shallow or the ground surface is seasonally inundated and shallow marshes where standing shallow water is present much of the year. Wooded swamps and marshes border the Charles River and approximately 400 acres of these wetlands are protected under ownership by the DCR. Cutler Park is a state reservation of 700 acres (400 acres are located within Dedham) and is the largest freshwater marsh on the Middle Charles River.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has permanently protected Cutler Reservation as part of the Charles River Natural Storage Area for floodwater control.

The Neponset River is bordered by the **Neponset River Reservation**, an **Area of Critical Environmental Concern**, totaling approximately 200 acres. Additional major wetland complexes border both Wigwam Pond and Little Wigwam Pond, and surround Wight Pond, Lowder Brook, and the northern corner of town, between Needham Street and the MBTA Needham Line. Hundreds of smaller wetlands of several types are found throughout Dedham. Although Dedham has many acres of

wetlands today, a comparable area was most likely lost to development over the town's 400 year history, including alongside the former East Brook which is now Mother Brook.

Wetlands are very sensitive and valuable resources and the regulations that protect them comprise some of the strongest constraints on land development in Massachusetts. Wetland impacts are regulated by the Federal Clean Water Act, the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA), the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act, and the Town of Dedham's General Wetland Protection Bylaw. The Clean Water Act requires a permit for the dredging or filling of any "waters of the United States" including most wetlands. The Massachusetts WPA prohibits impacts to wetlands, buffer zone, and riverfront area, and the town's bylaw adds additional regulation to the WPA jurisdiction.

The Massachusetts WPA prohibits the removal, dredging, filling, or alteration of any bank, freshwater wetland, coastal wetland, beach, dune, flat, marsh, or swamp bordering on the ocean, any estuary, creek, river, stream, pond, or lake, or land under any of the water bodies listed above, land subject to tidal action, land subject to coastal storm flowage, land subject to flooding, or riverfront area without first applying to the local Conservation Commission and the state DEP for a permit (Order of Conditions). The WPA jurisdiction includes a 100-foot "buffer zone" around any of these resource areas. Guidance on wetland locations can be obtained from maps available from MassGIS, but wetlands must be delineated in the field by a competent expert and verified by the Conservation Commission as part of the permitting process.

The Rivers Protection Act of 1996 created a 200-foot riverfront corridor on each side of any perennial river or stream, measured from the mean annual high water line of the river. The purpose of this act was to protect the natural integrity of the Commonwealth's rivers, and to encourage the preservation of open space along rivers. The riverfront area protects water quality, mitigates flooding, and supports natural plant and animal habitat. The Rivers Protection Act is a complement to the WPA and is

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, "Wetlands Datalayer," at <<http://www.mass.gov/mgis.htm>>.

<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation at <<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks>>.

administered under the same procedures through the Conservation Commission.

Dedham's Wetlands Bylaw adds further protection within the geographic jurisdictional limits of the Wetlands Protection Act with regard to certain resource areas such as buffer zones and vernal pools, and certain activities such as stormwater management and compensatory resource area creation. The Dedham Wetlands Bylaw requires a separate application for a permit from the town for work impacting wetlands.

Recognizing the impacts of stormwater runoff, Dedham has enacted several layers of stormwater management regulations. Dedham has a Stormwater Management Bylaw that regulates activities having an impact on the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff to protect against increased and untreated stormwater runoff, flooding, and to protect the Town's ponds, rivers, streams and groundwater.

### VERNAL POOLS

Vernal pools are unique wetlands with special wildlife. A vernal pool is a contained basin depression lacking a permanent above-ground surface water outlet. In Massachusetts, a wetland is defined by the presence of breeding amphibians that require this special environment. In the Northeast, vernal pools fill with water with the rising water table of fall and winter or with the meltwater and runoff of winter and spring snow and rain. Many vernal pools in the Northeast are covered with ice in the winter months. They typically contain water for only a few months in the spring and early summer. By late summer, a vernal pool is generally (but not always) dry.

Vernal pools do not support breeding populations of fish since they do not contain water year-round. However, many other organisms, some of them rare, have evolved to use this type of temporary wetland during part of their life cycle because they (and their eggs) are not preyed upon by fish. Such organisms are called "obligate" vernal pool species because they require a vernal pool for certain parts of their life cycles. In Dedham and most of

southern New England, the most common obligate vernal pool species are the mole-type salamanders and the wood frog.

Certified vernal pools are recorded with the **Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program** (NHESP) and receive protection under the Wetlands Protection Act. Vernal pool certification requires evidence that a vernal pool exists and contains the biological indicators which define it as a vernal pool. The WPA only protects vernal pool habitat that falls within the geographic jurisdiction of the Act. Certified vernal pools are also afforded protection under the Massachusetts Water Quality Certification regulations (401 Program), the Massachusetts Title 5 regulations, and the Forest Cutting Practices Act regulations. Vernal pool habitats occur in a wide variety of settings, including forested swamps, bogs, and other wetlands, as well as upland and wetland buffer zone. According to the *Dedham Open Space and Recreation Plan* (2004), two vernal pools have been certified in Dedham. Many more potential vernal pools have been mapped by the DEP and are shown on the MassGIS Potential Vernal Pool datalayer (Map 6.4). Most of these are located in the areas of Wilson Mountain Reservation, the Charles River floodplain, and the Neponset River Reservation. Several Eagle Scouts are working to certify additional vernal pools in Dedham.

### FLOODPLAINS

Floodplains are areas of land that have a statistically significant likelihood of being flooded. These areas are often found adjacent to major streams and rivers, and indeed floodplain swamps and marshes are common wetland types.

Floodplains are categorized according to the average frequency of flooding and are stated in percent or converted to yearly probability. A floodplain with a one percent chance of flooding each year is therefore likely to be flooded once every 100 years and is referred to as the 100-year floodplain. Similarly, the 500-year floodplain has a 0.2 percent chance of being flooded in any year.

Development in floodplains is regulated in order to protect the safety of people and their property and to minimize the potential deleterious effects of decreasing the volume of space available to store and carry floodwater. Decreasing the flood storage volume in one area of a watershed greatly increases the potential severity of flooding downstream. Development in floodplains is restricted under the WPA and the Town of Dedham Floodplain District. In addition, the Dedham Wetlands By-Law regulates any reduction of the flood storage capacity of a freshwater wetland, river, stream or creek, and any alteration of a river, stream or creek that results in any increase in the volume or velocity of water which may cause flooding or storm damage.

### GROUNDWATER

Groundwater provides the drinking water source for the Town of Dedham. A large portion of rainfall (and snowmelt) infiltrates the soil and slowly migrates downward to the saturated zone. The saturated zone, or **aquifer**, is the area between deep soil and bedrock that is so tight water cannot effectively penetrate and the soil area above where water percolates but does not fill all of the spaces between soil particles. Aquifers, like surficial geologic units, soil, and watersheds, have physical and geographic properties that constrain their suitability for human use. They are also intimately related to the soil and the hydrology of the overlying watershed.

Water enters the aquifer through rainfall and under some conditions by downward discharge of some of the surface water in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Water leaves the aquifer by flowing into other aquifer areas or surface water bodies or through direct removal by pumping for human use. When more water enters the aquifer than is taken out, the water table rises; when more is taken out, it falls. Most aquifers can support a specific volume of pumping removal and maintain equilibrium with the volume of water entering them. Aquifers are classified by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Massachusetts DEP as low, medium, and high yield, according to the volume of water they can sustainably produce.

Productive drinking water aquifers in New England are most commonly found in areas of glacial outwash sands and gravels because these materials are relatively loose, porous, and transmissive to water flow. Dedham contains a wide band of sand and gravel that extends north to south that provides high and medium yield aquifers.

The **Dedham-Westwood Water District** operates drinking water supply wells in Dedham within wetland areas surrounding the Charles and Neponset Rivers (Map 6.3). The Dedham-Westwood Water District pumps an average of about 4.25 million gallons of water per day (gpd) from eleven wells, six of which are in Westwood, and five in Dedham. The newest well at Fowl Meadow in Dedham came on line in 1997.<sup>8</sup> The town's **Aquifer Protection District** bylaw prohibits certain activities in or near mapped districts (areas of Bridge Street and Fowl Meadow) to prevent the unregulated withdrawal of groundwater and the introduction of pollutants into the water supply. The Dedham-Westwood Water District regulates seasonal use of water and has developed a water conservation campaign to further encourage public conservation efforts. This information is available on its website.

Dedham has taken consideration of land use impacts on the quality and quantity of drinking water available to the town. However, the fact that an aquifer is physically located within the town's political boundaries does not guarantee that its water resources are and will continue to be available to the town. The water in an aquifer may be part of a watershed that extends into a neighboring town and may be pumped for drinking water there. Diversion of water from surface water bodies for industrial or other use may reduce the water entering the aquifer. Pollutants entering the groundwater in places distant from the wells may gradually make their way to the well fields. Therefore, an understanding of the watershed's hydrology is vital to protecting drinking water.

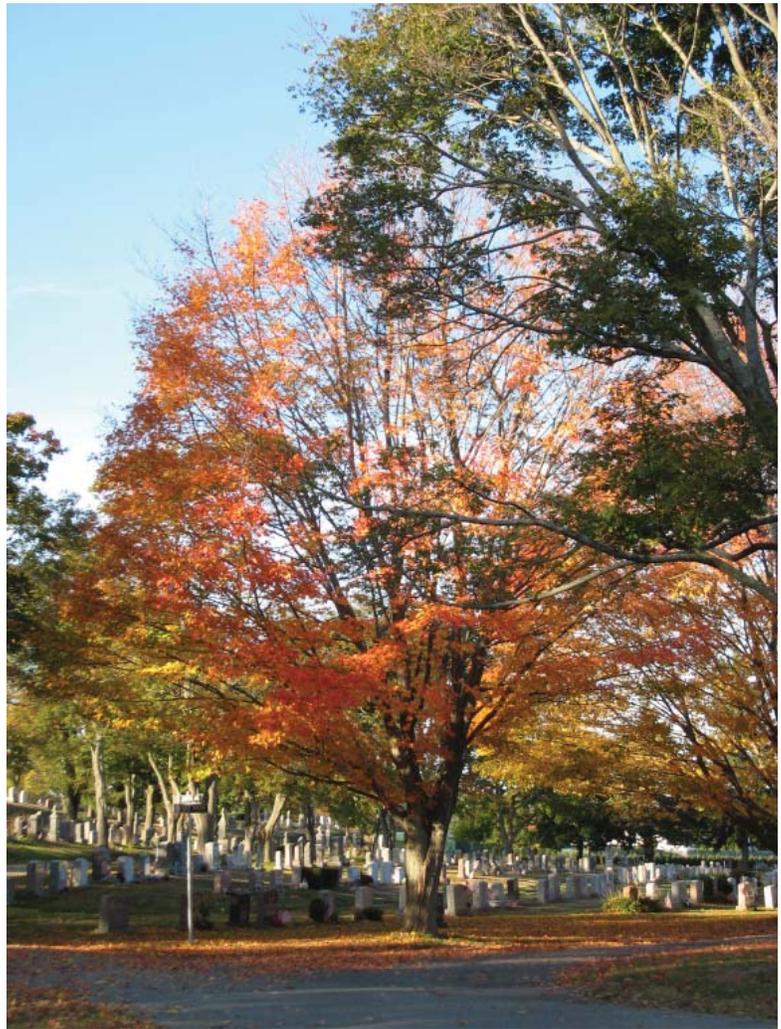
<sup>8</sup> Dedham-Westwood Water District at <<http://www.dwwd.org/>>.

## Vegetation

Although Dedham is highly developed with homes, roads, and businesses, it still maintains a generally wooded appearance and is host to many of the same native plant species found in towns located further from Boston. Dedham's woodlands are part of the Oak-Hickory Forest belt that spreads across southern New England from Connecticut through Rhode Island, into southern and eastern Massachusetts, and up into southern New Hampshire. This forest, which has grown up on the land cleared for farming by the early settlers, is dominated by oaks and hickories along with other species including white pine, maples, and grey birch. The forest's understory contains juniper, sassafras, and many types of shrubs, ferns, grasses, and wildflowers.

Trees are interspersed among buildings throughout even some of the more densely developed areas in Dedham. Wooded lands are predominant in the northern and western parts of town. Heavily forested areas in Dedham include the floodplains of the Charles and Neponset Rivers, Wilson Mountain, and the Town Forest between the north and southbound lanes of Route 128. At seventy-one acres, the Town Forest is the largest conservation parcel under the care of the Conservation Commission.

The MassGIS Land Use datalayer contains thirty-seven land use classifications interpreted from 1:25,000 aerial photography, with the most recent complete coverage produced from 1999 data. The land use data shows that in 1999, Dedham contained 1,764 acres of forest land, approximately twenty-five percent of the town's land area. Forested land decreased about eight percent between



*Brookdale Cemetery.*

1971, the date of the first land use coverage calculated by MassGIS, and 1999.<sup>9</sup>

Dedham's landscape possesses the natural tendency to be forested: open fields and abandoned farmland will revert to woodland if left alone. Undeveloped buffers along roadways will yield up shrubs and trees if not regularly mowed. However, the prime tendency of humans is to clear the land for development. Deforestation has obvious effects on the environment by removing wildlife habitat and fragmenting the remaining forested areas, which tends to reduce biodiversity. Deforestation also reduces the value and extent of services that the land can provide for human society. These services have great economic value including climate regulation,

<sup>9</sup> Massachusetts Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS), "Land Use Datalayer," at <<http://www.mass.gov/mgis/lus.htm>>.

maintenance of freshwater supply and quality, pollution assimilation and nutrient regulation, soil retention, mitigation of flooding, and recreation and aesthetic value.

In addition to its forests, Dedham’s street trees are an important natural resource and play a significant role in defining the town’s visual character. Although it is a densely-developed suburb of Boston, Dedham has many beautiful tree-lined streets and small wooded areas. Shade trees in populated areas are extremely valuable for both their visual beauty and the services they provide such as buffering of winds, shading and cooling for pedestrians and vehicles, absorption of carbon dioxide and physical trapping of dust and pollutants in the air. Trees also provide soft, natural screening between pedestrians, buildings, and traffic.

In an effort to increase its street tree inventory, Dedham is seeking grant funds to prepare a targeted street tree inventory that would be incorporated into the town’s GIS system. In addition, the town has instituted an informal policy of planting two trees for every street tree removed. To further this goal, the Department of Public Works (DPW) is currently working toward eligibility as a Tree City USA community, a national program sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

In order to qualify for Tree City designation, Dedham must meet four criteria: 1) establish a Tree Board or Department; 2) create a Tree Care Ordinance to establish policies for planting, maintaining and removing public street trees; 3) establish a minimum annual forestry budget of \$2 per capita; and 4) create a formal

Arbor Day proclamation. Currently the DPW observes Arbor Day and plants trees with residents and schoolchildren, but an official proclamation has yet to be created. Benefits of a Tree City USA designation include preferred status when applying for grants, an established community forestry program, community education, improved public image and civic pride.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES**

NHESP maintains a list of all plant species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or considered Species of Special Concern. Table 6.2 lists the most recent observations of each species in Dedham.<sup>10</sup> However, because they are rare, many listed species are difficult to detect and NHESP does not conduct methodical species surveys in each town on a regular basis. Older “most recent observations” may be several years old and should not be interpreted as meaning that the species no longer occurs in a town. NHESP regards observations that are older than twenty-five years as “historic observations.”

**TABLE 6.2  
ENDANGERED PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED IN DEDHAM**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Most Recent Observation
<i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i>	Adder’s-tongue Fern	T	1884
<i>Potamogeton vaseyi</i>	A Pondweed	E	1887
<i>Aristida purpurascens</i>	Purple Needlegrass	T	1894
<i>Scirpus longii</i>	Long’s Bulrush	T	2002
<i>Eleocharis ovata</i>	Ovate Spike-sedge	E	1878
<i>Viola brittoniana</i>	Britton’s Violet	T	2001
<i>Houstonia longifolia var. longifolia</i>	Long-leaved Bluet	E	1897
<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>	Andrews’ Bottle Gentian	E	1911
<i>Senna hebecarpa</i>	Wild Senna	E	1885
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great Laurel	T	1900
<i>Nabalus serpentarius</i>	Lion’s Foot	E	1901
<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	Linear-leaved Milkweed	T	1884
<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Purple Milkweed	E	1879
<i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i>	Adder’s-tongue Fern	T	1884

Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, updated September 11, 2007

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Updated 9/11/07 at <[http://www.mass.gov/dfwel/dfw/nhesp/species\\_info/town\\_lists/town\\_d.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwel/dfw/nhesp/species_info/town_lists/town_d.htm)>.

None of these species identified in Dedham are listed on the Federal Endangered Species List.

Contiguous vegetated areas provide habitat not only for rare plant species, but for many species of native plants and wildlife that require such large areas or corridors of land for their habitat. Dedham, though densely populated, contains several significant wildlife corridors. The Charles River provides long stretches of undisturbed riparian and wetland environments, floodplains and adjacent uplands along virtually its entire length through Dedham (Map 6.4). The Neponset River is bordered by the Neponset Reservation, a wide area of wetlands and undisturbed upland. Also, the northwestern part of town from Route 128 through the Wilson Mountain Reservation provides many large areas of undeveloped land.

### INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Non-native and invasive plant species are very common in many parts of Dedham especially in disturbed areas, along roadsides, and alongside Route 128 as it passes through town. An “invasive species” is defined by the National Invasive Species Council as a species that is 1) non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration, and 2) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.<sup>11</sup> Invasive plants often have few or no native competitors to maintain a balance in the landscape, thus allowing them to spread unchecked. Invasive plants, animals, and microorganisms cause harm through economic costs, damage to goods and equipment, food and water supply disruption, and environmental degradation.

In Dedham, invasive plant species continue to degrade environments and displace native species. For example, while purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) has beautiful purple flowers, it also diminishes waterfowl habitats, alters wetland structure and function, and chokes out native plants. Some of the other more prevalent invasive species in Dedham include Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera*

*japonica*), tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), and oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*). These invasive species are common to many other parts of New England and some communities have developed successful management strategies.

### Fisheries & Wildlife

Dedham’s woods, fields, lakes, and rivers host many common and some rare species of birds, fish, and other wildlife. Native woodland and water bodies provide suitable habitat for much of Dedham’s wildlife. The native species are generally interdependent; impacts to the habitat of one species will likely affect that of others.

Dedham contains many species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, spiders, mollusks, invertebrates, birds, and fish. The most commonly seen mammals are squirrels, chipmunks, and raccoons. Approximately 450 species of birds are found seasonally in Massachusetts. Dedham’s rivers, wetlands and riparian areas provide excellent habitat for waterfowl. Raptors such as hawks, falcons, and osprey nest in the openings of power line corridors. Song birds are found in forested areas, tree-lined residential neighborhoods and on the edges of woodland habitats. The Charles and Neponset Rivers have seen dramatic improvements in water quality in the past thirty years, and native fish habitat has improved.

As Dedham’s land area was converted to development and native habitat, edge habitat and food supplies dwindled, conflicts between residents and wildlife populations increased. Over the past several years, the town has witnessed several wildlife conflicts: roaming populations of wild turkeys, damage from beaver dams, overpopulation of rodents and coyotes. The town does not have a municipal policy or budget for management activities

<sup>11</sup> National Invasive Species Council at <<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/council/main.shtml>>.

such as rodent control, legal beaver trappings or dam breaching.

Four wildlife species in Dedham are listed by NHESP as Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Special Concern.<sup>12</sup>

These are shown below in Table 6.3. None of these species are listed on the Federal Endangered Species List.

Conservation of rare species, and in fact any plant or animal habitat, is best accomplished through the protection of natural habitats. Most wildlife habitats are not discrete areas with clear boundaries, they are overlapping ecosystems with gradations in physical characteristics and species composition. Birds and large animals in particular often make use of multiple communities and require large areas or corridors to thrive.

NHESP publishes GIS maps depicting Priority and Estimated Habitats of Rare Species. The Priority Habitats datalayer contains polygons representing the geographic extent of the habitats of state-listed rare species in Massachusetts based on observations documented within the last twenty-five years in the NHESP’s database. Priority Habitats are the filing trigger for proponents, municipalities, and other development project stakeholders for determining whether a proposed project must be reviewed by the NHESP for compliance with the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). Estimated Habitats are for use with the Wetlands Protection Act regulations (310 CMR 10.00). The Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife datalayer contains polygons that are a subset of the Priority Habitats of Rare Species. They are based on occurrences of rare wetland wildlife observed within

**TABLE 6.3**  
**ENDANGERED WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED IN DEDHAM**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Most Recent Observation
<i>Cicindela duodecimguttata</i>	Twelve-spotted Tiger Beetle	SC	1908
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	T	1867
<i>Neurocordulia obsoleta</i>	Umber Shadowdragon	SC	2004
<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Blanding’s Turtle	T	1993

Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, updated 11 September 2007.

the last twenty-five years and documented in the NHESP database. They do not include those areas delineated for rare plants or for rare wildlife with strictly upland habitat requirements.

Dedham has two areas of Priority Habitat and two areas of Estimated Habitat that are almost coincident (Map 6.4). The riverfront and floodplain area of the Charles River from its entrance into Dedham south and east to Providence Highway is both Priority and Estimated Habitat for rare wetlands wildlife. The Neponset River Reservation also contains both Priority and Estimated Habitat for rare wetlands wildlife. Any work proposed within uplands or wetlands within these habitat areas will require permission from NHESP.

### Environmental Hazards

The Massachusetts DEP Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup regulates the identification, assessment, and remediation of contaminated sites, known as Disposal Sites under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP) regulations. According to the DEP’s Reportable Release Lookup table dated December 2007, there have been a total of 170 disposal sites identified in Dedham since the DEP implemented the cleanup program following promulgation of M.G.L. c. 21E in 1983. Of these, only eighteen sites remain “open,” i.e. they are not completely remediated or otherwise resolved, but are in assessment or remediation in accordance with the MCP regulations (Map 6.5).

The Tier status of each site is an indicator of the level of severity of the contamination. Tier 1 sites

<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Updated 9/11/07 at <[http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/species\\_info/town\\_lists/town\\_d.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/species_info/town_lists/town_d.htm)>.

**TABLE 6.4**  
**CONTAMINATED DISPOSAL SITES UNDERGOING REMEDIATION**

DEP Number	Name	Address	Status
3-0002716	Mobil Station	19 Ames St	Tier 1C
3-0023153	Exxon Mobil Station	19 Ames St	Tier 1C
3-0023994	No Location Aid	19 Ames St	Tier 1C
3-0024795	No Location Aid	12 Bridge St	Tier 1C
3-0026971	Town Offices	26 Bryant St	Unclassified
3-0026355	Homeowner	14 Chauncy St	Unclassified
3-0027223	Texaco Service Station	901 East St	Unclassified
3-0020943	No Location Aid	1069 East St	Tier 2
3-0026876	Dedham Inst. For Savings	55 Elm St	Unclassified
3-0026841	No Location Aid	200 Elm St	URAM
3-0026872	Foundry Secondary Disp	200 Elm St	Unclassified
3-0026857	No Location Aid	250 Elm St	URAM
3-0027172	No Location Aid	Ernest and Milton	URAM
3-0002856	MBTA Readville Yard	Industrial Dr	Tier 1C
3-0021870	Sunoco Station	405 Providence Hwy	Tier 2
3-0016844	Parcels 49 and 52	367-419 Rustcraft Rd	Tier 2
3-0001022	Port Station Reynolds Ind	370 VFW Pkwy	Remedial Ops
3-0003712	MWRA Property	Wellesley Ext. Tunl.	Pending No Further Action

Source: Massachusetts DEP - Massachusetts Contingency Plan Searchable Sites Database, Accessed December 21, 2007.

are sufficiently hazardous to require direct oversight by the DEP Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup, while Tier 2 sites are remediated by Licensed Site Professionals with regular reporting to the DEP. There are no Federal ‘Superfund’ sites or DEP Tier 1A sites that are so contaminated that they require direct DEP supervision in Dedham.

The town operated a municipal solid waste landfill at East Street and Incinerator Road until 1976.<sup>13</sup> The landfill encompassed approximately eight acres and was not capped or lined at the time of its closure, according to DEP records. Even after a landfill stops accepting material, Massachusetts solid waste management facility regulations (310 CMR 19.000) require the owner or operator to properly maintain the site for up to thirty years to ensure that leachate or runoff does not contaminate water resources and gas generated as buried waste that continues to decay does not pose an explosion hazard. The Dedham landfill closed thirty-one years ago. There are no DEP records that indicate that

Dedham’s former landfill poses a threat to public health or safety.

Two less recognized environmental hazards are air pollution and non-point source water pollution. Air pollution is a problem in cities and densely developed areas. Major pollutants of concern and their principle sources include the following:

- ◆ Carbon monoxide is formed from combustion (often from incomplete combustion) of fossil fuels from motor vehicles and industry;
- ◆ Ground-level ozone is formed when hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides - from motor vehicles, industry, household products – interact on hot, sunny days;
- ◆ Nitrogen oxides form from combustion from utility plants, industrial boilers, incinerators, and motor vehicles;
- ◆ Other air toxics include organic compounds and metals from combustion, industrial processes, consumer products, motor vehicles; and

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Department of Environmental, Protection Bureau of Waste Prevention, “Solid Waste Facility Database,” November 2007.

- ◆ Fine particulate matter results from diesel engine exhaust, industrial incinerators, smoke from wood-burning stoves, and wind-carried dust and soot.

Many of these pollutants are caused by motor vehicles. The use of public transportation, bicycles, or walking and the fostering of efficiently located retail, service and community establishments all help to reduce air pollution.

Non-point source water pollution is pollution originating from diffuse or widespread sources that acts principally through stormwater runoff entering surface water bodies and groundwater. Such pollutants include:

- ◆ Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from lawns and farmland;
- ◆ Oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- ◆ Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, eroding streambanks;
- ◆ Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems.

These pollutants have harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, and fisheries and wildlife. Identifying and controlling the source of these pollutants, such as a leaking underground oil tank, is much more difficult than point source pollution. The most important ways to control non-point source pollution are through proper land management, effective maintenance of septic waste and petroleum, and zoning or erosion control ordinances, particularly in sensitive areas.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

The most visible trend of the last fifty years in Massachusetts has been the exodus of city residents to the suburbs, including Dedham, and the resultant conversion of forest and farmland to residential development. This settlement pattern reversed

the century-long increase in forested land cover that followed the abandonment of farmland during the industrial revolution. When European settlers cleared forested land for farming, the land remained vegetated and impacts from farming on land, water, plants, and wildlife were limited. With the development of buildings, roads, and hardscape, the modern impact on these resources is far greater.

A recent counter to the hardscape development trend is growing appreciation for open space and otherwise undeveloped land. With increasing development pressures, many communities in New England are realizing that natural resources such as open space, clean water, clean air, and natural biological diversity and ecological balance are inherently valuable and worth protecting. Communities have the ability to protect their resources as they see fit with many different tools, ranging from overlay zoning districts to low-impact development techniques, land acquisition, and conservation restrictions.

The latter has been a growing trend in many towns, including Dedham, which owns approximately 265 acres of protected land. At the initial community meeting for this Master Plan Update on 15 November 2007, residents expressed a strong desire to preserve natural resources and open space. When asked what they liked about Dedham today, residents identified the town's forestland, open space, and trails as their second most-liked feature (behind only the revitalization of Dedham Square). When asked what challenges Dedham faces today, residents also identified the preservation of open space as a high priority.

A third trend in Massachusetts communities, and one already adopted in Dedham, is the establishment of local bylaws to provide the town added control over development impacts to resources such as wetlands and aquifers. Dedham has adopted several local bylaws to protect its water resources, including a wetlands protection bylaw, a stormwater management bylaw and an aquifer protection overlay zoning district. Dedham has also adopted Drainage and Stormwater Management Design

Standards and has incorporated stormwater regulations into its subdivision regulations. The Conservation Commission is currently reviewing all of the town's stormwater management regulations to ensure consistency between the various bylaws and standards. The Commission is also reviewing these documents to incorporate the Massachusetts DEP's Stormwater Handbook's standards and Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Another growing trend is strong public awareness of global climate change. Anthropogenic forcing of climate change can potentially be ameliorated by decisions made today, such as reducing consumption of fossil fuels, and maintaining forests and naturally vegetated areas. Dedham's Master Plan can present choices that may help respond to climate change, such as the preservation of open space, encouraging public transportation, bicycles, and pedestrian-friendly land development rather than the continued growth of roads and reliance on automobiles and the development of environmentally-sensitive ("green") municipal buildings and landscapes.

In recognition of this issue, Dedham formed the Dedham Sustainability Advisory Committee (previously called the Renewable Energy Committee), to identify and recommend actions for Dedham to reduce its energy usage and carbon footprint. The Committee has promoted actions through workshops, brochures, and information on the town's website. Dedham is also a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)/Local Governments for Sustainability, an association of national, regional, and local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. ICLEI provides technical consulting, training, and information resources to support local government in the creation and implementation of a sustainable development plan. In addition, Dedham instituted a new Environmental Coordinator staff position in 2008. The Coordinator is responsible for promoting community environmental initiatives such as recycling, energy and water conservation, and wildlife management.

## PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

**Dedham Master Plan (1996).** Dedham's 1996 Master Plan presented several clear goals related to the protection of the town's natural resources. The Introduction's Vision Statement placed great emphasis on the value of natural resources: describing Dedham as "...a town of extraordinary beauty in its physical environment..." which recognizes "the quality of its landscape including tree-lined streets, public parks, passive recreation areas, and preservation of natural resources (wetlands and flood plains, wooded areas, rivers, brooks, and ponds)."<sup>14</sup>

The goals set forth in the Plan included a section entitled Environment, Open Space, and Recreation. The goals included:

"Establish a program of open space protection for one or a combination of the following purposes:

- ◆ preservation of scenic, natural, and aesthetic values;
- ◆ protection of aquifers and watersheds;
- ◆ provision of outdoor recreational opportunities;
- ◆ protection of areas of historic and cultural significance; and,
- ◆ protection of wildlife."

The Environment Chapter in the 1996 *Master Plan* presented a detailed discussion of the town's most desirable attributes that should be promoted and preserved in the future. These included improvements to the Providence Highway corridor related to street tree plantings; protection of water quality through stormwater management; appropriate landscaping in Dedham Square and other gateways to the town; adoption of a Scenic Road Bylaw

<sup>14</sup> Dedham Planning Board, *Town of Dedham Master Plan*, 1996.

under M.G.L. c. 40, s. 15C; development of a town shade tree protection program; establishment of a permanent Open Space Committee to advocate for implementation of an Open Space Plan; protection of wetlands, surface water bodies, water supply, wildlife, forest and meadow lands, parks, networks of open space, trails and greenbelts; and the promotion of Conservation Restrictions. The 1996 *Master Plan* made the following recommendations with regard to the town's natural resources:

- ◆ Tree Planting Program – Establish a program for tree planting along streets and in parks and other public spaces that includes maintenance practices and a replacement policy. Consideration should be given to meeting the standards for obtaining Tree City USA designation;
- ◆ Scenic Roads Designation – Improve civic appearance by designating a network of scenic roads in town as allowed by State legislation;
- ◆ Fowl Meadow Aquifer District – Enact an overlay aquifer district zoning provision and other land use policies to protect the water supply now being developed in Fowl Meadow;
- ◆ Establish a Greenspace Acquisition Fund, including a proposal to establish greenbelts in the following areas: Providence Highway; High School Rail-to-Trail; Wigwam Ponds; Mother Brook; Wilson Mountain; greenbelts on private property; and
- ◆ Update the town's 1992 Open Space Plan.

Dedham has had limited success in implementing these recommendations. The town enacted an overlay zoning district to protect the Fowl Meadow aquifer and completed an update of the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* in January 2004. Dedham is also working toward meeting the standards for Tree City USA designation. However, the town has been unsuccessful in its efforts to adopt a Scenic

Roads Bylaw or establish a Greenspace Acquisition Fund.

**Open Space and Recreation Plan (2004).** The 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* gave more explicit consideration to protecting the town's natural resources than the 1996 *Master Plan*.<sup>15</sup> The major goals for natural resource protection identified in the 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* are as follows (Goals and Objectives – Natural Resource Protection, Stewardship, Restoration, and Enhancement):

- ◆ Protect biological diversity, watersheds, and ecosystems of natural resource areas;
- ◆ Promote sound environmental management of open spaces and encourage responsible use among recreation users;
- ◆ Encourage development that protects open space systems and enhances natural resources;
- ◆ Preserve and restore waterways, ponds, and wetlands;
- ◆ Integrate historic and scenic resource protection in Open Space and Recreation Planning; and
- ◆ Pursue methods to protect additional natural resource areas.

These goals were addressed in a series of fourteen proposed actions outlined in the Plan's Five-Year Action Plan. Related goals of the 2004 Plan were addressed in actions proposed under other categories, too, such as Access to Public Open Spaces, and Land Acquisition, Funding, and Management.

**Dedham Community Development Plan (2004).** The Dedham Community Development Plan (CDP) provided an overview of Dedham's hous-

<sup>15</sup> Dedham Open Space Committee and Dedham Planning Board, *Town of Dedham Open Space and Recreation Plan*, January 2004.

ing and economic development issues and established a set of strategies for the town to consider as it addresses these priority concerns. While the plan focused on housing and economic development, these topics are intertwined with Dedham's underlying natural environment and the plan provided recommendations to ensure that new development would have limited impacts on natural resources.

Regarding the potential impacts of industrial uses on drinking water, the CDP recommended that Dedham protect its water supply by enforcing its stormwater regulations and supporting and encouraging land uses that would have the least demand for public water. The CDP also recognized the impacts that new development could have on natural resources. It recommended that Dedham amend and or adopt new zoning provisions such as cluster housing to allow the town to reach two seemingly differing objectives: accommodating new growth and simultaneously protecting the environment. The CDP further recommended that Dedham consider adopting an open space bylaw in West Dedham ("the estate area"). Finally, it set forth a draft Environmental Checklist that could be used by town boards and departments during the development review process. The checklist includes items pertaining to groundwater, soils/slopes, wetlands/surface water and significant and unique features. The plan also included a draft Site Design Checklist that could be used to review a development proposal based on the proposal's landscape criteria, subdivision design and facilities, utilities, and safety.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The principal natural resource issues identified in this Master Plan Update remain largely the same as in the 1996 Master Plan (and the 2004 Open Space and Recreation Plan). These issues can be distilled to one primary goal: to preserve Dedham's most significant open spaces, surface water bodies, wetlands, floodplains, groundwater, soils, forestland and wildlife habitats in the face of development pressures.

Recommendations and goals expressed in the 1996 *Master Plan* were presented at a community meeting in November 2007 for discussion and consideration of their degree of success. Residents agreed that the following goals of the 1996 *Master Plan* had not been met with success:

- ◆ Preservation of scenic, natural and aesthetic values;
- ◆ Provision of outdoor recreational opportunities;
- ◆ Protection of wildlife;
- ◆ Set priorities for acquisition of open space parcels;
- ◆ Purchase development rights for certain open space;
- ◆ Establish or improve small neighborhood parks at the central area of each neighborhood; and
- ◆ Include work of the Open Space Committee for Open Space Issues.

As noted earlier, when residents were asked at the November 2007 meeting what they liked most about Dedham, they named the town's forests, open space, and trails as their second most-appreciated feature. Considering that municipalities often purchase undeveloped land, the slowdown in commercial and residential construction, and relative stabilization in the real estate market, Dedham has two basic opportunities: 1) promote the importance of permanently protecting the town's most valued natural resources; and 2) integrate land and resource protection clearly into the master planning process and into town government.

Dedham's current approach to evaluating the environmental impacts of a development is fragmented and fairly informal. For example, special permit requirements for major nonresidential developments include some environmental standards and guide-

lines, but they are vague. Site plan review regulations do not include any environmental standards or requirements. Both the Design Review Advisory Board and the Development Review Committee consider and comment on environmental impacts in their project reviews, but their work is not guided by shared, specific criteria.

Another critical issue apparent in Dedham, as in other communities, is the need to conserve water and protect water quality. Presently, the Dedham-Westwood Water District regulates the seasonal use of water and promotes water conservation awareness through public forums and the distribution of informational literature. The town could expand upon these efforts by promoting appropriate forms of water conservation methods such as the use of drought-resistant and low-water-use plantings and appropriate landscape maintenance care. Dedham also could serve as a model for environmentally-sensitive design by developing water-efficient landscape design on some of its public landscapes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Residents say that since the 1996 *Master Plan* was completed, only two of the plan's nine natural resource goals have been successfully addressed. The unmet goals remain relevant today, and they should be reinforced in this Master Plan Update. In addition, the Master Plan Update should provide guidance for the town to integrate the care of its natural resources into the goals and policies of all the other plan elements to the greatest extent possible. Also, the Master Plan Update should promote communication, outreach, and advocacy for the protection of Dedham's natural resources. The fourth and most fundamental recommendation is the prioritization and implementation of land acquisition or conservation by the town.

During the Master Plan Update planning process, the Steering Committee asked its subcommittees to establish goals for this plan. The goals were reviewed and discussed by the Steering Committee, and they provide a basis for the following recommendations.

### 1. DEVELOP AN ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST TO ASSIST WITH DEVELOPMENT REVIEW.

The 2004 *Dedham Community Development Plan* recognized the need for the town to establish criteria for evaluating the environmental impacts of a project. It presented a draft checklist for use by town boards and staff that would make the permitting process more transparent and predictable. Dedham should review the checklist to ensure that it adequately identifies impacts on natural, scenic, and historic and cultural resources. When reviewed and approved, the checklist should be formalized as part of the update of the Dedham's Zoning Bylaw or immediately following completion of the Zoning Bylaw revision process. (See also, *Chapter 2: Land Use, Recommendations.*) The criteria should be available both in print and on the Town's official website.

### 2. CONTINUE TO REVIEW AND REVISE DEDHAM'S LOCAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS AND BYLAWS TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS.

Dedham is currently reviewing its various layers of regulations related to stormwater management to ensure their consistency with each other and their consistency with current standards and guidance. Through this review, the town will incorporate the Massachusetts DEP Stormwater Handbook's standards and BMPs for use in Dedham.

### 3. ESTABLISH MUNICIPAL POLICY AND AN ANNUAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT.

Conflicts between humans and wildlife will continue to increase in Dedham and the costs associated with addressing these conflicts will potentially escalate. The town should review the issues and adopt a municipal management policy with an associated annual appropriation. A concerted public education and awareness campaign is also important as is collaboration with adjoining communities on management issues.

**4. ESTABLISH A PLAN AND PRIORITIES FOR MAINTAINING AND INCREASING THE TOWN'S URBAN FOREST AND PUBLIC TREE INVENTORY.**

The town should complete a long-term Urban Forestry Management Plan to protect and maintain its tree resources. This should start with the proposed GIS-mapped tree inventory, which should be expanded to include all town street trees. Dedham should formalize its existing street tree planting policy and continue to work toward Tree City USA designation. In addition, the town should review its existing management policies, whether formal or informal, regarding the Town Forest and its conservation lands to ensure the protection of these vital resources.

**5. DEVELOP AND PROMOTE PUBLIC CONSERVATION EFFORTS RELATING TO WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES.**

The creation of the Sustainable Advisory Committee is an important step in promoting public conservation efforts. Water conservation measures, ecological landscape practices, and energy and resource conservation are all important goals not only for community residents and businesses but for public officials as well. Building upon the existing Dedham-Westwood Water District's water conservation efforts, Dedham has the opportunity to be a leader in conservation by initiating environmentally sensitive landscape designs for public spaces and instituting water and energy conservation techniques in town buildings.

**6. INCREASE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS TO PROMOTE APPRECIATION AND PROTECTION OF THE TOWN'S NATURAL RESOURCES.**

Through the Environmental Coordinator, Dedham has the opportunity to expand its efforts to engage the public in natural resource protection. Encouraging citizen participation and involvement through volunteer programs such as water quality monitoring, species counting and reporting, and trail maintenance would raise awareness of Dedham's vital resources and work toward their ultimate protection. Utilizing the town's website as part of an educational campaign would also educate and inform residents about environmental is-

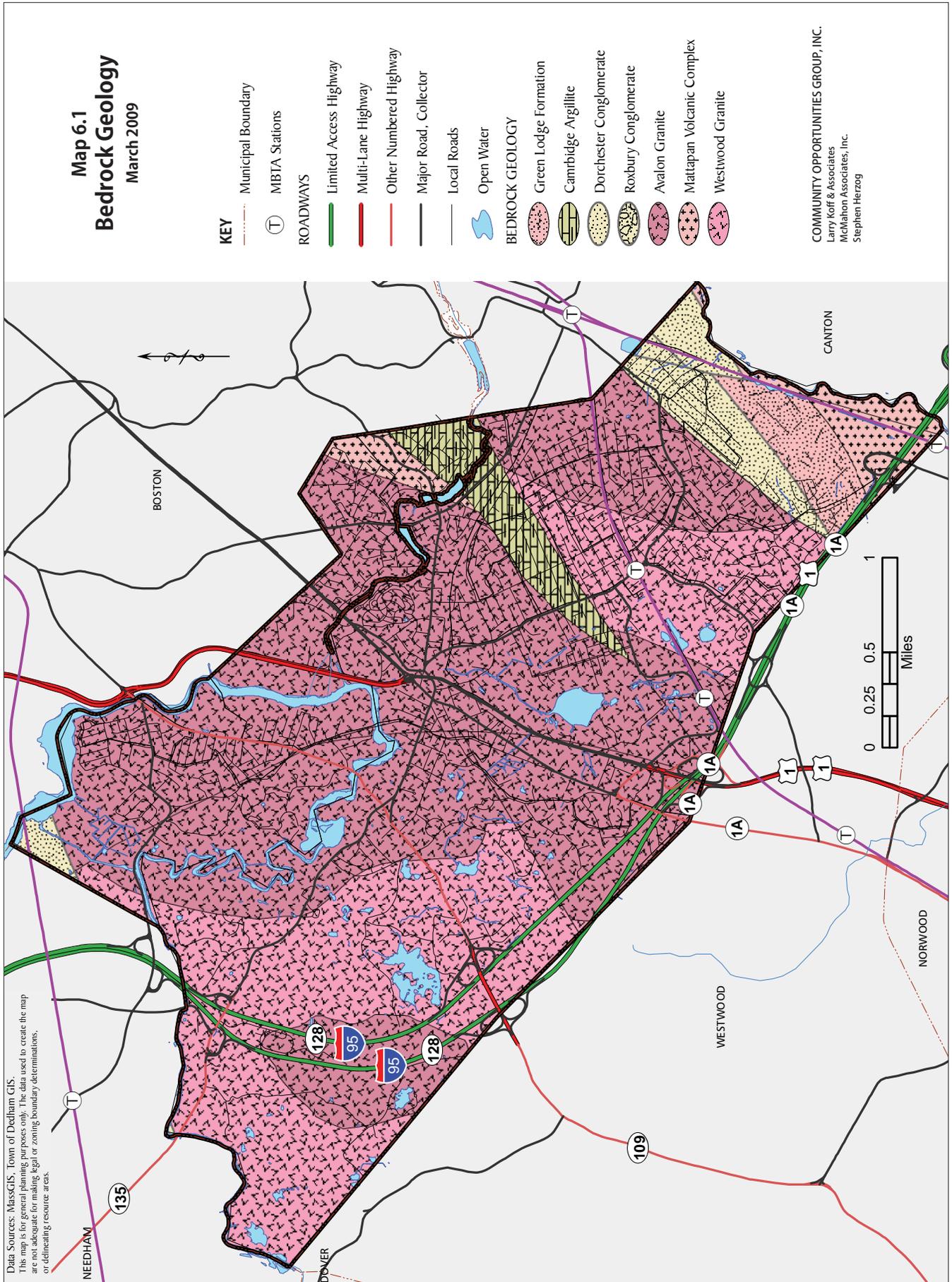
sues affecting Dedham's natural resources, such as its waterways and aquifer system.

**7. INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH NEARBY COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION GROUPS FOR REGIONAL WATER RESOURCE AND HABITAT PROTECTION.**

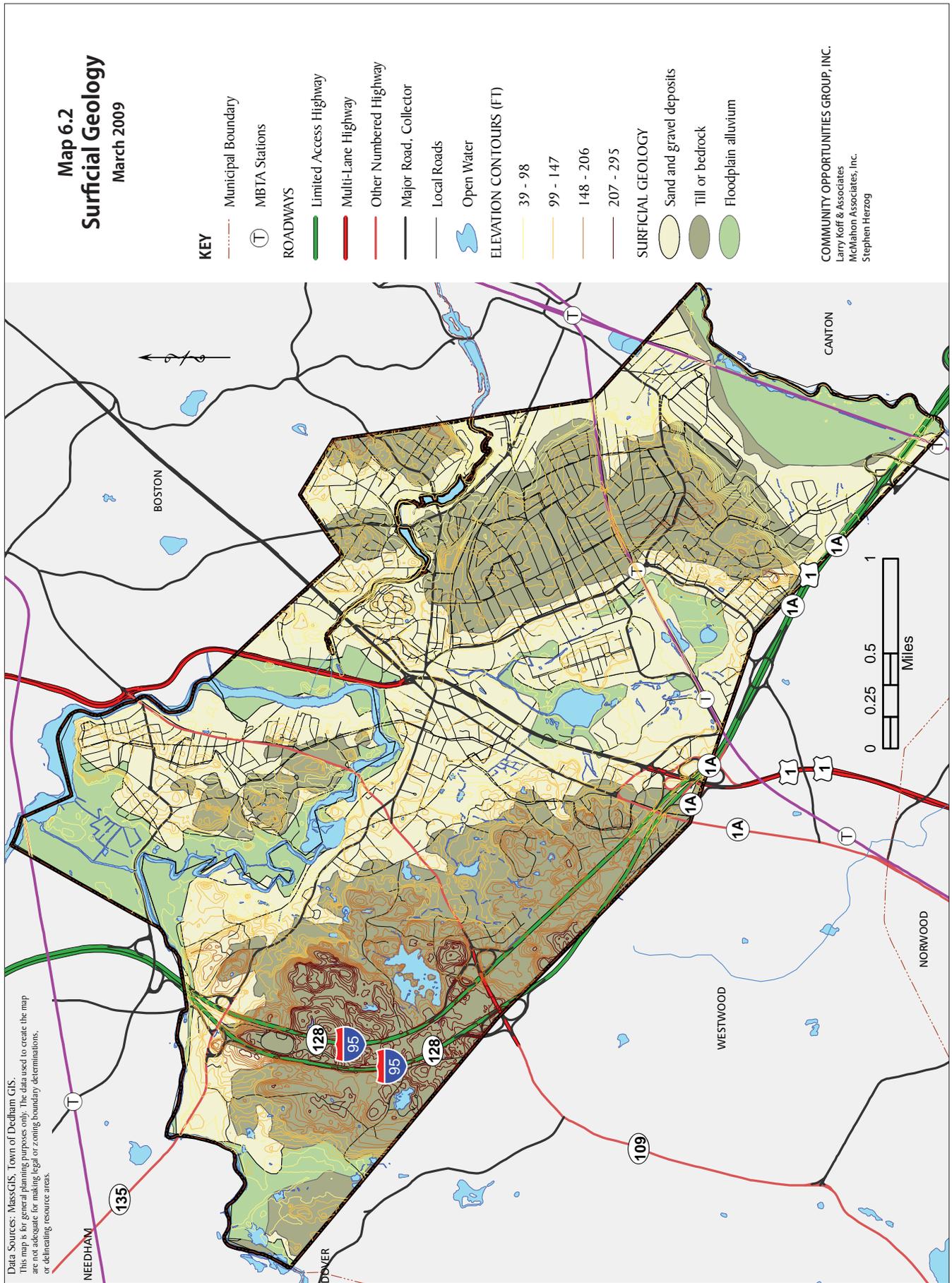
Natural resources are not defined by a municipality's boundaries; actions taken in one town can have significant impacts on the water resource and natural habitats of the communities that surround it. Regional collaboration between communities and conservation organizations should be continued and expanded where appropriate. Dedham should take a leadership role in hosting activities related to resource protection efforts.



**Map 6.1**  
**Bedrock Geology**  
March 2009

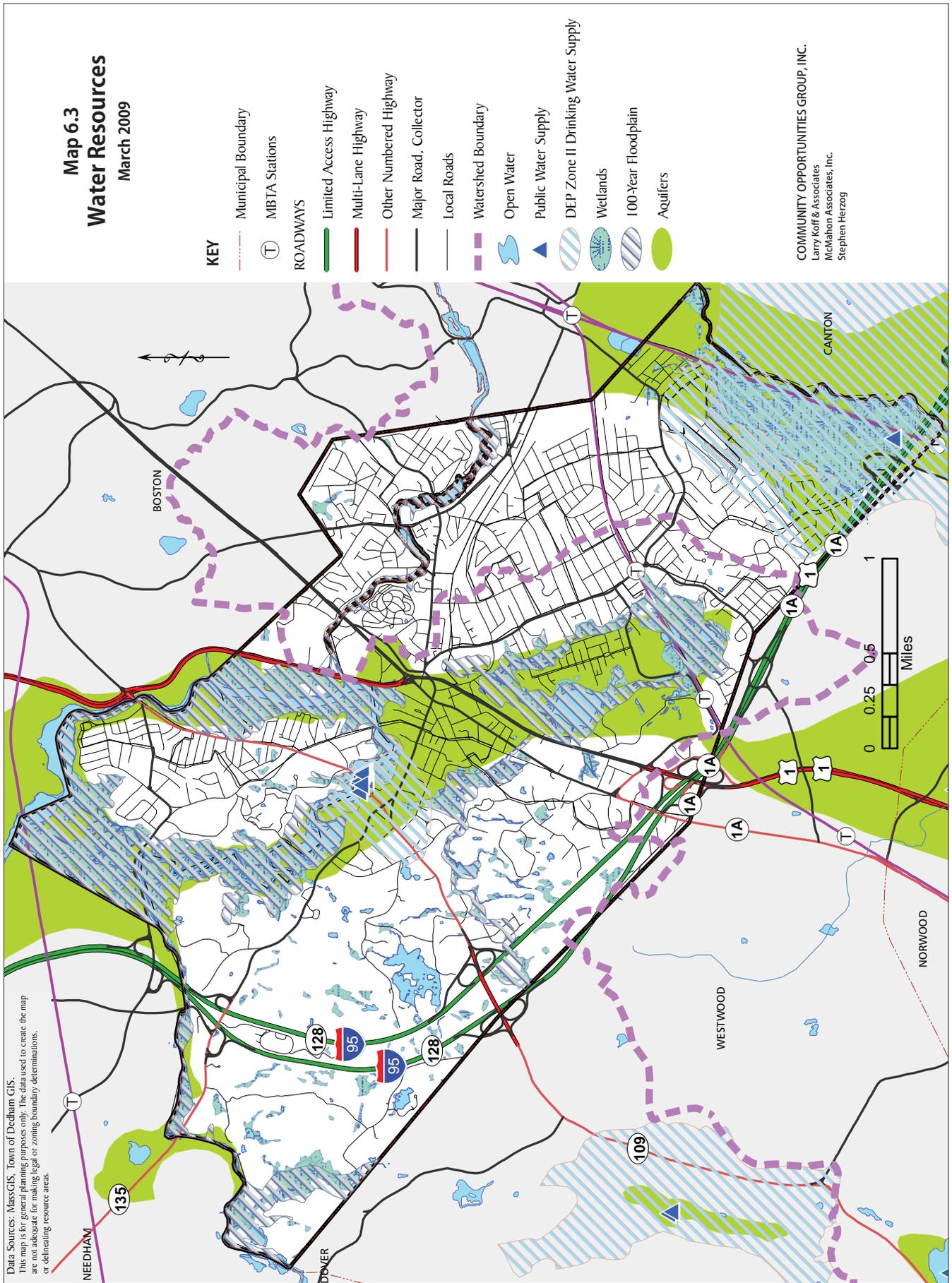








**Map 6.3**  
**Water Resources**  
March 2009

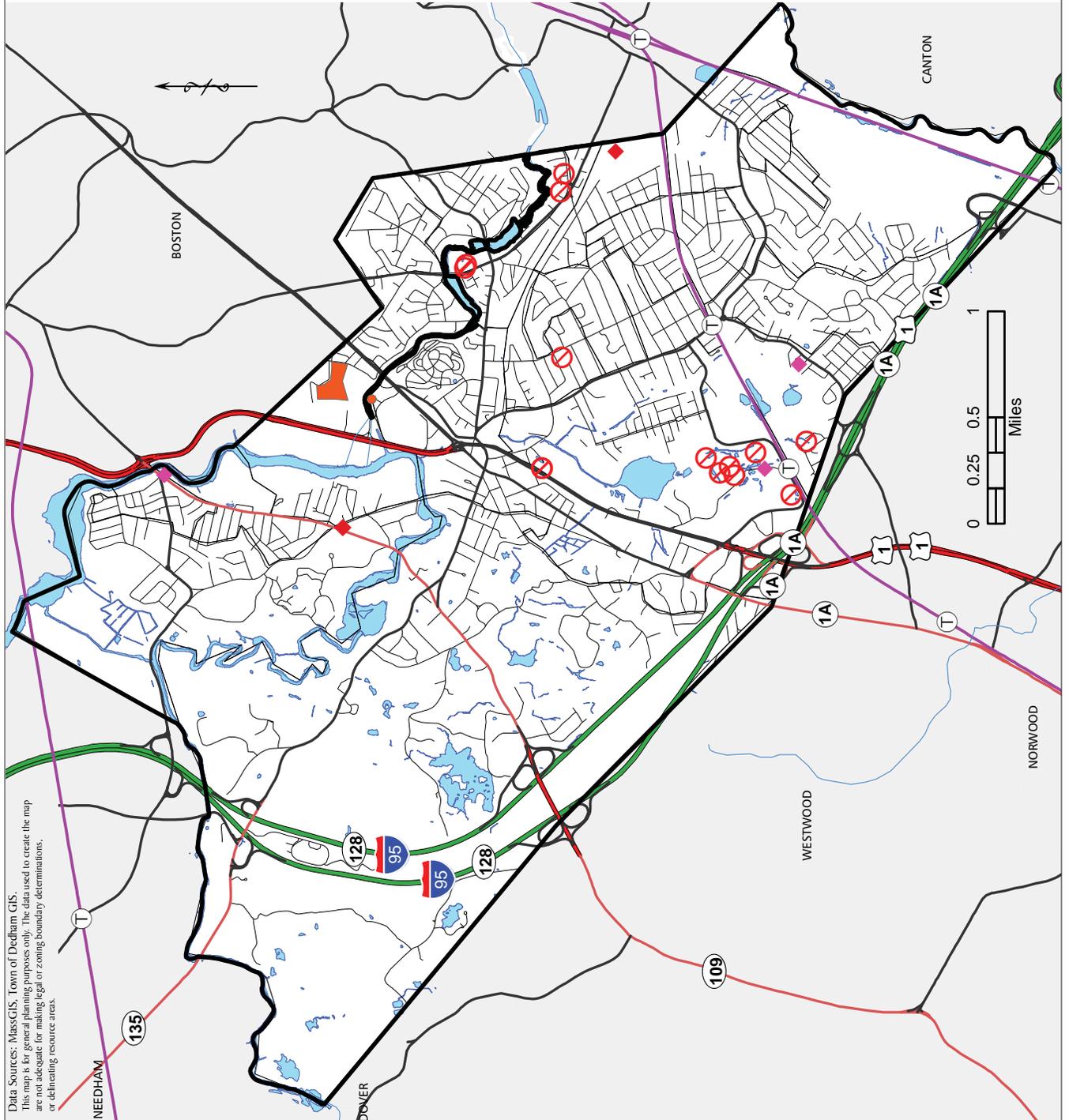


Data Sources: MassGIS, Town of Dedham GIS.  
This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations, or delineating resource areas.

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES GROUP, INC.  
Larry Koff & Associates  
McMahon Associates, Inc.  
Stephen Herzog



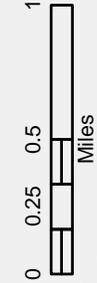
**Map 6.4**  
**Environmental Hazards**  
 March 2009



- KEY**
- Ⓣ MBTA Stations
- ROADWAYS**
- Limited Access Highway
  - Multi-Lane Highway
  - Other Numbered Highway
  - Major Road, Collector
  - Local Roads
  - Open Water
  - Landfill (Closed)
- Chapter 21E Tier Classified Sites**
- ◆ Tier I C
  - ◆ Tier II
  - ⊘ Activity & Use Limitation Sites

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES GROUP, INC.  
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 McMahon Associates, Inc.  
 Stephen Herzog

Data Sources: MassGIS, Town of Dedham GIS.  
 This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations, or delineating resource areas.





## CHAPTER 7

# OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

## INTRODUCTION

Open space is essential to the quality of life in every community. From urban centers to rural hamlets, open space supports the natural environment and gives shape and visual interest to the built environment. In suburbs like Dedham, the open space network tends to be characterized by urban parks on one hand and wetlands on the other, for most of the developable upland has already been converted to homes, businesses, civic uses, and transportation facilities.



*Soccer fields at Barnes Memorial Park.*

When new growth does occur, it is immediately visible to a large number of people. This makes the remaining land in substantially built-out suburbs very important to residents, for the loss of open space has a direct impact on the character of their neighborhoods and may also have an impact on their property values. Still, it can be extremely difficult for older suburbs to acquire and protect open space because the scarcity of vacant land makes for very high land values. Since the public cost to buy open space is daunting in suburbs along Route 128, communities need to take creative approaches to protecting the land they have left, and they have to set priorities.

A master plan's open space and recreation element should help a community plan for adequate land to meet its social, ecological and health needs, today and in the future. Open space protects wetlands, wildlife habitat and vistas, and provides for outdoor recreation and gathering places. In Dedham, institutional open space plays a prominent role in defining the town's visual character – from

the imposing campus of Noble and Greenough School to the manicured grounds of the Endicott Estate. Dedham's public parks also benefit neighborhood residents of all ages, but particularly the town's children, whether they participate in organized sports or congregate for informal play. For them, neighborhood open space is akin to a common back yard.

Dedham has to consider not only how much open space and recreation land it should have, but also how the town will care for the land it already owns and will own in the future. In many of the Commonwealth's maturely developed suburbs, management and stewardship have become more critical open space planning issues than strategies to protect vacant land from development. The competing demands on local governments often leave very little funding for asset management and the effects can be seen in deferred maintenance of public buildings, parks, playing fields and playgrounds, and unattended conservation land. As Dedham plans for its open space needs, the town

should think about public costs and benefits in a comprehensive way, and explore opportunities to engage developers as partners in providing open space by design.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Open Space and Recreation Inventory

Dedham’s open space is notable. Approximately 2,185 acres, or slightly less than one third of the town’s total land area, are used for open space, conservation and recreation purposes (Map 7.1). Federal, state and local government agencies own a combined total of about 1,450 acres, or sixty-six percent of the open space that exists in Dedham today. For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns 278 acres of riparian corridor along the Charles River for flood control purposes. In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) owns 626 acres in five parks in Dedham: Riverside Park, Cutler Park, Stimson Wildlife Sanctuary, Neponset River Reservation, and Wilson Mountain. The Dedham Conservation Commission controls 265 acres of town-owned land, mainly wetlands or riparian tracts, while the Parks and Recreation Department and Dedham Public Schools manage another 150 acres of land with active recreation facilities.<sup>1</sup>

Wetlands account for about 900 acres of Dedham’s open space and recreation land. Red and silver maple, speckled alder, white oaks, pin oaks, hemlock, sweet pepperbush, and highbush blueberry are common in Dedham’s swampy, wet areas. The upland vegetation is characterized by southern New England hardwood forest, including northern red oak, shagbark hickory, beech, red maple, and birch. One of Dedham’s most significant open space resources is Fowl Meadow, a contiguous wetland associated with the Neponset River Reservation and the 8,350-acre Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Fowl Meadow area, along with a portion of the Wilson Mountain Reservation in the northwest

part of town, provide significant habitat for rare species in and around Dedham.<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of the Town Forest and Wilson Mountain, most of the large parcels of upland open space in Dedham are privately owned.<sup>3</sup> The Dedham Land Trust and the Massachusetts Audubon Society own thirty-seven acres, and 224 acres of privately owned land are under Chapter 61 agreements. Private non-profit institutions own about 245 acres. Finally, there are approximately 73 acres of vacant, privately-owned land in Dedham, mainly in West Dedham.<sup>4</sup>

### LEVEL OF PROTECTION

A common way of classifying open space is by the degree of certainty that land will not be converted to another use in the future. The levels of open space protection include permanent (in perpetuity), temporary, limited, and none. Open space protected in perpetuity includes land owned for conservation and wildlife habitat by federal and state agencies, a local conservation commission or non-profit land trusts, and privately owned land bound by conservation restrictions. In turn, temporary protection applies to open space covered by revocable restrictions against a change in use, such as a Chapter 61 agreement. Further, open space with limited protection includes properties such as a ball field or neighborhood park, i.e., land that technically could be redeveloped, though a change in use is very unlikely. Finally, open space without any legal restrictions is land that could be developed in the future. Table 7.1 reports the levels of protection that apply to land in Dedham’s open space inventory.

The Dedham Assessor’s Office classifies 428 of the 532 acres of town-owned open space as “public-permanent,” or publicly-owned land that is protected in perpetuity. Only the schools, the landfill, and two small water bodies are not permanently protected conservation and recreation land. In ad-

<sup>1</sup> Dedham Assessor’s Office, “Parcel Records Database,” (2006); Town of Dedham, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009*, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 26, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Town of Dedham, *Dedham Master Plan* (1996), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Dedham Assessor’s Office, Parcel Records Database, (FY 2006).

**TABLE 7.1**  
**OPEN SPACE BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION**

Level of Protection	Totals	Owners
<i>Private</i>	263.85	
Private institution	31.56	MIT; others
Private recreation	39.18	Dedham Community House; Dedham Athletic Complex; others
Private school	193.11	Noble & Greenough School; Dedham Country Day School ; Ursuline Academy; Northeastern University
<i>Private-partial</i>	224.32	
Chapter 61	224.32	Dedham Country & Polo Club; various private owners
<i>Private-permanent</i>	243.80	
Conservation restriction	138.91	River Bend Inc.
Private cemetery	25.70	Various church cemeteries
Private conservation	57.80	Dedham Land Trust; Mass. Audubon Society
Private institution	21.38	Animal Rescue League of Boston
<i>Public</i>	101.25	
Public school	93.58	Town of Dedham
Town	7.68	Town of Dedham (Landfill)
<i>Public-permanent</i>	1,327.18	
Federal flood control	278.04	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
State park	626.40	Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Trust for Public Land
Town cemetery	51.53	Town of Dedham
Town conservation	271.40	
Town historic properties	19.14	
Town park	80.68	
<i>None</i>		
Vacant land	73.09	Various owners
Water	9.17	N/A
Abandoned Rail	1.23	MBTA
<i>Total</i>	2,243.89	

Source: Town of Dedham, Engineering Department, GIS data file, 2004.

dition to the town's protected open space, 1,030 acres are protected in perpetuity and held by another entity. Remarkably, 1,458 acres of all 2,185 acres of open space in Dedham (66%) qualify as permanently protected land.<sup>5</sup>

Dedham property owners have the opportunity to work with the town and local, regional and state conservation organizations to protect their land through conservation restrictions and land donations. The Dedham Land Trust holds conservation restrictions in Dedham on some private land, and the Trustees of Reservations holds a conservation restriction on eighty-eight acres of land along the Charles River near the Needham border. Property owners also have the option to donate their land

to these conservation agencies. Recently a property owner in West Dedham donated a parcel of land on Stoney Lee Road to the Conservation Commission.

### NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACE

Each of Dedham's neighborhoods has open space, park, and recreation facilities. The largest open space holdings with passive recreation amenities exist in the Riverdale and West Dedham/Dedham Village neighborhoods, where the town, state, and several educational institutions own a considerable amount of land. East Dedham and Oakdale contain most of the town's schools, parks and active recreation facilities, while Greenlodge/Manor has a mix of active recreation and large open space areas. Table 7.2 summarizes the open space in the neighborhoods.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**TABLE 7.2  
NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACE**

Neighborhood	Open Space, Park and Recreation Facilities
Riverdale	Charles River Riparian, Cutler Park, Riverside Park, Stimson Wildlife Sanctuary, Riverdale School, Noble and Greenough School
West Dedham/Village	Town Forest, Wilson Mountain, Dedham Common, Dexter School, Dedham Country Day School, MIT Endicott House, Northeastern University, Ursuline Academy, Dedham Country and Polo Club, Meadow Brook Conservation Restriction, Weld Pond
East Dedham	Churchill Park, Condon Park, East Dedham Passive Park, Gonzalez Field, Hartnett Square, Mucciaccio Pool/Araby Skateboard Park, Pottery Lane Courts, The Triangle, Brookdale Cemetery, Avery School
Oakdale	Wigwam Pond conservation land, Barnes Memorial Park, Fairbanks Park, Oakdale Common, Dedham Middle School, Dedham High School, Oakdale School, Endicott Estate
Manor/Greenlodge	Fowl Meadow and Neponset River Reservation, Little Wigwam Pond, Manor Fields, Paul Park, Greenlodge School, Capen Early Childhood Education Center

Source: Town of Dedham, Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2004-2009.

**PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

Dedham’s Park and Recreation Department manages twelve sites totaling about fifty-five acres with playgrounds and active recreation amenities. The Parks and Recreation Department also manages the playgrounds and athletic fields at several of Dedham’s public schools. Dedham’s Conservation Commission is responsible for maintaining the public hiking trails located on municipal conservation land, such as those in the Town Forest. Table

7.3 summarizes the active recreation facilities in Dedham. The state has made recreation improvements at each of the five properties managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Several private sporting clubs and private schools also have recreation facilities. Hebrew Senior Life’s NewBridge on the Charles development in north-east Dedham will offer the use of the Rashi School’s two fields when not in active use, which was a condition for development approval.

**TABLE 7.3  
PARK, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND PLAYGROUNDS**

Ownership	Number of Sites	Est. Acres	Facilities
<i>Town of Dedham</i>			
Parks & Recreation	12	54.8	Playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, baseball, softball and soccer fields, basketball, tennis courts, skateboard park, outdoor pool
Public Schools	8	93.6	Playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, baseball, softball, football and soccer fields, basketball, tennis courts, track, indoor pool
Conservation Commission	8	278.1	Hiking trails
<i>Commonwealth of Mass.</i>	5	626.5	Playgrounds, basketball, tennis, hiking trails, boat launch
<i>Privately Owned</i>	3	122.6	Golf, tennis, polo

Source: Town of Dedham, Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2004-2009; Dedham Assessor’s Office, Parcel Record Database, 2006.

**Management and Stewardship**

Three town government entities – the Open Space Committee, the Conservation Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Department – as well as DCR have responsibility for the management and stewardship of public open space and recreation land in Dedham.

**TOWN OF DEDHAM**

Dedham has been engaged in comprehensive open space and recreation planning for sixteen years. The role of the Open Space Committee is to guide the development of each open space and recreation plan, set

policy and implementation priorities, and advocate for implementation of the plan once it is completed. Dedham produced its first open space and recreation plan in 1991 and updated the plan in 1998. In 2003, Town Meeting appropriated funds for the Open Space Committee to hire a consultant to prepare the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* so that Dedham would be eligible for state open space grants. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Division of Conservation Services subsequently approved the 2004 Plan.<sup>6</sup>



Dedham's Conservation Commission, operating under M.G.L. c. 40 s. 8C, is responsible for protecting the town's water resources and open space. The seven-member Commission administers and enforces the state Wetlands Protection Act and the Dedham Wetland Protection Bylaw. The Commission also manages Dedham's 265 acres of conservation land. Its staff includes a Conservation Agent, an Environmental Coordinator, and an Administrative Assistant.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is a five-member elected body that oversees the Parks and Recreation Department at 269 Common Street, a gym that hosts recreation programs for Dedham residents. In addition to the Parks and Recreation Director, the department has three full-time employees assigned to the Parks Department while sixty to seventy part-time employees manage the recreation facilities and run programs for the Recreation Department. The Parks Department manages Barnes Memorial Park, Hartnett Square, Whiting Triangle, East Dedham Passive Park, the Dedham Common, Oakdale Square, and Condon, Paul, Churchill, and Fairbanks Parks, and the ath-

letic fields at the Capen, Greenlodge, Oakdale, and Riverdale Schools.<sup>7</sup>

### **MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION (DCR)**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has authority over 626 acres of open space in Dedham. DCR prepares resource management plans and engages in capital planning and policy development for all lands under its jurisdiction throughout the state. DCR's Urban Parks Division, South Region, manages Cutler Park and Wilson Mountain. In addition, DCR has general oversight of the Fowl Meadow and the Ponkapoag Bog Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

### **Recreational Program Participants**

Dedham's recreational facilities are used for programs run by the Recreation Department, the School Department, and youth sports leagues. While available program statistics do not reflect casual users of Dedham's recreation facilities, they do provide an estimate of the demand for each facility. According to local data, the Mucciaccio Pool is the most heavily used recreation facility in Dedham, accommodating about 122,300 users annual-

<sup>6</sup> *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> Town of Dedham, Official Website, Parks and Recreation at <<http://www.dedham-ma.gov/index.cfm?pid=11777>>.

**TABLE 7.4**  
**ATHLETICS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY FACILITY TYPE**

Facility Type	Program	Number of Facilities	Number of Users
Pool	Swimming (one year attendance)	1	120,000
	Parks and Rec Swim Team		400
	Parks and Rec Swim Lessons		1,900
	School Athletics Swimming & Diving		11
Tennis	Parks and Rec Tennis Lessons	3	190
	School Athletics Tennis		26
Basketball (indoor-outdoor)	Dedham Youth Basketball	16	600
	School Athletics Basketball		85
Baseball/Softball	Dedham Little League	16	955
	Dedham Girls' Softball		250
	Dedham Parks and Rec Mens' Softball		220
	School Athletics Baseball		66
	School Athletics Softball		51
Track	School Athletics Track & Field	1	147
Field Sports*	Dedham Youth Soccer	9	823
	School Athletics Soccer		108
	School Athletics Field hockey		68
	School Athletics Lacrosse		45
	School Athletics Football		69
Playgrounds	Parks and Rec All Day Playground	8	120
	Parks and Rec Playgrounds		302
Indoor Facilities	Karate	2**	170
	Wrestling		175
	Gymnastics		270

\* Includes soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, and football.

\*\* Recreation Center and Dedham High School.

Source: Dedham Parks and Recreation Department, Dedham School Department, and Dedham Youth Leagues.

ly. Baseball and softball fields are the second-most heavily used type of facility, with over 1,500 users annually. Playing fields for soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse attract over a thousand users per year, most of them soccer players. Table 7.4 reports the estimated number of participants in outdoor and indoor recreation programs sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department, Dedham Public Schools, and various youth sports organizations.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

Aerial photographs show that between 1971 and 1999, the total amount of open land in Dedham decreased by about 280 acres (Table 7.5). The greatest absolute loss occurred with forest land—about 166 of the 280 acres – yet this represented a relatively small loss as a percentage of total forest land (-8.6 percent). About ninety acres of general “open” land were lost, too, including abandoned agricultural land and areas with no vegetation (such as power lines). Agricultural land, which by

**TABLE 7.5  
LAND USE CHANGE, 1971-1999, DEDHAM REGION**

ACRES	Canton	Dedham	Dover	Foxboro	Medfield	Milton	Needham	Norwood	Randolph	Sharon	Stoughton	Walpole	Westwood
1971													
Open Land*	5,928.7	2,193.9	7,276.2	8,621.4	6,170.5	4,051.9	2,601.9	1,980.9	2,618.2	10,748.0	6,070.3	8,565.3	3,304.6
Recreation	757.3	182.8	57.4	422.8	65.9	246.3	169.4	227.3	61.1	334.2	112.6	186.8	178.6
Residential	2,756.0	2,552.4	2,136.9	2,505.0	1,954.0	3,351.8	3,781.1	2,574.8	2,689.6	2,819.2	3,022.3	3,009.6	2,816.8
Commercial	821.5	378.2	24.4	389.0	138.2	107.5	475.6	754.7	306.2	206.2	515.2	566.2	351.4
Water	1,539.2	915.5	283.9	829.8	843.0	262.9	725.9	581.5	584.7	942.5	400.4	862.3	264.6
All Other	684.2	610.0	99.0	573.8	201.8	373.8	406.5	576.9	430.5	575.2	409.3	317.6	222.4
Open Land % of Total	47.5%	32.1%	73.7%	64.6%	65.8%	48.3%	31.9%	29.6%	39.1%	68.8%	57.6%	63.4%	46.3%
1999													
Open Land*	4,533.5	1,912.5	6,636.6	7,076.3	5,121.3	3,408.5	2,297.1	1,376.1	1,942.7	8,927.3	4,699.8	6,718.8	2,717.2
Recreation	777.9	190.4	67.8	508.1	88.0	383.8	223.4	264.7	68.1	373.4	129.4	284.0	182.8
Residential	3,846.6	2,658.2	2,798.8	3,809.8	2,973.7	3,759.5	4,041.8	2,773.0	3,185.7	4,601.6	4,067.1	4,518.8	3,336.7
Commercial	1,084.6	611.6	16.4	484.5	143.9	165.7	474.3	1,211.3	504.6	169.1	870.7	709.1	439.4
Water	1,547.2	912.3	255.9	854.3	788.3	272.1	725.9	515.5	583.5	942.5	404.1	848.9	264.6
All Other	697.1	547.7	102.3	608.8	258.3	404.8	398.0	555.5	405.7	611.5	359.0	428.2	197.7
Open Land % of Total	36.3%	28.0%	67.2%	53.0%	54.6%	40.6%	28.1%	20.6%	29.0%	57.1%	44.6%	49.7%	38.1%
% Change in Open Land, 1971-1999	-23.5%	-12.8%	-8.8%	-17.9%	-17.0%	-15.9%	-11.7%	-30.5%	-25.8%	-16.9%	-22.6%	-21.6%	-17.8%

Source: MassGIS Land Use Summary Statistics Set 2, Massachusetts Geographic Information Systems. Online at <www.massgis.gov>. [last accessed 15 January 2008]. "Open land" includes agricultural, land, forests and other open or vacant land. "Commercial" includes commercial and industrial.

1971 already made up a very small proportion of all acres in Dedham, accounted for the remaining decline in acres of open land. Compared with most towns in the region, Dedham's loss of open space was fairly small. Only Dover and Needham experienced smaller losses of open space, while Randolph, Stoughton, and Walpole had losses of over twenty percent and Norwood, over thirty percent.<sup>8</sup> However, Dedham had a relatively small overall percentage of open space in 1999. While Dedham is largely built out and has many acres of protected open space, its relatively dense neighborhoods and small proportion of open space overall mean that even small losses can have significant effects on local ecology and would be felt keenly by residents.

## PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

### Local Plans

**Dedham Master Plan (1996).** The 1996 *Master Plan* was Dedham's most recent comprehensive planning effort. In the "Environment" chapter, the plan set forth two broad goals for open space and recreation in Dedham. The first addressed the protection and enhancement of open space as a natural and cultural resource and the second as a critical element of the town's design:

- ◆ Establish a program of open space protection for one or a combination of the following purposes:
  - ◆ Preservation of scenic, natural and aesthetic values
  - ◆ Protection of aquifers and watersheds
  - ◆ Provision of outdoor recreational opportunities
  - ◆ Protection of areas of historic and cultural significance
  - ◆ Protection of wildlife

<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Geographic Information Systems (MassGIS), "Land Use Summary Statistics Set 2," at <[http://www.mass.gov/mgis/landuse\\_stats.htm](http://www.mass.gov/mgis/landuse_stats.htm)> .

- ◆ Establish or improve small neighborhood parks at the central area of each neighborhood, typically where convenience retail services are located.

To attain these goals, the following policies and actions were proposed:

- ◆ Set priorities for acquisition of open space parcels.
- ◆ Purchase development rights for certain open space.
- ◆ Include the work of the Open Space Committee for open space issues.

These goals and actions were revisited at the Dedham Master Plan Public Meeting held on November 15, 2007. (See *Recent Community Planning* below.)

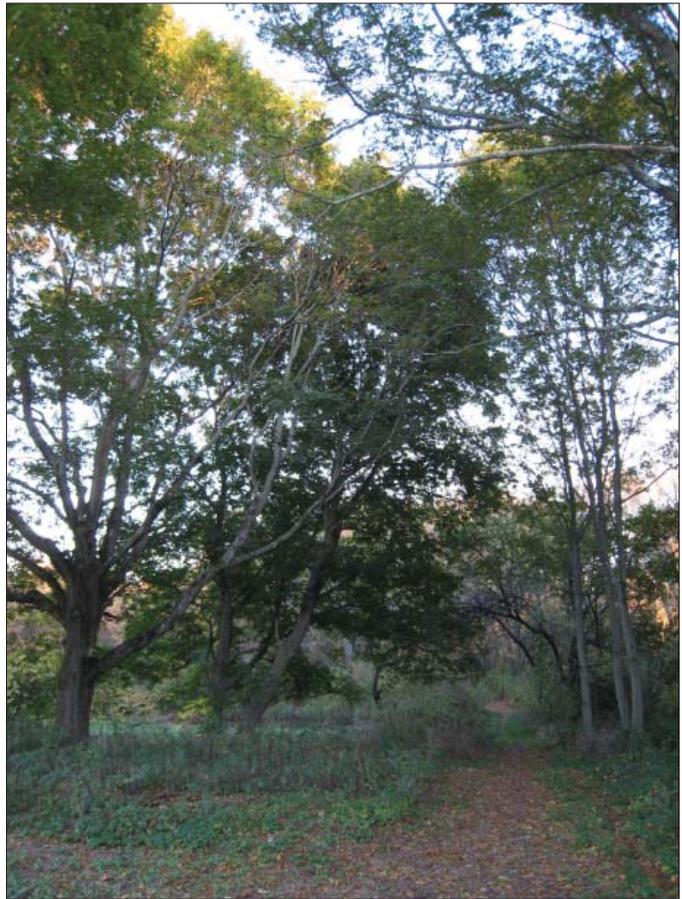
**Dedham Open Space and Recreation Plan (2004).** Dedham published its most recent *Open Space and Recreation Plan* in 2004. As part of its evaluation of open space and recreational needs, the Open Space Committee surveyed Dedham residents about conservation strategies and the town's recreational facilities. Most of the survey respondents said that protecting open space in Dedham is a priority, particularly for conservation of land and water, and also for recreational needs. Respondents favored a broad mix of strategies the town could use to protect open space, including dedicating more local funds for maintenance of existing open space and recreation areas, creating a fund to acquire and maintain open space, and regulating the intensity of development in certain areas. Also, the majority of respondents indicated they would personally vote for town-supported land acquisitions to preserve open space. However, they also said the town should act first to maintain current recreation areas before moving to acquire new recreation land.

Regarding existing facilities, the greatest dissatisfaction expressed by respondents involved the quantity and quality of tennis courts and sports

fields. Several respondents reported overuse of existing fields and facilities. They also mentioned lack of access to waterways and lack of paths for various activities as a source of dissatisfaction. Survey respondents felt that both the quantity and quality of recreational areas for young or school-aged children were better than those for adults. The most commonly cited recreational amenities needed in Dedham were bike trails, public boat access, and soccer fields.

Based on the survey results and other information, the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* set forth an analysis of Dedham's open space needs. These needs fell into three broad categories, with related issues and opportunities:

- ◆ *Protection and restoration* of open space as both a natural resource and recreational opportunity.
  - ◆ Implement stormwater management techniques and restore ponds impacted by non-point source pollution.
  - ◆ Continue to make necessary improvements to recreational facilities.
- ◆ *Increased access* to open space.
  - ◆ Expand presence of hiking/walking trails, especially into networks of trails that function as both a recreational opportunity and as an alternative form of transportation.
  - ◆ Increase opportunities for canoeing and kayaking.
- ◆ *Acquisition* of additional open space.
  - ◆ Some of Dedham's neighborhoods are more densely populated than others, and there is a particular need to ensure that open space and recreational opportunities are accessible to all residents.



- ◆ Unprotected private parcels must be monitored and protected carefully.
- ◆ The town should develop criteria and strategies for acquisition of unprotected open space.

In addition, the plan identified a need for improved coordination of departments and other groups to ensure consistency with the town's overall open space objectives and to promote awareness of open space goals. From this analysis of needs, the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* identified the following goals, which fall under four main areas of action:

- ◆ *Recreation area planning and maintenance:* Maintain and improve quality of recreational service; Provide a range of recreation opportunities.

## DEDHAM MASTER PLAN

- ◆ *Natural resource protection, stewardship, restoration, and enhancement:* Protect biological diversity and scenic character; Preserve water resources.
- ◆ *Access to public open spaces:* Provide universal access to facilities and programs; Expand access to open spaces.
- ◆ *Land acquisition, funding, and management:* Plan and coordinate protection of lands of conservation and recreation interest; Provide linkages between existing open spaces; Implement and promote land management strategies; Provide adequate funding for open space acquisition and management.

These broad policy statements were translated into steps that comprise the *Five-Year Action Plan*. Now nearing the end of its intended lifespan, the Action Plan serves both as a guide to current and future open space planning and as a sounding board against which to evaluate what has been accomplished in recent years. Since the Plan's approval, Dedham has made progress on the following actions:<sup>9</sup>

- ◆ *Maintain and improve quality of recreational service:* The Parks Department has made improvements to several parks, including work to improve accessibility. Playground equipment has been replaced at Paul Park, accessible parking will be added at Fairbanks Park, and Churchill Park will be renovated.
- ◆ *Provide a range of recreation opportunities:* The town acquired the former Society of African Missions (SMA) property to accommodate the Parks and Recreation Department office and facilities, and will be the site of a boat launch onto the Charles River. The Dolan Fields property will host two new softball fields, addressing the need for new playing fields. However, there has been little to no progress on actions

regarding planning for a town-wide greenway, bicycle/pedestrian trails, and other recreational trails.

- ◆ *Protect biological diversity and scenic character:* The Conservation Commission has continued to enforce the town's wetlands bylaw, which is more restrictive than the state Wetlands Protection Act, and follows the ACEC guidelines for the Fowl Meadow/Ponkapoag Bog area. The 100-year floodplain has not been updated, and without town resources to dedicate toward this action, the Conservation Commission will have to go to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for funding. Actions to protect scenic character were perceived to be under the jurisdiction of the Dedham Historic Districts Commission (HDC).
- ◆ *Preserve water resources:* The Conservation Commission has addressed actions to monitor water quality by continuing to use the Charles River Watershed Association's (CWRA) water quality monitoring services, and is generally supportive of their efforts. The town participates in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) MS4 Program, which regulates Dedham's stormwater system, and the Conservation Commission is making additional efforts to monitor stormwater discharges from individual properties. In addition to working with the CWRA, the town has made efforts to improve the quality of Charles River by cleaning up the waterfront that abuts the former SMA property. There has been no action on pursuing funding from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to restore Wigwam Pond.
- ◆ *Provide universal access to facilities and programs:* Aside from beginning to designate and construct accessible parking spaces at Parks Department facilities, there have been no actions under this goal. Many of Dedham's parks pose barriers to people with disabilities and therefore require renovations to gates, paths of travel, and playground equipment, but these have not been addressed. The action to de-

<sup>9</sup> Don Yonika, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 16 January 2008; Jim Mahar, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 23 January 2008.

velop recreational facility design standards to guide future construction of facilities also has not been addressed. Finally, because the action to create other recreational trails has not been addressed, neither has the action to provide a range of trail systems for all abilities.

- ◆ *Expand access to open spaces:* Dedham has made some progress increasing access to both water and land open space resources. The town has increased access to the Charles River – a long-standing goal articulated in both the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* and in recent community planning efforts – by acquiring the SMA property and installing a boat launch. Further, the Conservation Commission has applied for funding to create a “Water Trail” along the Charles River. This project will involve the creation of a water-proof map to guide boaters along a three-mile river route, installation of benches, repair and upgrade of boat launches, and the removal of hazardous debris in the waterway.

While the town has focused on expanding access to waterways, no action has been taken to create or upgrade trails in the Town Forest. This may partially reflect the Parks and Recreation Department’s perception that there is little demand for these trails due to the presence of trails elsewhere, such as Wilson Mountain.

- ◆ *Plan and coordinate protection of lands of conservation and recreation interest:* The Conservation Commission has begun to identify and update ownership information on parcels of conservation interest and create a prioritized list of Chapter 61 parcels and other vacant land. Action to generate a list of “orphan” properties that could be sold to generate funds for other open space acquisitions is in progress. Actions to identify and create a strategy to acquire institutional or recreational properties have not been addressed. Of the properties identified for acquisition, one has been acquired, two are under negotiation for preservation of open space, and one has not been acquired. An Open Space Committee has been established, but reportedly meets infrequently.

### ***Universal Access***

Many of Dedham’s parks pose barriers to people with disabilities, and therefore require renovations to gates, paths of travel, and playground equipment, but these needs have not been addressed. According to the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2006 (SCORP)*, the most pressing recreation facility needs in the Metropolitan Boston region involve providing access for people with disabilities of all types. These needs are more pronounced in the Boston area than in any other part of the Commonwealth.

- ◆ *Provide linkages between existing open spaces:* No specific actions under this goal have been addressed per se because their implementation is largely contingent upon completing the identification and prioritization of parcels.
- ◆ *Implement and promote land management strategies:* Although the youth sports league teams do some cleanup of recreational facilities, there has been little outreach to encourage local stewardship of parks, fields, playgrounds, and open space, and little to no education for property owners regarding preservation opportunities or environmental stewardship. There has been little progress on improving communication between town boards with jurisdiction of open space and recreational facilities.
- ◆ *Provide adequate funding for open space acquisition and management:* The action to hire one full-time staff person for environmental protection and development review was completed when the town hired an Environmental Coordinator in 2007. Efforts to establish an Open Space Land Acquisition Fund have not been initiated. The town attempted to pass the Community Preservation Act (CPA), but was not successful. This may have been due to insufficient information, lack of preparation, concerns about the cost to taxpayers, or a preference to pay for

open space and other CPA-eligible activities with general fund revenue.

## Regional Plans



**Charles River Watershed Association.** The Charles River Watershed Association (CWRA) consists of thirty-five cities and towns adjacent or near to the eighty-mile-long span of the Charles River. While the CWRA has not issued specific actions to be carried out by communities within the watershed, its Stormwater Management program puts particular emphasis on outreach and education to communities. In a recent report submitted to the EPA, the CWRA's Stormwater Education and Outreach Project set forth the following goals:<sup>10</sup>

- ◆ Educate municipalities on better methods for stormwater prevention and control, including low-impact development (LID) and on-site stormwater best management practices (BMPs);
- ◆ Assist in the preparation and adoption of local stormwater regulations; and
- ◆ Educate and advocate for the development, adoption and implementation of dedicated stormwater financing mechanisms, such as user fees or stormwater utilities.

### Neponset River Watershed Association 2004-2009 Action Plan.

The Neponset River Watershed comprises about 130 square miles of land in fourteen towns, including Dedham. The Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA) is a non-profit organization that works to protect and restore the Neponset River through science, outreach, project work, and advocacy. NepRWA's



<sup>10</sup> Charles River Watershed Association, *Charles River Watershed Plan*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Targeted Watersheds Grant Program, 2003-2006, Final Report, (2007), 123-124,

2004-2009 Action Plan identifies the following actions relevant to open space resources in Dedham:

- ◆ Require implementation of town-wide bylaws with emphasis on recharge that applies to both new development and redevelopment;
- ◆ Establish collaborative multi-town, state, and citizen group efforts to implement education/public participation on aspects of pollution reduction more effectively, including methods to limit stormwater runoff from landscaped areas;
- ◆ Adopt and enforce Irrigation System Performance Standards;<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Encourage all municipalities and water suppliers to dedicate meaningful funding to water conservation activities and effective outreach; and
- ◆ Encourage all towns to collaborate to maximize effectiveness in water conservation efforts.

In addition, NepRWA's Action Plan identifies Priority Sites for a series of recommended actions. The Neponset River's Middle Mainstream section, which includes Boston, Canton, Dedham, Milton, Norwood, and Westwood, was designated as a priority site for addressing runoff from impervious surfaces and the river's reduced streamflow, caused primarily by excessive water withdrawals. Dedham's Mother Brook was designated as a priority site for two reasons: first, it has one of the highest nutrient levels in the watershed, and trash and debris from runoff, and second, it contributes to the river's reduced streamflow because of channelization and habitat destruction from illegal dumping.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Neponset River Watershed Association and Alexandra Dawson, "Options for Managing the Impact of Private Irrigation Wells and Surface Diversions on Wetlands, Waterways and Public Water Supplies," (2004).

<sup>12</sup> Neponset River Watershed Association, *Neponset River Watershed 2004-2009 Action Plan*, (30 June 2004), 22-26.

**Massachusetts State-wide Outdoor Recreation Plan (2006).**

*Massachusetts Outdoors 2006* is the State-wide Comprehensive



Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which allows the Commonwealth to be eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants. Findings are reported for the state as a whole and also by regions. Dedham belongs to the Metropolitan Boston region, which, though smallest in land area, accounts for approximately thirty-two percent of the state's population. It is notable that, though the region has the smallest total acreage of open space, it has the third largest percentage of total land area dedicated to open space and recreation.

According to the results of a survey conducted for the SCORP, baseball, basketball, and other field-based activities were more popular in the Metro Boston region than other regions in the state. There was significantly less resource use in the Boston area, for half the resource types including lakes, ponds, and wetlands, wildlife conservation areas, forests, mountains, and agricultural lands. The SCORP survey found the most pressing needs to be providing access for people with disabilities of all types, a need which garnered a higher percentage than in other regions in the state. This need was followed by maintenance and restoration of existing facilities (a concern shared by other regions), and then by providing public transportation to recreation activities (also a need more pronounced in the Metro Boston region). In terms of facilities maintenance needs, tennis and basketball facilities were named as most in need of repair. For new facilities, respondents named walking, road biking, swimming, and playground facilities as most important.<sup>13</sup>

**Recent Community Planning.** In November 2007, Dedham residents came together to discuss and evaluate many aspects of town life, including open space and recreation. The meeting consisted of two

parts. The first involved the entire assembly, when residents were invited to express what they liked and did not like about life in Dedham. After generating a list of ideas, residents voted on which items they felt were important, and also which they felt were worth spending money on. Several open space issues garnered significant support, including:

- ◆ The Town Forest, open space, and trails;
- ◆ Preserving open space in general;
- ◆ Development and maintenance of playing fields, and
- ◆ Maintaining a balance of open space and development.

Of these, with the exception of “preserving open space,” fewer people indicated they were willing to spend money on these issues than thought them important.

In a smaller group discussion, participants agreed that there had been some progress on protecting aquifers, watersheds, and historically and culturally significant areas, and slight progress on establishing and improving neighborhood open space. For the remaining goals and actions, the group agreed there had been little if any progress, and—with the exception of aquifer protection—there was general agreement on the lack of success in meeting most open space goals and actions.

In addition to feedback on goals, general discussion in the break-out group generated the following issues and opportunities:

Dissatisfaction with the management/governance of open space issues and action. There was a sense that open space-related committees hold meetings, but are ineffective in their cooperation with each other and with citizens.

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs: Division of Conservation Services, *Massachusetts Outdoors 2006 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, (2006), 50, 86-91.

Suggestions for possible new open space and recreation sites, including the landfill site and a possible canoe launch on the Charles River.

Emphasis on the need for continued aquifer and watershed protection and addressing the issue on a regional level.

Concern for the loss of open space on the Charles River.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### MAINTAINING AND MANAGING EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

With over two hundred acres of active recreation facilities and over 1,000 total acres of outdoor recreation space, Dedham has a wealth of recreational opportunities. As demonstrated in the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* survey, Dedham residents recognize the importance of maintaining and improving existing facilities before building new ones. With an inventory of existing open space assets and a list of actions to improve town-owned recreational facilities, the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* provided a good road map for maintaining Dedham's parks, fields, playgrounds, and trails. Since the plan's publication, the Parks and Recreation Department has been active in pursuing some of its goals. Continued adherence and regular updates to this type of short-range plan will be crucial to keeping the resources Dedham already owns in good repair for future generations of users.

Some aspects of Dedham's substantial parks maintenance could be lessened by leveraging neighborhood assets. Many communities have had great success in transferring the care of their smaller, neighborhood open spaces to the people who use them: the residents of the neighborhoods. These types of open spaces—known as *community open spaces*—typically see a higher level of care, increased safety, and a strengthening of neighborhood social fabric as people work together to care for a common space close to where they live. Dedham is fortunate in that it has identifiable and intact neighborhoods with at least two parks in each. By

organizing groups to take charge of certain aspects of parks maintenance, such as cleanups, plantings, and light renovations, the town could experience both decreased demands for park maintenance and a stronger civic fabric through increased neighborhood activity. The Five-Year Action Plan refers to this sort of arrangement with its recommendation to create adopt-a-park and adopt-a-spot programs for public open spaces. Dedham Civic Pride currently runs a "sponsor-a-spot" program with local merchants and neighborhood groups to beautify traffic islands and street corners. With the help of the town's Parks and Recreation Commission, this type of activity could be expanded to each neighborhood.

### INCREASING ACCESS AND EXPANDING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

With regard to new recreational facilities and opportunities, Dedham's greatest opportunity and challenge lies in activating substantial and largely inaccessible parcels of town-owned open space, and linking the existing collection of open space pieces into a town-wide open space system.

### ACTIVATING EXISTING OPEN SPACE

Dedham owns several large parcels of open space that remain largely inaccessible to and, therefore underutilized by, local residents. For example, the Wigwam Pond and Little Wigwam Pond conservation areas include over one hundred acres of open space, but most of the land is inaccessible to residents due to overgrown trails and lack of signage. The Town Forest contributes another seventy-six acres of open space, yet it too remains largely underutilized due to a poorly marked access point and overgrown trail.

Developing these lands into areas for walking, hiking, and biking will not only activate open spaces with low-impact, sustainable recreational activities, but will also provide the types of recreation facilities that residents identify as being in short supply: walking and hiking trails and bike paths, activities that can be enjoyed as much by adults as by young and school-aged children. The need and opportunity for this type of recreational amenity

appears in the Five-Year Action Plan,<sup>14</sup> the 1996 *Master Plan* and the SCORP, and also was evident during the public participation process for this Master Plan Update. The Parks and Recreation Department may think there is less demand for trails due to their presence in other locations, such as Wilson Mountain and Cutler Park. However, these areas are concentrated in west and northwest Dedham, leaving large areas of town underserved by hiking, walking, and biking trails.

### LINKING EXISTING OPEN SPACE

The other element to unlocking Dedham's open space potential is the creation of a network of trails to connect existing open spaces. This goal and relevant actions also appear in the Five-Year Action Plan, and several suggestions for potential trails to connect significant open space parcels have been identified.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, the Plan identified paths along Mother Brook, the Charles River, Wigwam Pond, and the Providence Highway corridor, and connections among the land within the Town Forest, Neponset River Reservation, and Cutler Park through easements across private land to provide access to Dedham's ponds.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the Plan recommends that the abandoned railroad between the Readville Station in Boston to just before Providence Highway be developed into a **greenway**—a linear green space that provides walking and bicycling paths, and typically links nodes such as public facilities, commercial centers, or other open spaces, together. A greenway in this location would create connections between several open space and recreational land such as the High School fields, Pottery Lane recreation area, and the fields at Memorial Park, and would also provide a nearly-direct route between the Readville commuter rail station and Dedham Square.

The Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission are in the process of identifying land

<sup>14</sup> *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009, "Five Year Action Plan,"* (2004), Actions A-1, A; A-2, A, B, C, D, and K, 72-77.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, see Action L-2, C.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

### Greenbelts and Greenways

A **greenbelt** is a contiguous band of forests, open space, and parkland around a community or connecting places within a community. Its primary purposes are to protect natural and scenic resources, enhance the quality of life, and preserve community or neighborhood aesthetics.

A **greenway** is a linear open space network adjacent to defined corridors such as rivers, railroad rights of way, or streets. Its primary purpose is to provide a system of safe, aesthetically pleasing trails and paths for non-vehicular transport such as walking, jogging, and biking.

ownership along some of the proposed trail routes. Once the prospective routes are inventoried, these groups will need to create a strategy for acquiring the necessary parcels or obtaining conservation easements from private property owners. While such an undertaking will be a long and challenging endeavor, it is nevertheless a crucial one if Dedham is to expand the opportunities provided by its open spaces. By moving away from open space as a patchwork of parcels and toward open space as a *network* and *system*, Dedham can greatly increase access to open space through relatively small additions of land. Doing so would provide routes for alternative forms of transportation, further provide for under-represented recreational activities such as walking, biking, and hiking, and offer a new experience of the town's built and natural environment previously unknown even to long-time residents.

Finally, providing information on recreational facilities is an immediate and relatively low-cost way to increase access to town-owned open space. The Five-Year Action Plan recommends creating handouts and brochures for the major parks and public lands, showing trails, special features, and access points for pedestrians, the disabled, and vehicles. Making these materials available at Town Hall, on the town's website, and at town-wide events would

boost use of Dedham's lesser known recreational areas and help to create a greater constituency for their care and stewardship.

### RECENT AND PENDING OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS

In addition to expanding access to some of its long-standing open space parcels like the Town Forest, Dedham also has a new opportunity to shape and activate open space through its development of the Manor Fields recreational site, also known as the Striar property. In 2001, the town purchased this property – a 25-acre parcel named after its former owner, Steven Striar – for the purpose of preventing further industrial and commercial development. The town placed a conservation restriction on the land and dedicated it for recreational purposes.

In the early 2000s, a concept plan and feasibility study were completed by the Norfolk County Engineering Department and Vollmer Associates, respectively. The latter study highlighted two key problems with the basic concept plan for Manor Fields: wetlands impacts and site access.<sup>17</sup> Dedham resolved the site access issue in 2008, which until then had posed a critical roadblock to the property's development, by obtaining an access easement through an abutting property. In 2009 the Parks and Recreation Commission recommended establishing a committee to spearhead planning for the parcel. The group includes two members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Department of Public Works (DPW) Director, the Director of the Department of Engineering, Conservation Commission members, and two at-large members. Currently, this committee is in the process of generating possible development objectives and options, which include:

- ◆ Working with the DPW and Engineering Directors for field development and parking lot design.
- ◆ Possible inclusion of snow storage area.

- ◆ Providing for wetland protection and management.
- ◆ Providing for the temporary storage yard for equipment and materials.
- ◆ Possible inclusion of space and/or facilities for composting residential yard waste for clean fill and loam for use on municipal fields and properties, which would reduce the need to pay for the removal of yard materials and for loam for playing fields and flower beds.

Dedham will need to continue with its efforts to develop and provide access to this space, taking into consideration the types of recreational opportunities Dedham residents desire most and also how the Striar property can be linked to other existing open space parcels.

### LAND PROTECTION PRIORITIES

Dedham's priorities for acquiring unprotected parcels should hinge on whether they abut or could potentially contribute to existing or planned open space resources. Many vacant, privately-owned parcels could make a significant contribution to Dedham's open space holdings due to their location near larger parcels of open space with at least some level of protection. In addition to the larger parcels, small parcels or conservation easements to connect existing open spaces should be identified and made acquisition priorities.

Currently, the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee are working to identify properties of conservation and recreational interest and incorporate them into the town's existing Open Space Inventory. Without a funding source, however, it has been difficult to acquire land to add to existing open space resources. Instead, open space has been acquired on a piecemeal basis by negotiating with developers.<sup>18</sup> While this approach may add to the net amount of protected open space in Dedham, it does not advance the development of an overall open space plan or design, nor does it lend itself to assembling larger parcels or corridors of open

<sup>17</sup> Vollmer Associates, *Feasibility Study: Manor Fields Recreation Facility*, (February 2004), iii-iv.

<sup>18</sup> Don Yonika, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 16 January 2008.

space that offer habitat protection. Dedham could take a more comprehensive and planned route to open space conservation and preservation by completing its open space inventory, identifying parcels that are particularly valuable due to size and/or location, and making those parcels priorities for preservation. This approach, coupled with a designated funding source for open space acquisition and an outreach strategy for cultivating donors of conservation restrictions and outright donations of land, would allow Dedham to take a much more strategic approach to protecting open space and building an open space system.

### FUNDING

Dedham's most recent *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and accompanying Five-Year Action Plan is comprehensive in its identification of issues, opportunities and goals, and its articulation of actions required to advance those goals. However, without a reliable source of funds for open space acquisition, the plan's most important goals and a large amount of Dedham's open space potential will not be realized. Asking town officials and residents to dedicate large sums of money to purchase open space will be a difficult proposition. While many residents value open space and the recreational opportunities it provides, there are competing needs for town funds that overshadow open space acquisition. Many town facilities are badly in need of repair, an issue that will require not only substantial amounts of money for renovation but possible additional purchases of land as well. Dedham's sewer and road systems also have acute needs that will require a large and long-term financial commitment.

Dedham cannot afford to ignore or set aside planned additions to its open space system. The potential to link existing open spaces means that a relatively small amount of land may create enormous gains in access. Additionally, the town has over 600 acres of land owned by non-profit organizations or private institutions, used as private recreation, or under the Chapter 61 program. The sale of one of these holdings could either present a tremendous opportunity or loss, depending on whether Dedham has some means to finance open space acquisition.

Adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) would provide a means to acquire open space (as well as fund affordable housing and historic preservation). The CPA is local option legislation through which municipalities voluntarily agree to impose a surcharge on their property tax bills of up to three percent. These funds may be used for open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation only. Some taxpayers may be granted an exemption from paying the surcharge. CPA cities and towns receive matching funds from the state, which collects revenue for the statewide CPA trust fund through fees on real estate transfers. Initially, each CPA community received a match equal to 100 percent of its locally raised revenue. While the match rate has fallen significantly over the past two years (to an average match of seventy-four percent in 2008), new legislation was filed in January 2009 to stabilize the statewide trust fund by guaranteeing that CPA communities received a minimum 75% annual match.<sup>19</sup>

The CPA was brought to Town Meeting several years ago, but there was little public outreach and education, and the legislation did not pass. The town should again consider adopting CPA to fund urgently needed public resources, including open space acquisition. Asking residents to accept an increase in their property taxes is difficult, but it would provide the means to move forward with long-term open space planning, design, and implementation which, despite comprehensive open space planning efforts, has to this point been difficult to realize.

Another funding mechanism used in communities such as Bedford involves authorizing a sizeable open space bond issuance, which would essentially reserve some of the town's borrowing power to buy open space as properties become available. This approach would require a debt exclusion under Proposition 2 1/2.

### CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS

Traditionally, Dedham has not promoted the use of conservation restrictions as a component of its open

<sup>19</sup> Massachusetts Community Preservation Act at <[www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org)>.

space protection strategy. The majority of protected land in Dedham has been secured through land purchase or, in a few instances, land donation. This ensures municipal jurisdiction over the protected land and allows for public access. However, municipal ownership can also raise land management issues and potential liability concerns as well.

While Dedham has successfully preserved a significant amount of open space, there are still large tracts of undeveloped land and smaller, strategically located parcels that remain unprotected. These parcels could significantly enhance the town's open space inventory. However, current economic conditions can make it difficult for towns to complete outright purchases of land, and alternative methods for land conservation should be pursued. Furthermore, there may be instances where a municipal purchase of land is not necessary or is simply not feasible in order to provide permanent protection for an open space parcel. A conservation restriction placed on a private landholding would result in the same benefit of permanent protection. Strategically combining the use of trail easements and conservation restrictions could enhance the town's ability to develop a town-wide trail system without the need to acquire land parcels.

### MANAGEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ISSUES

Dedham has three entities in town government with a role in managing open space and developing recreational facilities: the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Committee, and the Parks and Recreation Department. Additionally, the Dedham Historic Districts Commission (HDC) has a role to play in issues relating to scenic quality and character.

The Conservation Commission acts under the authority of M.G.L. c. 40, s. 8C as the local municipal agency responsible for protecting the town's land, water, and biological resources. To achieve its mandated mission "for the promotion and development of natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources," the Commission has the authority to acquire, protect, and limit the use of open space parcels in the interests of resource conservation. To date, the Dedham Conservation

Commission has 265 acres of land under its care and custody. The Commission has the authority to adopt rules and regulations governing the use of public conservation land and is responsible for managing the parcels.

As is often the case in communities, the Conservation Commission's jurisdictional responsibilities for watershed and wetlands protection can hinder its ability to seek and promote open space conservation. To address this, Dedham made the Open Space Committee a permanent committee to advocate for open space after completion of the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009*. However, there is a sense among residents that the Open Space Committee has not been as effective as it could be in advancing *Open Space and Recreation Plan's* goals and actions. More clearly defined roles and responsibilities, greater visibility within town government, a method of accountability to residents, and predictable funding might improve the Committee's efficacy and standing. Further, it appears that the Dedham HDC has not been included in joint planning efforts with the Open Spaces Committee. Improved coordination between the HDC and Open Space Committee is worth considering.

As recommended in the Five-Year Action Plan, Dedham recently hired a full-time Environmental Coordinator to act as a liaison for different boards and departments dealing with open space and environmental issues.<sup>20</sup> This position may need to be assessed and reshaped to accommodate Dedham's changing and growing open space and environmental needs.

### ZONING & OPEN SPACE

In some cases, preservation or conservation of open space should happen through conservation restrictions or outright purchase of land. This is true when there is a distinct parcel of land with clear value as open space, whether it is left as conservation land or developed into some type of recreational amenity or other public space. However, open space also has value as a design element within development itself, providing aesthetic, ecological, and sometimes recreational benefit. This type of ar-

<sup>20</sup> Virginia LeClair, interview, 9 January 2008.

rangement is well-illustrated by “cluster” development, a residential form that increases housing density on one section of a subdivision and leaves a large section of land as contiguous open space. Cluster development creates less impervious surface, which reduces stormwater runoff, and leaves larger parcels of undeveloped land that support critical ecological functions such as stormwater retention and bioremediation, as well as wildlife habitat. Cluster developments are the product of local zoning regulations which allow, encourage, or require developers to create smaller lots and preserve open space.

Dedham’s current zoning bylaw provides something like a cluster development bylaw with its Planned Residential Development (PRD) Standards. These are special regulations for residential districts that allow a unit density 1.5 times higher than what is allowed under conventional zoning, and require twenty percent of the entire tract to be maintained as natural open space, i.e., no addition of impervious surfaces or structures. (*For more information on PRD, see Chapter 3, Land Use.*) While the regulations do provide a means for conservation of open space, there is little incentive for developers to use them. The regulations require developers to present a comprehensive concept plan to the Planning Board and to obtain Town Meeting approval before the Planning Board can act on a development application. Although this type of permitting process intends to provide greater control over development, it usually acts as a disincentive to developers to use the regulations.

To better integrate and protect open space as a design element, Dedham should adopt an open space-residential development (OSRD) bylaw. This type of regulation differs from Planned Residential Development Standards in that it maintains the net unit density on a large parcel of land but allows reduced lot sizes, and consolidates the land that would otherwise be in private yards and driveways into common open space. The results include more compact development and a large area of common open space. Also, a typical OSRD process identifies the most sensitive or unique land within a parcel and frames the development around this feature, resulting in both better open space and natural re-

source protection and often better design. (*For more information on OSRD zoning, see Chapter 3, Land Use.*)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. CONTINUE EFFORTS TO PLAN FOR AND DEVELOP THE MANOR FIELDS (FORMERLY THE STRIAR PROPERTY) SITE FOR RECREATIONAL USES.

Dedham has made substantial progress toward activating this open space parcel, which it acquired in 2001, by conducting conceptual planning and a feasibility study and also by securing an access easement through an adjacent property in 2008. The town recently assigned a special committee to undertake preliminary planning for the parcel. This group should continue its work identifying development objectives and working with appropriate staff, boards and committees to develop the property. The committee should incorporate other overarching goals discussed in this element into its planning for Manor Fields, especially linking the parcel with existing opens by connecting them through proposed greenways or other trails). The site’s proximity to the Readville Yards, the Readville commuter rail station, and the proposed greenway between Readville station and Providence Highway present a significant opportunity to create new and powerful open space connections.

### 2. CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND COMPLETE A COMPREHENSIVE OPEN SPACE INVENTORY THAT IDENTIFIES AND RANKS ALL OPEN SPACE PARCELS WITHIN THE TOWN.

Dedham has made commendable progress in developing its existing open space inventory. However, it will be important going forward for the town to ensure that each parcel has consistent information on ownership, level of protection, and existence of conservation restrictions and/or agricultural preservation restrictions. In addition, Dedham needs to develop a system for evaluating parcels in terms of their relative priority for preservation. Considerations for identifying priority parcels could include proximity to existing open space; level of existing protection; and the likelihood that the current owner may sell. The priority ranking of an open space parcel should also be based on whether

that parcel helps to expand or complete an existing trail or path. A comprehensive inventory will serve as an invaluable tool as Dedham seeks to expand and link together its open space holdings. This work should be done in concert with work that is currently underway to update the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009*.

**3. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO PROVIDE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE TOWN'S RECREATION FACILITIES, PARKS, AND TRAILS.**

The *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* included a number of recommendations for accessibility improvements to Dedham's existing recreational facilities. Aside from providing accessible parking spaces at several municipal parks, Dedham has done little to address these accessibility recommendations. Access to recreation facilities for people with disabilities is both a civil rights issue under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA) and an eligibility issue for federally funded grants under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Dedham will need to devote more attention to disability access in its future planning for open space and recreation facilities development.

**4. MAKE THE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MORE EFFECTIVE BY CLEARLY COMMUNICATING ITS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PUBLIC, HOLDING IT ACCOUNTABLE FOR ITS INITIATIVES, AND GIVING IT A MORE VISIBLE ROLE WITHIN TOWN GOVERNMENT.**

Dedham is fortunate to have a dedicated municipal committee to serve as an advocate for open space initiatives, and the town should take advantage of its potential. The Open Space Committee's role also needs to be made distinct from the Conservation Commission's role as it relates to open space.

**5. ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS AND GROUPS TO TAKE GREATER OWNERSHIP AND STEWARD SHIP OF NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACES.**

The maintenance responsibilities of neighborhood associations could be limited to small tasks such as caring for vegetation, walking paths, and other

plantings. Interested groups could work with the Parks Department to establish responsibilities for the upkeep of certain areas. Further, the Parks Department could provide materials for use by neighborhood groups, which would give them greater control and ownership over some of the aesthetic and functional choices in neighborhood open spaces, such as the placement of flower beds and types of plantings that are chosen. This type of arrangement takes dedicated individuals and flexible, attentive town staff. However, it could provide a way to foster greater civic engagement and stewardship while providing better maintenance and care for town parks.

**6. ESTABLISH A TRAIL STEWARDS GROUP.**

Town-owned trails suffer from poor maintenance, which leads to reduced access and decreased utility for town residents. Trail conditions could be improved by establishing a volunteer Trail Stewards Group to not only maintain but also create and promote the town's trails. Currently, access to Dedham's municipal trails is limited by poor trails maintenance and also a simple lack of awareness of these resources. A Trail Stewards Group could maintain trails and also publish basic materials such as maps and brochures to guide residents and visitors to and along existing trails.

**7. CONTINUE EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A TOWN-WIDE TRAILS SYSTEM.**

Dedham's Conservation Commission should continue to work to identify land ownership along proposed trail or "greenway" routes in Dedham and strategize to preserve and gain access to the necessary parcels. The *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* contains a number of recommendations related to the development of a system of trails, paths, or greenways in various parts of town. It also identifies several potential trail or greenway routes, such as a linear open space system along the Mother Brook and Charles River and a trail along the Charles River in West Dedham. These additions would contribute significantly to the Dedham's open space resources by linking currently isolated open space parcels in to a town-wide open space system and providing more op-

portunities for passive recreation activities, such as walking or biking.

**8. MAINTAIN TIMELY UPDATES OF THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP) TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR OPEN SPACE PLANNING FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.**

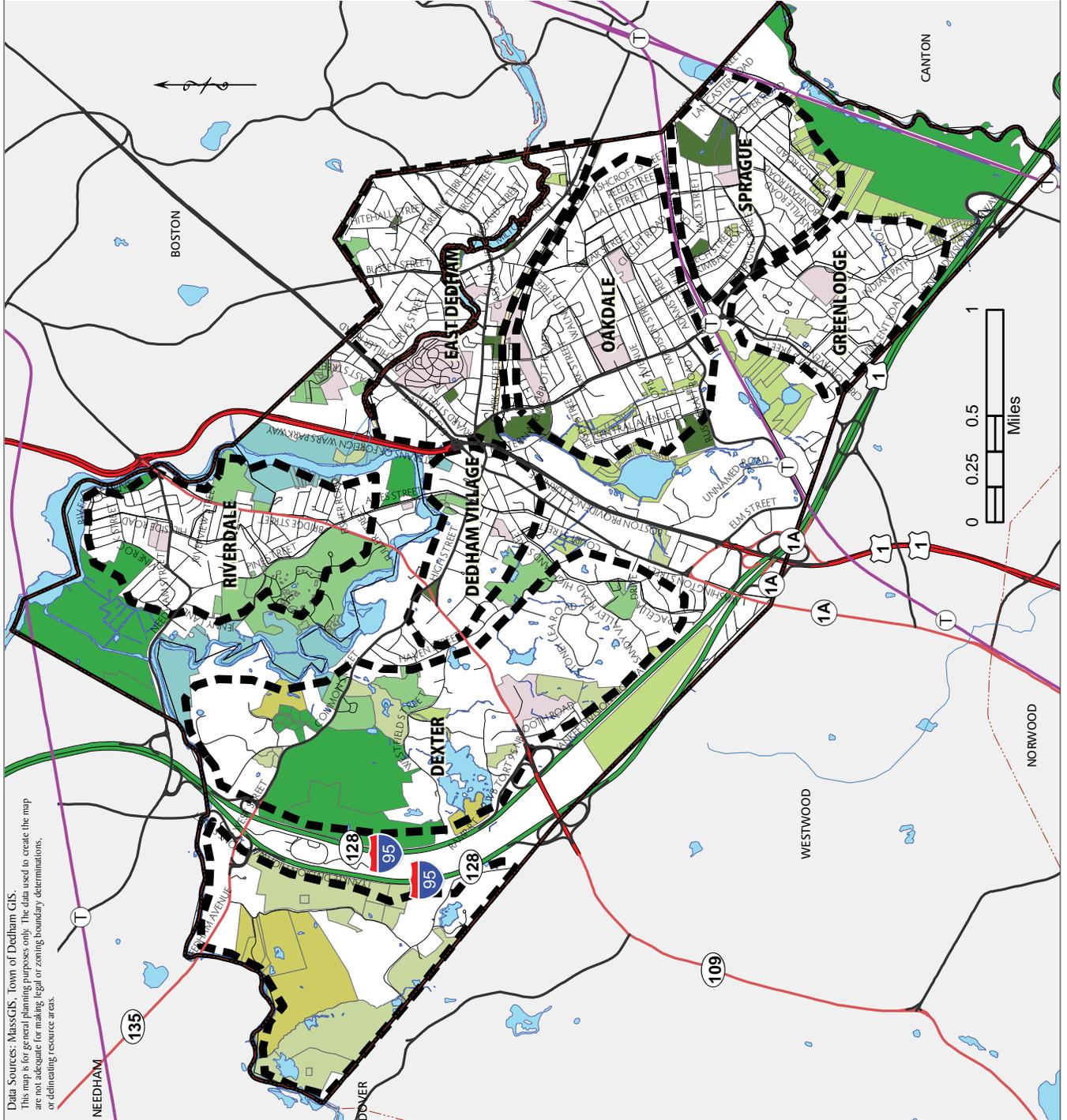
An Open Space and Recreation Plan and its accompanying public process help a community identify open space resources and establish action items to improve, expand, and protect them. The structure and contents of an OSRP are determined by requirements of the Division of Conservation Services. Fulfilling these requirements allows cities and towns to apply for competitive state grants for open space and recreational facility development. In Dedham's next OSRP, it will be particularly important to include a framework and specific details for improving and maintaining the town's recreational facilities. Going forward, Dedham should use the recreational facilities recommendations and action items in its OSRP as a roadmap for upgrading all parks and recreational facilities.



**Map 7.1**  
**Open Space Inventory**  
 April 2009

- KEY**
- Municipal Boundary
- ROADWAYS**
- Limited Access Highway
  - Multi-Lane Highway
  - Other Numbered Highway
  - Major Road, Collector
  - Local Roads
- Dedham Neighborhoods**
- Open Water
- OPEN SPACE INVENTORY**
- Town Conservation
  - Private Conservation Land
  - State Park
  - Town Park
  - Federal Flood Control
  - Municipal and Schools
  - Private Institutional
  - Chapter 61/Vacant Land
  - Unclassified

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES GROUP, INC.  
 Larry Koff & Associates  
 McMahon Associates, Inc.  
 Stephen Herzog



Data Sources: MassGIS, Town of Dedham GIS.  
 This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations, or delineating resource areas.



## CHAPTER 8

# HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

Dedham has a diverse housing stock that reflects the town's history and growth. Established in 1635 as a buffer town to protect coastal communities from attacks from the interior, Dedham initially included more than two hundred square miles of land, much of it used for agriculture. Industry made an early mark in Dedham with the digging of Mother Brook to supply power to the town's corn mill. Manufacturing expanded and eventually employed over 650 people in the mid-nineteenth century, producing textiles, metal goods, paper, furniture, leather goods and other products.

Construction of the Norfolk & Bristol and the Harford & Dedham Turnpikes through Dedham, and the later establishment of rail lines, created new economic opportunities centered on transportation. By the twentieth century, it became clear that the town's agricultural identity was lost, and the future use of farmland would be the subdivision.<sup>1</sup>

Housing in Dedham ranges from the historic mill workers' housing in East Dedham to large homes surrounded by wide expanses of pasture in West Dedham. The physical form and vitality of the Village makes it easy to imagine the hustle-and-bustle of life in Dedham of years gone by, and the postwar housing boom is apparent in Dedham's suburban neighborhoods of Greenlodge, Riverdale and Oakdale. Today, Dedham faces housing issues common to many communities in the Boston



region: affordability, preservation of housing stock, the changing needs of the population, and growth pressures stemming from residential and commercial development. In addition, Dedham has a uniquely diverse housing stock that contributes directly to the ambience of each neighborhood. As Dedham moves into the future, the town will need to consider the shape and character of its housing stock when developing policies and regulations that affect housing production and preservation.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### Population Characteristics

Dedham experienced much of its population growth after World War II. With the expansion of regional highways and local road networks, Dedham became a logical choice for families looking to move beyond the confines of the city. Between 1950 and 1960, Dedham's population increased twenty-nine percent and peaked around

<sup>1</sup> The Dedham Historical Society and Museum, "A Capsule History of Dedham," <[www.dedhamhistorical.org](http://www.dedhamhistorical.org)>.

1970 at 26,928 persons.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, its population declined fifteen percent to 23,464 persons in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Current estimates suggest that Dedham's population has increased slightly and now stands at 24,046.<sup>4</sup>

While population growth plays an important part in determining needs for community services, housing dynamics are intrinsically related to household growth and changes in household composition. National trends indicate that households are smaller than in the past, and though populations in some areas may decline in absolute terms, people demand more housing units to accommodate growth in the number of households. Dedham, too, has experienced this trend. Despite declines in population, the number of households in Dedham has increased and continues to grow. In 1990, Dedham had 8,490 households, but ten years later, there were 8,653 households in town and as of 2007, the estimated number of households in Dedham is 9,004.<sup>5</sup>

The characteristics of Dedham's population and households affect local housing demand and housing needs. Though certainly not the only considerations, two influential factors are the ages of household members and household income. Like the Boston region and the nation as a whole, Dedham is witnessing dramatic growth in some of its older age cohorts with the aging of the Baby Boom generation. Estimates indicate that between 2000 and 2007, the 55 to 64 year old cohort increased by twenty-three percent to almost 2,900 persons. Today, people over 55 years old represent more than one-third of Dedham's population. Furthermore, the 75 and over age cohort grew dramatically between 1990 and 2000, increasing twenty-five percent. Estimates for 2007 show that the over-75

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1950, 1960, and 1970 Census.

<sup>3</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 1, "P12: Sex by Age."

<sup>4</sup> Claritas, Inc., "Demographic Snapshot Reports", <[www.claritas.com](http://www.claritas.com)>.

<sup>5</sup> 1990 Census, Summary Tape File 1, "P15: Household Type and Relationship," Census 2000, Summary File 1, "P18: Household Size," and Claritas, Inc., "Demographic Snapshot Reports."

population continues to grow and now makes up seventeen percent of Dedham's total population.<sup>6</sup>

Household incomes in Dedham grew in real dollars between 1990 and 2000, but when adjusted for inflation, incomes declined between 2000 and 2007. Dedham's median household income increased from \$45,687 in 1990 to \$61,699 in 2000. Median family incomes and non-family incomes increased by similar margins during the 1990s. As is the case in many communities, however, household incomes in Dedham did not outpace inflation between 2000 and 2007. Dedham's median household income in 2000 is valued at over \$74,000 in today's dollars, yet the current median household income is estimated at less than \$73,500.<sup>7</sup>

## Neighborhood Housing Characteristics

Dedham has many types of housing. Its homes range from single-family dwellings to large multi-family complexes, from historic homes dating back hundreds of years to new development still under construction, and from modest, market-rate and affordable homes to multi-million dollar estates. Its housing varies by neighborhood, too, which sheds light on the town's history, physical evolution, and regional influences. As noted elsewhere in this Master Plan Update, Dedham has seven recognizable neighborhoods: East Dedham, Greenlodge, Sprague/Manor, Oakdale, Riverdale, Dedham Village, and West Dedham (often referred to as Dexter or Upper Dedham).<sup>8</sup> While these neighborhoods have grown and changed over time, each retains distinctive characteristics and a unique identity.

<sup>6</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 1, "P12: Sex by Age," and Claritas, Inc., "Demographic Snapshot Reports,"

<sup>7</sup> 1990 Census, Summary Tape File 3, P80A; 2000 Census, Summary File 3, P53; Claritas, Inc.; and Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota CPI Calculator, <<http://www.minneapolisfed.org/Research/data/us/calc/>>.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth M. Kreutziger, *Dedham Master Plan* (March 1996), IV-4. Neighborhoods identified in the *Dedham Master Plan* and the *Open Space & Recreation Plan 2004-2009*, largely corresponding with boundaries of 2000 Census Tracts and Block Groups. See Map 2.1.

**TABLE 8.1**  
**NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS IN STRUCTURE BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

	Number of Units in Structure							
	1, detached	1, attached	2	3 or 4	5 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 49	50+
DEDHAM	6,735	343	949	474	226	91	60	55
East Dedham	959	142	495	376	65	70	48	22
Greenlodge/Manor	1,973	37	18	13	34	0	0	0
Oakdale	1,612	49	240	30	12	0	0	0
Riverdale	1,199	63	131	41	94	9	0	9
Village	353	27	55	14	13	12	12	0
West Dedham	639	25	10	0	8	0	0	24

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H30: Units in Structure."

### EAST DEDHAM

East Dedham is indelibly influenced by its history of industrial development along Mother Brook. Home to mills and factories, East Dedham has a housing inventory that reflects its industrial past. Multi-family housing, modest cottages, and mill housing predominate in this neighborhood. Many homes are set on small lots, and narrow streets wind through neighborhoods. East Dedham has a dense residential development pattern as well as commercial areas, churches, schools, and other institutional buildings that provide services to residents.

In federal census terms, East Dedham is composed of Census 2000 Tract 4021.02, Block Groups 1-4, and Tract 4024, Block Group 1 (see Map 2.1). Just over half of East Dedham's 2,069 housing units are single-family attached and detached homes; 871 units are in two- to four-unit structures, and the remaining units are in larger multi-family structures or complexes. East Dedham has some of the oldest housing in town. Fifty-percent of housing units in East Dedham were built prior to 1939.<sup>9</sup>

East Dedham has the lowest levels of owner-occupancy in Dedham, for fewer than sixty percent of the housing units are occupied by the owners. Owner-occupied housing values are lower than in other Dedham neighborhoods, too, with the

median values in each census block group ranging from \$181,400 to \$196,800.<sup>10</sup>

### GREENLODGE, SPRAGUE, OAKDALE, & RIVERDALE

The four neighborhoods of Greenlodge, Sprague-Manor, Oakdale, and Riverdale were formerly agricultural land that began their transition to housing in the mid-nineteenth century, with considerable subdivision development occurring in the twentieth century. Newer infill development is scattered throughout each of these neighborhoods as well. House lots vary in size between neighborhoods, but in general the lots are larger than in East Dedham and as a result, these neighborhoods are less densely developed.

Single-family homes are the most prevalent housing type in the Greenlodge, Sprague-Manor, Oakdale, and Riverdale neighborhoods. Of the four neighborhoods, Oakdale has the oldest housing stock, for fifty-two percent of its homes were built before 1939. By comparison, homes built before 1939 account for fifteen percent of all housing units in the Greenlodge/Sprague-Manor and neighborhoods and thirty-nine percent in Riverdale.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, owner-occupancy is high in these neighborhoods, with approximately eighty to ninety-four percent of units occupied by

<sup>10</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built," "H76: Median Value for Specified Housing Units."

<sup>11</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H30: Units in Structure," "H34: Year Structure Built."

<sup>9</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H30: Units in Structure," "H34: Year Structure Built."

**TABLE 8.2**  
**AGE OF HOUSING STOCK BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

Year Built	DEDHAM	East Dedham	Greenlodge-Manor	Oakdale	Riverdale	Village	West Dedham
1999 to March 2000	20	0	8	0	5	0	7
1995 to 1998	148	24	38	18	10	6	52
1990 to 1994	65	10	39	0	0	0	16
1980 to 1989	409	143	142	35	47	21	21
1970 to 1979	664	248	195	73	81	34	33
1960 to 1969	1,331	229	456	211	268	41	126
1950 to 1959	1,764	222	654	345	362	47	134
1940 to 1949	874	203	229	243	165	11	23
1939 or earlier	3,658	1098	314	1018	608	326	294

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H34: Year Structure Built."

the property owner. Owner-occupied property values vary considerably depending on the location. According to Census 2000, median values in the block groups comprising the neighborhoods range from \$158,500 to \$264,700.<sup>12</sup>

**THE VILLAGE**

Dedham Village is located near the geographic center of town. The Village neighborhood grew around major transportation routes and is home to Dedham Square, a central business district with retail, restaurants, offices, and government buildings, including the Norfolk County Court House. The Village’s housing stock offers several examples of well-maintained and preserved historic homes. Small lots and minimal setbacks create a pedestrian-friendly and picturesque neighborhood.

The boundaries of the Dedham Village neighborhood match those of Census Tract 4025. Housing units in the Village are predominantly single-family detached homes and owner-occupied. The Village has many of the oldest homes in Dedham; sixty-seven percent of units in the Village were built before 1939. With a median housing value of \$324,600, owner-occupied housing in the Village

**TABLE 8.3**  
**HOUSING UNITS AND TENURE**

	Housing Units	Owner occupied (%)	Renter occupied (%)
DEDHAM			
East Dedham	2,069	58.9%	41.1%
Greenlodge/Manor	2,053	94.0%	6.0%
Oakdale	1,896	88.8%	11.2%
Riverdale	1,508	77.9%	22.1%
Village	467	75.4%	24.6%
West Dedham	682	85.9%	14.1%

Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built."

is considerably more valuable than that in other Dedham neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup>

**WEST DEDHAM**

West Dedham, also referred to as Dexter, is the most sparsely developed of all of Dedham’s neighborhoods. Formerly the location where wealthy businessmen constructed their country estates, West Dedham’s housing is impressive in scale and style. Large lots and rolling lawns create a landscape that calls to mind Dedham’s bucolic past.

West Dedham’s boundaries closely align with those of Census Tract 4025. Almost exclusively comprised of single-family detached homes, over forty percent of West Dedham’s housing was built prior to 1939, much of it during the late nineteenth

<sup>12</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built," "H76: Median Value for Specified Owner Occupied Housing Units."

<sup>13</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H30: Units in Structure," "H34: Year Structure Built," H36, H76.

**TABLE 8.4**  
**HOUSING VALUES BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

	Range of Median Values by Block Group (Census 2000)		Avg. Single-Family Sale Price (7/1/2008 to 12/31/2008)
	Low	High	
DEDHAM			
East Dedham	\$181,400	\$196,800	\$197,889
Greenlodge/Sprague	\$178,300	\$240,100	\$189,967
Oakdale	\$189,800	\$264,700	\$246,746
Riverdale	\$158,500	\$249,800	n/a
Village	\$324,600		\$357,054
West Dedham	\$536,300		

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H76: Median Value for Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units;" RE Records Search at <www.thewarrengroup.com>, and Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

and early twentieth century. Owners occupy eighty-five percent of West Dedham's housing and owner-occupied housing values are the highest in town with a median value of \$536,300.

## General Housing Characteristics

### TYPES OF HOUSING

Today, it is estimated that there are 9,368 housing units in Dedham, almost 700 more units than counted by Census 2000. The vast majority of these units (78%) are single-family detached homes, and over ten percent of Dedham's units are in two-family homes.<sup>14</sup> Dedham housing stock also includes several multi-family homes ranging from three unit structures to over fifty units per structure. Many smaller multi-family properties are scattered throughout Dedham's neighborhoods,

while large developments are primarily located near major highways.

Since 2000, developers have started construction on several large-scale housing developments and some developments are complete. These developments include a combination of market-rate and affordable rental housing, and senior housing developments. These developments are described in more detail later in this paper.

### TENURE

Most Dedham residents own the home they live in. However, Dedham offers a varied housing stock that provides both ownership and rental opportunities. Homeownership housing comes in various forms—condominiums, single-family homes and owner-occupied multi-family properties. The level of homeownership has remained level since 1990; today, approximately eighty percent of units are owner-occupied.<sup>15</sup>

Dedham is similar to its neighbors in the diversity of its housing stock and in the proportion of owners to renters. Although some neighboring towns have more suburban characteristics, i.e. predominantly single-family homes and high levels of owner-

**TABLE 8.5**  
**CHANGE IN HOUSING BY NUMBER OF UNITS IN STRUCTURE**

	Number of Units in Structure									
	1, detached	1, attached	2	3 or 4	5 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 49	50 or more	Mobile home	Other
DEDHAM										
1990	6,465	294	1,032	449	220	106	93	-	1	90
2000	6,735	343	949	474	226	91	60	55	-	-

Source: 1990 Census, Summary File 1, "H041: Units in Structure," Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H30: Units in Structure," Claritas, Inc., "Demographic Snapshot Reports."

<sup>14</sup> Claritas, Inc., and Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built."

<sup>15</sup> 1990 Census, Summary Tape File 1, "H003: Tenure," Census 2000, Summary File 1, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built."

**TABLE 8.6  
CHANGE IN HOUSING UNITS AND TENURE**

	1990			2000		
	Housing Units	Owner occupied (%)	Renter occupied (%)	Housing Units	Owner occupied (%)	Renter occupied (%)
Canton	6,605	74.9%	25.1%	7,952	74.2%	25.8%
<b>DEDHAM</b>	8,490	79.4%	20.6%	8,675	80.0%	20.0%
Dover	1,643	91.8%	8.2%	1,849	94.9%	5.1%
Foxborough	5,262	66.0%	34.0%	6,141	72.0%	28.0%
Medfield	3,428	82.6%	17.4%	4,002	86.1%	13.9%
Milton	8,749	82.5%	17.5%	8,982	84.2%	15.8%
Needham	10,160	79.7%	20.3%	10,612	80.9%	19.1%
Norwood	11,018	57.0%	43.0%	11,945	55.7%	44.3%
Randolph	10,886	70.9%	29.1%	11,524	70.9%	29.1%
Sharon	5,244	87.7%	12.3%	6,026	88.5%	11.5%
Stoughton	9,394	73.2%	26.8%	10,488	72.9%	27.1%
Walpole	6,777	81.8%	18.2%	8,229	83.9%	16.1%
Westwood	4,444	86.6%	13.4%	5,251	87.0%	13.0%

Source: 1990 Census, Summary Tape File 3, "H008: Tenure," 2000 Census, Summary File 3, "H36: Tenure by Year Structure Built."

occupancy, most communities in the region offer a range of housing options.<sup>16</sup>

### Housing Affordability

In general, a home is considered affordable if a household spends less than thirty percent of its gross income on housing costs. For renters, this includes rent and utilities; for homeowners, thirty percent should cover mortgage principal and interest, property taxes, and hazard insurance. Federal census data indicate that in Dedham, thirty-six percent of renters and thirty-one percent of homeowners with mortgages have unaffordable housing costs.<sup>17</sup>

### RENTERS

Renter households earning incomes less than \$35,000 annually have particular difficulty affording apartments in Dedham. Sixty-percent of these

households spend more than thirty percent of their household income on housing; in fact, many spend more than thirty-five percent. As incomes decline, the situation worsens. Almost seventy percent of households with incomes less than \$10,000 spend thirty percent or more of household income on rent and utilities.<sup>18</sup>

Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data, prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), offer more insight into housing affordability issues. In Dedham, very low-income renter households – that is, households with incomes at or below thirty percent of the area median income for the Boston metropolitan area – with two to four family members have the highest incidence of housing affordability problems. Over fifty-eight percent of these residents spend more than fifty percent of household income on housing. In absolute terms, this translates to thirty-four households. While this may seem relatively small, when added to the other very low-income households with excessive housing cost burdens (forty elderly households and seventy-five unclassified households), the total

<sup>16</sup> The region is the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) service area and includes Canton, Dedham, Dover, Foxborough, Medfield, Milton, Needham, Norwood, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole, and Westwood.

<sup>17</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H69: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income," "H94: Mortgage Status by Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income."

<sup>18</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H73: Household Income in 1999 by Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income."

**TABLE 8.7**  
**CHAPTER 40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY (JANUARY 2008)**

Development	Address	Type	Units	Affordability Expires
East Dedham Square	High St. & O'Brien Way	Rental	24	Perpetuity
n/a	Veterans Road/Oakland	Rental	80	Perpetuity
n/a	Parker Staples Road	Rental	26	Perpetuity
n/a	Parkway Court	Rental	25	Perpetuity
n/a	Doggett Circle	Rental	80	Perpetuity
n/a	O'Neil Drive	Rental	100	Perpetuity
n/a	Hitchens Drive	Rental	8	Perpetuity
Lantern Lane	Lantern Lane	Rental	3	2016
Traditions of Dedham	Washington Street	Rental	95	2043
Westbrook Crossing	East Street	Ownership	15	2012
Jefferson at Dedham	Presidents Way	Rental	300	Perpetuity
DMR Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	28	n/a
DMH Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	23	n/a
Fairfield Green (Station 250)	Elm St & Rustcraft Rd	Rental	285	Perpetuity

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, "Dedham SHI 1-31-08.pdf"

number of very-low income households competing for affordable rental housing (149) is a concern. Renter households with incomes between thirty and fifty percent of the area median (low-income) also have housing affordability issues, however not to the same degree as Dedham's very-low income households. Many low-income renters spend more than half their income on housing.<sup>19</sup>

The recent or pending addition of approximately 175 affordable rental units into Dedham's housing stock does not guarantee that the housing needs of very-low-income households will be addressed. The affordable units both at Jefferson at Dedham and Station 250 are priced to be affordable for households with incomes at eighty percent of the area median. For example, rents for one-bedroom units start at approximately \$1,000 per month.<sup>20</sup> Households with incomes below the eighty percent threshold could occupy these units if they have a portable rental subsidy, such as HUD's Section 8 voucher program.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, CHAS Data worksheet, "Housing Problems Output for All Households," at <[www.huduser.org](http://www.huduser.org)>.

<sup>20</sup> Leasing Agent, Jefferson at Dedham and Jennifer Mahalek, Marketing Agent for Station 250, interviews, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 16 April 2008.

The **Dedham Housing Authority** (DHA) owns and operates affordable rental housing in six developments with a combined total of approximately 300 units, including 130 family units and 205 elderly units. In addition, the DHA administers 460 HUD Section 8 housing vouchers that subsidize the difference between what a low-income renter can afford and the market-rate rent charged by a private landlord. Dedham residents and veterans receive priority for the DHA's Section 8 vouchers.

The wait for an elderly or family unit is approximately six months in Dedham if the applicant meets both local preferences, but one to two years if the applicant is solely a resident of Dedham (without veteran status). The wait for a non-resident applicant is over five years. While households earning fifty percent of the area median according to household size are eligible for public housing units, households earning less than thirty percent of the area median must occupy seventy-five percent of all DHA units.<sup>21</sup>

The DHA is one of sixty-four housing authorities in the state that participate in a centralized waiting list to manage distribution of Section 8 vouchers. Currently there are over 60,000 applicants on the

<sup>21</sup> Dedham Housing Authority, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 29 April 2008.

statewide list. Typically, the DHA turns over two to three vouchers a month.

Most of Dedham's public housing inventory was built in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Newer and larger units are in high demand as are those located near commercial areas and public transportation. The properties have major capital needs. With modernization funding recently released by the State, the DHA is currently reconstructing the roofs on all properties.<sup>22</sup>

### HOMEOWNERS

Housing affordability presents concerns for many of Dedham's lower-income homeowners, too. Sixty percent of homeowners with household incomes below \$35,000 have housing costs that exceed thirty percent of their income. Like renters, as the incomes of homeowners decline, the frequency of affordability problems increases. Over eighty-six percent of homeowner households with incomes below \$20,000 spend an unaffordable proportion of income on housing. In absolute terms, 462 households have this predicament; in fact, 420 homeowners spend more than thirty-five percent of income on housing.<sup>23</sup>

Dedham's elderly and small-related households with limited incomes have excessive cost burdens, according to HUD's CHAS data. Almost half of Dedham's very-low income elderly households spend over fifty percent of their income on housing. The same is true for sixty-eight percent of two- to four-person, very-low income family households, and over sixty-percent of two- to four-person, low-income, family households. Large families (five or more people) with lower incomes also have housing cost burdens. In total, over 370 of Dedham's very-low and low-income homeowners spend more than half of their income on housing costs.

For the Dedham Community Development Plan (2004), Larry Koff & Associates completed an *affordability gap analysis*. The gap analysis compares

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, "H97: Household Income in 1999 by Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 1999."

the selling prices of homes against the income level of residents. The results of the analysis indicate that while twenty-eight percent of Dedham's households have low-incomes, only one percent of Dedham's owner-occupied housing units are technically affordable to low-income households. There are more homes affordable to middle-income households (150 percent of area median income) in Dedham than middle-income households. This suggests that higher income households may be living in more affordable homes or lower-income households are stretching their budgets to live in technically unaffordable homes.<sup>24</sup>

Dedham's diverse housing stock includes modest single-family homes and condominiums: housing that is often affordable to first-time homebuyers and households with limited incomes. As of May 2008, however, there were only five properties listed for sale under \$200,000, and four of the five units were condominiums. Twenty-eight units listed between \$200,000 and \$300,000, including eight condominiums. Although, this type of housing exists in Dedham, few units are actually priced at a level affordable to first-time homebuyers.

### Housing Market

Dedham's home prices increased steadily after 2000 and peaked in 2005. Reflecting the downturn in the national and regional real estate market, both single-family home and condominium sale prices declined in 2006 and 2007. The number of housing sales between 2000 and 2007 in Dedham followed the same trend: rising steadily, then starting to decline in 2005.<sup>25</sup>

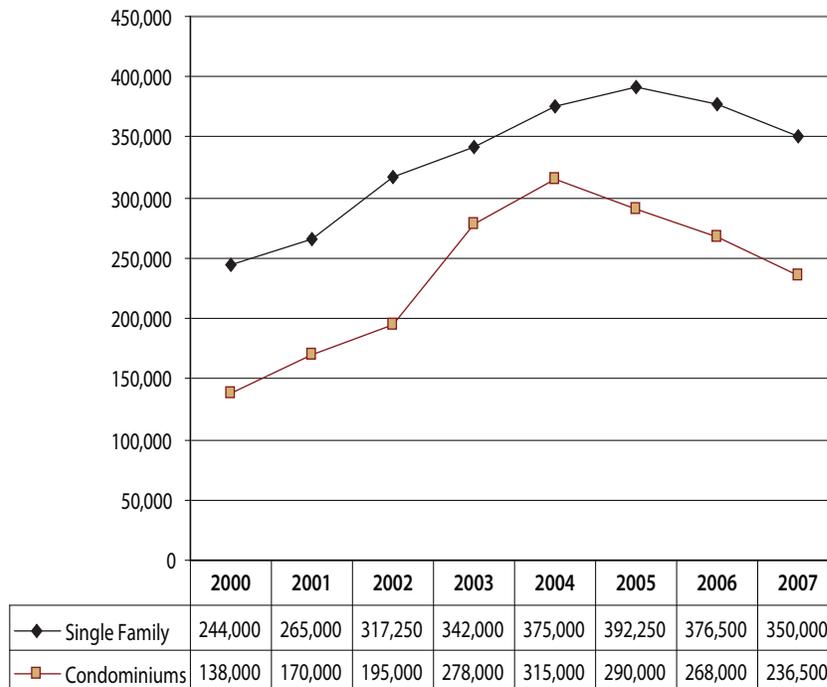
The recent decline in prices does not necessarily mean that purchasing a home has become more affordable to many households. For five consecutive years, housing prices in Dedham continued to grow, with single-family home prices increasing forty-three percent, from a median selling price of

<sup>24</sup> Larry Koff & Associates and Bluestone Planning Group, *Dedham Community Development Plan*, 2004, 8-9.

<sup>25</sup> The Warren Group, "Town Stats" at <[www.thewarrengroup.com](http://www.thewarrengroup.com)>.

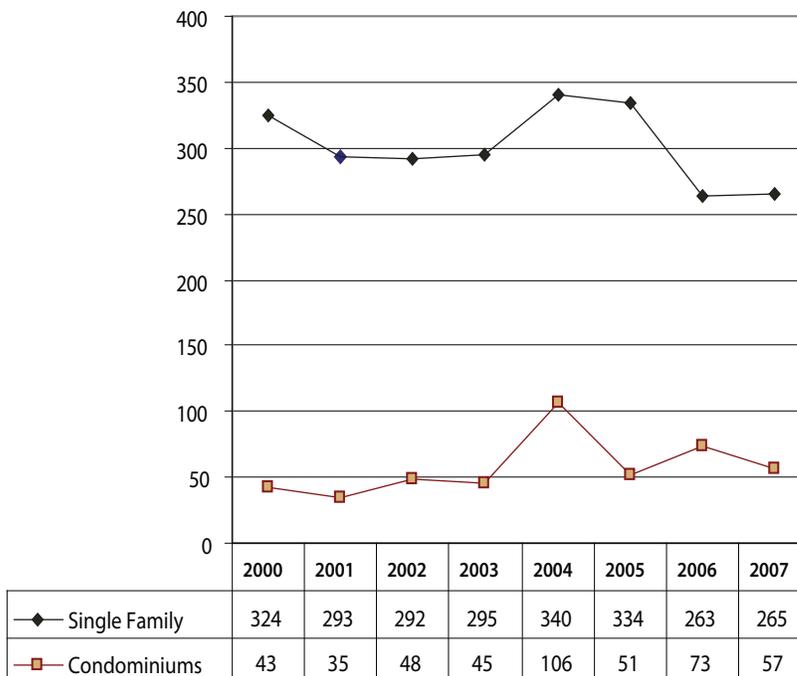
**Figure 8.1: Change in Median Housing Sale Prices in Dedham, 2000-2007**

Source: The Warren Group.



**Figure 8.2: Change in Number of Housing Sales in Dedham, 2000-2007**

Source: The Warren Group.



\$244,000 in 2000 to \$350,000 in 2007.<sup>26</sup> The average sale price for single family homes between July 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008 was significantly

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

lower at \$249,509.<sup>27</sup> However, in the same period that housing prices have fallen, wage and salary income has barely increased throughout the region and unemployment has continued to rise. These factors, coupled with challenging conditions in the banking industry that make it very difficult for many people to obtain a mortgage, mean that for Dedham and most communities, housing has not really become more affordable even though home prices have decreased.

### New Construction and Alterations

Since 2000, the Dedham Building Department issued 124 building permits for new single-family home construction. Eighteen of the seventy permits issued between 2003 and 2007 were to permit the demolition of existing homes and the construction of new replacement homes on the same house lots.

In total, the town approved new construction of over 775 units since 2000. Approximately 600 of these are units are included in the Jefferson at Dedham and Station 250 comprehensive permit rental developments. In 2007, the town also issued 325 permits for construction of residential units for the NewBridge on the Charles development. These developments are described in more detail below.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> RE Records Search at <www.thewarrengroup.com>.

<sup>28</sup> Jim Sullivan, Dedham Building Department, interview Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 25 April 2008.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

### Recent and Projected Population Growth

Dedham’s population decreased slightly between 1990 and 2000. Moreover, Dedham was the only community in the TRIC region to experience a population decline, as other towns witnessed moderate to substantial population growth. Looking forward, available projections indicate that Dedham’s population will continue to decline through 2020 and populations in surrounding towns will decline as well.<sup>29</sup>

Despite a barely perceptible increase in population between 2005 and 2006, for the last several years the population of the Boston Metropolitan Area has declined. Housing analysts say this is largely due to the shortage of affordable housing in the Greater Boston area. High housing costs have provided few opportunities to young families seeking housing at the lower-end of the price spectrum, forcing them to seek housing elsewhere. However, population growth statistics conceal the outmigration of young families from greater Boston and Massachusetts due to significant foreign immigration into the region.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> 1990 Census, Summary File 1, “P001: Persons”; Census 2000, Summary File 1, “P1: Total Population”; Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) at <<http://www.umass.edu/miser>>. Note: The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has prepared population projections as part of its MetroFutures effort. These projections indicate that given current trends Dedham’s population will be 26,760 in 2020. However, MAPC’s methodology is based on a regional approach to population growth versus a town-level approach. For more information see <<http://www.metrofuture.org>>.

<sup>30</sup> Bonnie Heudorfer, Barry Bluestone, et al., *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2006-2007*, October 2007.

**TABLE 8.8  
POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR THE TRIC REGION, 1990-2020**

Town	1990	2000	2007 (estimated)	2010 Projected	2020 Projected
Canton	18,530	20,775	21,731	21,732	21,918
DEDHAM	23,782	23,464	24,046	21,921	20,090
Dover	4,915	5,558	5,661	5,599	5,130
Foxborough	14,637	16,246	16,254	16,683	16,738
Medfield	10,531	12,273	12,263	11,739	10,682
Milton	25,725	26,062	26,161	25,455	24,471
Needham	27,557	28,911	NA	27,226	24,654
Norwood	28,700	28,587	28,410	27,340	26,037
Randolph	30,093	30,963	30,295	32,201	33,356
Sharon	15,517	17,408	17,119	16,908	16,534
Stoughton	26,777	27,149	26,538	26,243	24,946
Walpole	20,212	22,824	NA	23,436	23,417
Westwood	12,557	14,117	13,738	13,828	12,448
Norfolk County	616,087	650,308	653,686	654,198	652,440
Massachusetts	6,016,425	6,349,097	6,395,171	6,557,001	6,767,712

Sources: 1990 Census, Summary Tape File 1, “P001: Persons”; 2000 Census, Summary File 1, “P1: Total Population”; Claritas, Inc.; MISER, Mid-series Projections.

### Housing Demand and Affordability

Housing demand and affordability in Dedham and in the region are ongoing concerns. Recent downturns in the housing market have resulted in price adjustments in the for sale housing market, but the simultaneous rise of interest rates and scrutiny of credit markets has impaired the ability of many prospective homeowners to take advantage of lower pricing.<sup>31</sup> Table 8.9 shows that in the TRIC region, median sales prices for single-family and condominium homes declined between 2005 and 2007, yet the number of sales did not increase. Indeed, the data in Table 8.10 show that sales transactions also declined.<sup>32</sup>

While Dedham has had more housing starts than many of the surrounding communities, this is due primarily to two large-scale rental developments. Permitted under Chapter 40B comprehensive permits, both developments offer affordable and high-end market rate rental units – primarily one- and two-bedroom units designed to limit the number of apartments that might appeal to families.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The Warren Group, “Town Stats.”

**TABLE 8.9**  
**CHANGE IN MEDIAN SALE PRICES, 2005-2007, TRIC REGION**

Town	Change in Sale Price 2005-2007		
	Single-Family	Condominiums	All Sales
Canton	-19.4%	-16.8%	-12.8%
<b>DEDHAM</b>	-10.8%	-18.4%	-14.5%
Dover	-10.6%	-8.2%	-16.4%
Foxborough	-4.3%	40.3%	5.5%
Medfield	-10.2%	-9.0%	-11.8%
Milton	-8.8%	-32.9%	-11.5%
Needham	-7.8%	-30.7%	-7.8%
Norwood	-8.8%	1.5%	-5.1%
Randolph	-18.1%	-31.8%	-16.1%
Sharon	-9.0%	64.2%	-6.9%
Stoughton	-10.6%	-8.5%	-9.4%
Walpole	-7.7%	-18.0%	-5.9%
Westwood	-6.9%	n/a	-10.0%

Source: The Warren Group, "Town Stats."

**TABLE 8.10**  
**CHANGE IN NUMBER OF SALES, 2005-2007, TRIC REGION**

Town	Change in Number of Sales 2005-2007		
	Single-Family	Condominiums	All Sales
Canton	-22.3%	-28.9%	-18.8%
<b>DEDHAM</b>	-20.7%	11.8%	-20.2%
Dover	-10.0%	75.0%	-8.8%
Foxborough	-19.4%	-55.4%	-20.9%
Medfield	4.3%	-18.5%	-5.3%
Milton	-28.8%	-43.2%	-31.1%
Needham	19.1%	-6.3%	13.2%
Norwood	-24.9%	-40.1%	-33.9%
Randolph	-37.8%	-52.1%	-39.9%
Sharon	-29.6%	-16.0%	-27.0%
Stoughton	-41.1%	-30.2%	-40.0%
Walpole	-5.6%	-39.4%	-13.3%
Westwood	-0.5%	-100.0%	-13.0%

Source: The Warren Group, "Town Stats."

In response to municipal concerns about immigration of school-age children, development trends shifted several years ago to promote age-restricted housing. This type of housing can add units to a town's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, thereby increasing its supply of affordable housing (and getting it closer to the 10 percent statutory minimum) without the burden of growth in school costs. As shown in Table 8.11, Dedham currently has 360 units of age-restricted housing, and

completion of New Bridge on the Charles will add another 600 units (250 independent living, 350 assisted living to acute care). Age-restricted housing is an attractive way for towns to increase their unit count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory and it may be in great demand as the "Baby Boom" generation ages. However, there is currently an over-supply of "active adult" housing for people over 55 years in Massachusetts.<sup>33</sup>

## Recent and Future Housing Development

**Jefferson at Dedham.** Located on President's Way, Jefferson at Dedham is a 300-unit rental development offering both market-rate and affordable one- and two- bedroom units. Developed with a comprehensive permit, seventy-five units are set-aside as affordable to households earning up to eighty percent of the area median income. Rents for the affordable units range from \$1,150 to \$1,375. Market-rate unit rents range from \$1,475 to \$1,880 for a one-bedroom unit and \$1,925 to \$2,165 for a two-bedroom unit. The development is ninety-three percent occupied. There is a one-year wait list for affordable units.<sup>34</sup>

**Station 250.** Station 250 on Elm Street is currently under construction. When complete, the development will offer 285 one-, two- and three-bedroom rental units. Also permitted under Chapter 40B, Station 250 will have seventy-two rental units affordable to households with incomes up to eighty percent of the area median. Rents for affordable units start at \$946 for a one-bedroom unit, \$1,092 for a two-bedroom unit and \$1,233 for a three-bedroom unit. The developer plans to list market-rate units starting at \$2,022 for a one-bedroom unit, \$2,622 for a two-bedroom

<sup>33</sup> Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, *Age Restricted and Active Adult Housing in Massachusetts: A Review of the Factors Fueling Its Explosive Growth and the Public Policy Issues It Raises* (June 2005), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Leasing Agent, Jefferson at Dedham, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 16 April 2008.

**TABLE 8.11**  
**AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING IN DEDHAM**

Development	Number/Type of Units	Age Restriction	Affordable Units
New Bridge on the Charles (Hebrew Senior Life)	250 Independent Living, 350 other units ranging from assisted living to acute care	62+	
Traditions at Dedham	95 units; independent living and assisted living units	62+	19
Westbrook Crossing	60 condominium units	55+	16
Dedham Housing Authority			
Doggett Circle	80 rental units	60+	All
O'Neil Drive	100 rental units	60+	All
Parkway Court	25 rental units	60+	All

*Compiled by Community Opportunities Group, Inc.*

unit and \$3,432 for a three-bedroom unit. Phase I includes thirty apartments that were slated to be available for occupancy in July 2008. Construction of subsequent phases will be completed thereafter, depending on market demand. Applications have been accepted for the affordable units, but leasing the market-rate units has not started.<sup>35</sup>

**Readville Site.** The Readville site is a former railroad yard owned by the MBTA. In 2007, the Dedham Planning Board approved the development of 264 condominiums on the property. However, the MBTA halted the project in October 2007 due to the developer’s lack of progress in cleaning up the contaminated site. Town Meeting rezoned the parcel to Single Residence B in May 2008, effectively reducing the allowable density on the parcel to single-family homes on 12,500 s.f. lots. The town is not aware of any active plans to develop the parcel.<sup>36</sup>

**NewBridge on the Charles.** NewBridge on the Charles, developed by Hebrew SeniorLife, is an intergenerational campus offering a retirement community, assisted living, rehabilitation and long-term care facilities, a K-8 school, a community center, and recreation facilities. Construction began in June 2007. The development is located on a 162-acre parcel of land that abuts the Charles River in West Dedham. When complete, NewBridge on

the Charles will offer more than 250 independent living units for seniors, and 350 assisted living, sub-acute and long-term beds.<sup>37</sup>

**Traditions at Dedham.** Located on Washington Street, Traditions at Dedham is a ninety-five unit assisted living facility. Traditions offers supportive housing arrangements for elderly persons. The apartments are studios and one- and two-bedroom units. Services include meals, nursing services, housekeeping, programs, and transportation. Of the ninety-five units at Traditions, nineteen are affordable rental units subsidized by MassHousing with rents for affordable units starting at \$2,320 for a one-bedroom unit. There is currently a one- to three-year waiting list. It typically takes two years for an affordable unit to turnover.

**Westbrook Crossing.** Westbrook Crossing is an age-restricted condominium development on East Street. Developed earlier in the decade with a comprehensive permit, Westbrook Crossing consists of sixty condominium units for people over 55. Fifteen of the units are set-aside as affordable. The affordable units sell in the range of \$175,000 to \$190,000 and only two units have turned over since initial occupancy. Market-rate units sell in the low \$300Ks.

<sup>35</sup> Jennifer Mahalek, Marketing Agent for Station 250, interview, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 16 April 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Patrick Anderson, “Readville Summit”, *The Daily News*, <<http://www.dailynewstranscript.com>>.

<sup>37</sup> Schneider Associates, “Hebrew SeniorLife Secures \$457 Million in Bonds for Major Facilities and Service Expansion,” 19 February 2008, <[www.PRlog.com](http://www.PRlog.com)>.

## Economic Development

Two large mixed-use developments are planned for sites in and near Dedham: Legacy Place and Westwood Station. When complete, they will draw people from the region to work in the retail centers and planned office developments. It is likely that these new employment centers will influence housing demand in Dedham and the surrounding towns.

**Legacy Place.** Located in Dedham, Legacy Place broke ground in April 2008. The completed development will offer 675,000 sq. ft. of retail space and 85,000 sq. ft. of office space along Providence Highway and Elm Street. Scheduled for completion in Summer 2009, the development is being advertised as a “lifestyle center,” offering upscale shopping, fine dining and entertainment.<sup>38</sup>

**Westwood Station.** Westwood Station is a proposed retail/office development in Westwood that will offer 1,000 housing units and two hotels. In total, Westwood Station will include 1.5 million sq. ft. of office, laboratory, and research and development space, and 1.35 million sq. ft. of retail space. The project is estimated to generate 7,500 jobs.<sup>39</sup>

## PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

**Dedham Master Plan (1996).** The 1996 *Master Plan* emphasized that Dedham’s housing stock is unaffordable to many Dedham households, especially young adults, single-parent households, and empty-nesters. These are the same groups that are expected to experience the greatest growth in the future. The *Master Plan* recognized that Dedham’s zoning did not provide for small-lot development. It also did not provide for small-scale alternative housing development such as accessory apartments or residential units over existing commercial space. To address these concerns and prepare for future, the *Master Plan* promoted the following goals and related policies and actions:

<sup>38</sup> Legacy Place website located at <<http://www.legacyplacededham.com/>>.

<sup>39</sup> Westwood Station Community Bulletin located at <<http://www.wscommunityonline.com>>.

- ◆ Provide for a diversity of housing opportunities.
- ◆ Allow planned residential developments in order to save open space and provide diversity of housing opportunities.
- ◆ Establish Open Space Preservation Zoning (cluster zoning).
- ◆ Plan for a supply of affordable housing that will allow our young adults and senior citizens to remain within the town.
- ◆ Study affordable housing potential at MBTA Readville site.
- ◆ Consider ways to allow smaller dwellings.
- ◆ Permit small apartments above commercial in Dedham Square.
- ◆ Provide ways to maintain large older homes.
- ◆ Allow accessory or subsidiary apartments in large single-family dwellings.

Since completion of the 1996 *Master Plan*, Dedham has implemented several changes to the Zoning Bylaw, including provisions for Planned Residential Development (PRD), and accessory and “subsidiary” apartments. Developers explored the possibility of constructing affordable housing on the Readville site, and an agreement with the Town, the City of Boston, and the developer (Baran Cos.) was executed to achieve this end. However, slow progress of site clean-up led the MBTA to rescind the agreement and there is currently no plan for the property.

**Open Space and Recreation Plan (2004).** In January 2004, Dedham’s Open Space Committee and the Dedham Planning Board completed the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009* (OSRP). While the OSRP primarily focused on meeting Dedham’s open space and recreational needs, conservation

and housing objectives invariably intersect when new development is at hand. The OSRP identifies the subdivision of land and the possibility of missed opportunities to conserve open space as issues of concern.

To address these concerns, the OSRP recommended that Dedham consider “limited development” as a strategy to finance the acquisition of open space. This technique enables a community to acquire land and pay for it by allowing partial development while preserving the most important sections as open space. The community uses the proceeds from selling the parcel designated for development to finance the entire land acquisition. Furthermore, as owner of the parcel, the town has the ability to guide sensitive development of the land.

In addition to limited development, the OSRP recommended incorporating conservation subdivision design in the Dedham Zoning Bylaw. The OSRP also encouraged the Planning Board to promote the use of PRD when appropriate.

**Community Development Plan (2004).** The *Dedham Community Development Plan* was prepared by Larry Koff & Associates and Bluestone Group in 2004. It analyzed Dedham’s housing and economic development needs, identified issues, and presented several recommendations.

The housing needs analysis concluded that Dedham has a limited and declining supply of affordable housing that is unlikely to meet the demands of residents. An affordability gap analysis indicated that households with low- and moderate-incomes could not afford to purchase housing in Dedham, yet there appeared to be ample units appropriately priced for middle-income households. The gap analysis also concluded that Dedham had an adequate supply of rental units affordable to households at all income levels despite data indicating that over thirty percent of Dedham’s renters spend more than thirty percent of their income on housing. (This suggests that many renters may not be living in financially appropriate units.)

In addition to examining housing affordability, the *Community Development Plan* explored issues with housing development patterns in Dedham. It identified the potential loss of landscape, views, and conservation lands due to conventional subdivisions as undesirable, and encouraged Dedham to adopt cluster zoning in order to allow for housing development that works to preserve open space. In addition, the Plan proposed housing in Dedham Square to “reinforce its sense of place,” and recommended that the town consider the fiscal impact of some types of housing during the development review process. Lastly, the Plan emphasized that Dedham would continue to attract housing development due to its prime location and the presence of commuter rail.

Goals and strategies described in the *Community Development Plan* included the following:

- ◆ Provide for diverse housing by using zoning techniques to encourage mixed uses and focusing on how to meet the current and future housing needs of Dedham residents.
- ◆ Allow smaller dwellings and encourage mixed-use development in Dedham Square, allow accessory apartments in single-family dwellings, and provide for more types of housing.
- ◆ Identify public and private strategies to produce another 111 units of affordable housing so the town could meet the ten percent minimum under Chapter 40B, e.g., coordinating with Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership, using the Local Initiative Program (LIP) for Chapter 40B development, reusing municipal property for affordable housing, and establishing a first-time homebuyer program.
- ◆ Upgrade problem buildings and areas by working with local groups on renovation activities, offering housing rehabilitation assistance, and studying the potential for affordable housing development at the Readville site.

In support of these goals, the *Community Development Plan* proposed the following actions:

- ◆ Establish public consensus about priority areas for housing and economic development.
- ◆ Reorganize public oversight of housing and economic development activities.
- ◆ Broaden staff support for carrying out housing and economic development programs.
- ◆ Prepare new zoning for housing and economic development priority areas.
- ◆ Work with regional organizations to pursue housing and economic development strategies.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Like many first-ring suburbs, Dedham's housing issues center around an aging housing stock, affordability, and growth management. Dedham's ability to respond to the housing needs of its dynamic population is also critical. In the near future, population growth in older age cohorts due to the aging of the Baby Boom generation and new commercial and industrial development will affect demand for housing in Dedham. While local government is limited in its ability to influence housing supply, governments can take an active role in identifying housing gaps, creating policies, and designing incentives to encourage developments that are responsive to locally identified needs.

Dedham does not have a town board dedicated to addressing housing issues and needs within the community. During the *Community Development Plan* process in 2004, Dedham established a housing committee to offer insight into the town and guide the consultants preparing the plan. After the plan was completed, the committee dissolved. Since then, Dedham has not had a housing-centered group to advocate for the needs of lower-income residents, including the elderly and lower-wage municipal workers. That Dedham has surpassed the ten percent affordable housing minimum under Chapter 40B does not mean the town has successfully met the housing needs of

its residents. Housing needs vary and change; to meet them effectively, a community must track and analyze market dynamics, local demographics and other factors.

Despite recent market changes, Dedham's housing stock remains unaffordable to many would-be homebuyers. Of the single-family properties for sale in Dedham today, the median list price is \$419,000. Under the thirty percent affordability standard, a homebuyer's household income would need to be at least \$122,000 in order to purchase such a home.<sup>40</sup> While Dedham has properties priced below the median, it has very few homes under \$350,000 suitable for families. Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership, a regional housing advocacy organization based in Dedham, recently established a first-time homebuyer program that offers grants of \$3,000 to qualifying homebuyers to help bridge the affordability gap.<sup>41</sup>

Dedham's housing stock currently includes close to 300 units of age-restricted or elderly housing, and approximately 150 are designated as affordable units. When complete, NewBridge on the Charles will add roughly another 300 market-rate units to this count. However, as people age, their housing needs tend to progress incrementally. People often prefer to stay in their homes as long as they can and move to a supported housing arrangement when living independently becomes difficult or unsafe. Many towns offer housing rehabilitation assistance to elders to address repair needs and make homes physically suitable for the occupants. Other models exist to help elders address their changing housing needs, such as allowing homeowners to construct accessory apartments within their homes and providing transportation and other services to elders living alone.

The housing stock in each of Dedham's neighborhoods directly contributes to the neighborhood's

<sup>40</sup> This calculation makes the following assumptions: 5% downpayment, 6.25% mortgage interest rate, \$200/month for hazard insurance and a property tax mil rate of \$12.05 (Dedham's 2008 rate).

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Luna, President, Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership, interview Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 30 April 2008.

character. Not only does Dedham's housing reflect a variety of architectural styles, but also reflects a range of sizes and unit configurations. Preservation of Dedham's housing stock is important for neighborhood vitality and the reinforcement of neighborhood identity. Local government can promote housing preservation by sponsoring housing rehabilitation programs in specific areas and identifying properties the town wants to preserve for aesthetic, affordability, or other purposes.

Current economic conditions and increases in the number of foreclosures present immediate issues for Dedham. The town has responded by coordinating with local clergy to establish the "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program, which helps households facing foreclosure to make connections with resources to assist them. The group held its first event in November 2008, bringing together local banks, real estate professionals, human service agencies, and fuel and housing assistance programs. Neighbors Helping Neighbors has also created a Foreclosure Guide available at no cost to help people locate resources. Dedham is exploring developing a registry of foreclosed/vacant properties in order to track the town's growing inventory.<sup>42</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. ESTABLISH A HOUSING PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE.**

By establishing a housing partnership committee, Dedham can improve its capacity to recognize and respond to housing issues and trends. Although more than ten percent of Dedham's year-round housing is counted on the Chapter 40B subsidized housing inventory, this does not mean the housing needs of Dedham residents are being met in a comprehensive way. It is important for local governments to recognize that residents have many types of housing needs, and that a housing advocacy board makes a difference in a community's ability to meet these needs effectively.

<sup>42</sup> Karen O'Connell, Dedham Economic Development Director, to Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 17 March 2009.

A Housing Partnership Committee could help to establish a municipal structure that works toward addressing various housing issues. For example, a housing partnership committee today could play a major role in working with other town boards, staff, and local and regional organizations to assist homeowners facing foreclosure and develop strategies to manage the growing inventory of foreclosed properties.

### **2. COMPLETE A HOUSING PLAN.**

Dedham's Executive Order 418 Community Development Plan includes a housing component, but the town should review the plan for its current applicability and adequacy. A housing plan critically analyzes the housing needs of residents against opportunities, and develops strategies for meeting defined gaps. Dedham should closely consider the multiple and varied housing needs of its residents, such as elderly households, families with modest incomes, or those with special needs. A housing plan with a thorough needs assessment and strategies to address identified needs would help Dedham take an informed approach to addressing housing needs that are not met by Chapter 40B developments.

### **3. IDENTIFY TOWN-OWNED, TAX-TITLE PROPERTIES THAT MAY BE REDEVELOPED TO ADDRESS HOUSING NEEDS.**

Dedham should identify town-owned land and properties (including tax-title property) that may be suitable for development or redevelopment to meet needs such as affordable elderly housing, affordable family housing, "starter" homes, or other types of housing identified in a needs assessment. Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, Dedham may be able to attract interest in development of such properties.

### **4. REHABILITATE HIGHLY VISIBLE AND DETERIORATED RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES.**

Public investment focused on particular properties can trigger private investment in the surrounding area. Dedham should consider establishing a program that offers financial assistance to owners of renter- or owner-occupied dwellings if they

agree to invest in improving their property. For example, the town could seek CDBG funds and other grants to support this type of housing rehabilitation. By focusing on highly visible properties, the effect of the town's investment will most likely be maximized.

#### **5. ESTABLISH A HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM.**

Dedham should establish a housing rehabilitation program to assist lower-income property owners and tenants with basic home repairs, weatherization, energy efficiency, and code compliance. The program could focus on particular neighborhoods or provide assistance throughout the town. Housing rehabilitation programs promote property maintenance, housing affordability for lower-income residents, improvements in property conditions, neighborhood revitalization, and an increased supply of decent, safe (including lead-safe) housing.

Dedham could design a program that offers low-interest or no-interest loans to property owners whose incomes fall within designated limits (up to 80 or 100 percent of the area median income depending on the funding source). The financial assistance would be secured with a property lien or mortgage recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

#### **6. ESTABLISH A RENTAL CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM.**

Rental properties may be more prone to neglect and code violations because often they are owned by absent or inattentive landlords. Dedham should consider establishing a program that conducts outreach and education to tenants and landlords and offers financial assistance to landlords to bring their properties up to code. The objective of the program would be to increase code compliance and improve the condition of rental properties. The program should include the following elements:

- ◆ Inventory and periodic inspection of all rental properties;
- ◆ Communication with property owners and tenants;

Monitoring and enforcement to ensure correction of code violations.

The town could charge landlords a per-unit fee to cover its administrative costs. When developing the program, Dedham should consider how often it will inspect units given available staff resources and its ability to monitor and enforce code violations.

#### **7. CREATE A HOUSING RESOURCE GUIDE.**

The Housing Partnership Committee should create a housing resource guide for homeowners and renters that describes local, regional, and state level housing assistance programs, including fuel assistance, housing improvement assistance, resources for public and subsidized housing, tenant assistance, and foreclosure assistance. A housing resource guide can help residents readily identify programs that offer different types of housing assistance and connect them with needed services.

#### **8. WORK WITH SOUTHWEST AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (SAHP) TO PROMOTE FIRST TIME HOME BUYER PROGRAM.**

The SAHP offers downpayment assistance and financial/homebuyer counseling to first-time homebuyers in Dedham's area. There may be opportunities for the town and SAHP to coordinate efforts to assist first-time homebuyers and find and finance homes in Dedham. Access to affordable starter homes in Dedham is difficult for first-time homebuyers; it is also difficult for many homeowners to retain their properties. In addition, Dedham should consider coordinating with SAHP and other organizations to broaden the scope of services offered on an as-needed basis. For example, resources may be combined to offer foreclosure prevention counseling and assistance.



## CHAPTER 9

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## INTRODUCTION

A community's economy is influenced by its household wealth and sources of household income, the types of industries it attracts, and the uses of its land. In turn, each community is an integral part of an economic region, or larger areas connected by population, employment, labor and trade characteristics. The boundaries of economic regions usually correspond to land use patterns, utilities, and transportation systems that support the movement of goods and people.

Since local governments depend on property taxes for their operating revenue, they often pay closer attention to the structure of their tax base than the size, make-up, and health of their employment base. As a result, communities often think of "economic development" as zoning for commercial and industrial uses, yet building a local economy involves more than zoning, and economic development is not simply a matter of tax base enhancement. A host of non-taxable land uses also prime the economy of cities and towns, regions and the state as a whole: public and private schools, colleges and universities, outdoor recreation areas, government offices, and major charitable institutions. Dedham is an example of a community with tax-exempt land uses that provide significant local employment, notably the Norfolk County court system and Noble and Greenough School.

Dedham wants to revitalize its commercial areas and neighborhood centers in order to foster civic pride, improve the quality of life for residents, and provide revenue for local government services. Its economy is increasingly affected by changes in American consumer habits from local to regional shopping – changes that have led to more parking demands and a challenging environment for



*Mixed-use building developed across from Town Hall.*

Dedham Square retailers. Since Dedham has very little vacant developable land, securing and retaining a strong employment base will depend on the redevelopment of established commercial and industrial areas.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Labor Force

A community's **labor force** includes all residents 16 years of age and older, employed or looking for work. Dedham's labor force currently includes about 12,200 people. Most hold white-collar jobs in the Greater Boston area, with over forty percent working in management and professional occupations and thirty percent in sales and office

occupations.<sup>1</sup> Of the 9,116 residents commuting to non-local jobs, one-third travel to Boston, reflecting Dedham’s position as an economic sub-area of the City. About one-fifth of the labor force works locally.<sup>2</sup> (See Chapter 4, *Transportation*, Table 4.2.)

Despite Dedham’s proximity to Boston, residents seem to be traveling farther for work because the mean travel time for Dedham commuters increased by 3.3 minutes between 1990 and 2000. In the same period, the number of residents working locally decreased from 3,030 to 2,296, the number of people traveling 30 to 44 minutes to work increased by 7.3 percent, and the number traveling more than 45 minutes, by 31.7 percent. The percentages of people carpooling, bicycling, walking, and working at home declined significantly, but the percentage of people using public transportation increased.<sup>3</sup> Similar trends occurred throughout Eastern Massachusetts, but Dedham’s declining shares of home-based workers and commuters driving alone to work stand out as regionally unique.

While the unemployment rate in Dedham tends to be lower than that of the state, it has exceeded the unemployment rates of Norfolk County and the

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 1, “DP-1: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics,” *American Fact Finder*, <<http://factfinder.census.gov/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Census 2000, “2000 Minor Civil Division/County-to-Minor Civil Division/County Worker Flow Files,” <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/journey.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Census 2000 Summary File 3, “P31: Travel Time to Work for Workers 16+ Years,” “P30: Means of Transportation to Work for Workers 16 Years and Over,” and 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3, “P050: Travel Time to Work,” and “P049: Means of Transportation to Work.”

**TABLE 9.1**  
**DAYTIME POPULATION CHANGE: DEDHAM AND REGION**

Municipality	Total Resident Population	Estimated Daytime Population	Daytime Population Change	
			Number	Percent
Canton	20,775	30,305	9,530	45.9%
DEDHAM	23,464	25,831	2,367	10.1%
Dover	5,558	4,128	-1,430	-25.7%
Foxborough	16,246	16,358	112	0.7%
Medfield	12,273	10,967	-1,306	-10.6%
Milton	26,062	19,874	-6,188	-23.7%
Needham	29,911	33,454	4,543	15.7%
Norwood	28,587	36,497	7,910	27.7%
Randolph	30,963	24,468	-6,495	-21.0%
Sharon	17,408	13,490	-3,918	-22.5%
Stoughton	27,149	25,673	-1,476	-5.4%
Walpole	22,824	20,071	-2,753	-12.1%
Westwood	14,117	18,676	4,559	32.3%

Note: Milton and Randolph are part of the South Coastal WIA. Stoughton is part of the Brockton WIA.  
Source: Massachusetts EOLWD, *Regional LMI Profile: Annual Profile for Metro South/West Workforce Area*

Metropolitan South/West Workforce Investment Area since 2000. Dedham’s unemployment rate peaked in 2003 at 5.3 percent and rose 0.3 percent between 2005 and 2006, from 4.3 to 4.6 percent.<sup>4</sup>

### Employment Base

A community’s **employment base** includes all payroll jobs reported by for-profit, non-profit and public employers. Dedham serves as a regional employment hub with a relatively large employment base that offers about 1.17 jobs for every resident in the labor force. Due to the number of available jobs and the regional shopping attractions along Providence Highway, Dedham’s daytime population is estimated at 25,831, or 10.1 percent more than the total population, as shown in Table 9.1.<sup>5</sup> Boston residents traditionally make up about fifteen percent of all people working in Dedham each day. Other communities that generate a substantial number of workers in Dedham include Norwood, Quincy, Walpole, Brockton, and Randolph.<sup>6</sup> (See Chapter 4, *Transportation*, Table 4.1.)

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Municipal Employment Data, at <<http://lmi2.detma.org/>>.

<sup>5</sup> EOLWD, *Regional LMI Profile: Annual Profile for Metro South/West Workforce Area* (March 2007), 36.

<sup>6</sup> Census 2000, “2000 Minor Civil Division/County-to-Minor Civil Division/County Worker Flow Files.”

**TABLE 9.2**  
**EMPLOYMENT, ESTABLISHMENTS, AND WAGES BY SECTOR (2007)**

Sector	Establishments	Average Monthly Employment	Average Annual Wage
Total, All Industries	875	14,731	\$46,176
Goods-Producing Domain	132	1,115	\$60,528
Construction	111	736	\$51,116
Manufacturing	21	379	\$78,832
Durable Goods Manufacturing	12	308	\$76,336
Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing	9	71	\$89,804
Service-Providing Domain	743	13,615	\$44,980
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	178	2,938	\$35,048
Utilities	3	63	\$69,420
Wholesale Trade	53	374	\$83,408
Retail Trade	113	2,412	\$26,104
Transportation and Warehousing	9	89	\$49,608
Information	23	755	\$76,024
Financial Activities	90	868	\$58,812
Finance and Insurance	51	642	\$65,676
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	39	226	\$39,312
Professional and Business Services	171	2,889	\$59,956
Professional and Technical Services	110	596	\$64,220
Management of Companies and Enterprises	7	876	\$65,312
Administrative and Waste Services	54	1,418	\$54,756
Education and Health Services	71	3,036	\$43,056
Educational Services	11	806	\$50,180
Health Care and Social Assistance	60	2,230	\$40,508
Leisure and Hospitality	68	1,699	\$19,500
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	16	258	\$24,856
Accommodation and Food Services	52	1,441	\$18,564
Other Services	122	496	\$30,784
Public Administration	20	934	\$52,156

Source: Massachusetts EOLWD, Municipal Employment Data (ES-202).

Dedham is home to 875 businesses with over 14,700 employees. Most jobs in Dedham are in Professional and Business Services (19.6 percent), Education and Health Services (20.6 percent), and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (19.9 percent) industries. Overall, the composition of Dedham's employment base is fairly similar to that of the state and Norfolk County, but the town has a comparatively large proportion of jobs in Professional and Business Services, Information, and Public Administration even though the latter industries make up a fairly small percentage of local employment. Dedham's largest employers include the American Red Cross, the Highgate Manor Center for Health, and the Norfolk County Court system. In most industries, Dedham's jobs pay less than the

state average. For example, Dedham employees in the Finance and Insurance industry earn an average annual wage of \$65,676 compared with the statewide average of \$104,208 while those in Professional and Technical Services earn \$64,220 versus \$87,724.<sup>7</sup>

Services and retail trade are among the most productive industries in Dedham. According to the 2002 Economic Census, the health care industry generated nearly \$195 million in revenue that year, while retail trade generated \$421 million, wholesale trade \$295 million, and administrative

<sup>7</sup> EOLWD, Municipal Employment Data, ES-202; and Employer Locator, at <<http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/employers.asp>>.

and support and waste management and remediation services, \$560 million.<sup>8</sup>

### Household Income

The difference between Dedham’s median household income (\$61,699) and the average annual wage (\$38,970) indicates that many Dedham households have more than one wage earner and Dedham residents also work in communities with higher wages. Of Dedham’s 4,987 married couples, both partners work in 44.8 percent of the households and 17.4 percent have more than two employed family members. These statistics make Dedham similar to the state as whole, though the percentage of married-couple families with both partners employed is somewhat smaller than the Massachusetts average (49.6 percent).<sup>9</sup>

### Tax Base

Dedham depends primarily on property taxes and state aid to pay for municipal and school services. Property taxes represent 68.2 percent of Dedham’s total revenue, the fourth highest percentage among towns in the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC).<sup>10</sup> Relatively high taxes for commercial property and a proportionally high level of state assistance have contributed to Dedham’s strong AA bond rating and enabled the town to maintain a low residential tax rate of \$10.93 (FY 2008).

In Dedham, tax revenue from nonresidential development represents about thirty percent of the entire tax levy.<sup>11</sup> Compared with other communities in the TRIC subregion, Dedham transfers a

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Economic Census 2002, “Table 2. Selected Statistics by Economic Sector and Sub-Sector, at <<http://www.census.gov/econ/census02/>>.

<sup>9</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 1, “DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics,” and Summary File 3, “Table P48: Family Type by Number of Workers in Family in 1999.”

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, At A Glance Reports, at <<http://www.mass.gov>>.

<sup>11</sup> Massachusetts Department of Revenue, DLS, Property Tax Information, “Assessed Values by Class, FY 2007”, at <<http://www.mass.gov>>.

**TABLE 9.3**  
**VALUATION, TAX RATES, AND SHIFTS FOR CIP PROPERTY**  
**(FY07): DEDHAM AND REGION**

Town	CIP as % of Total Valuation	CIP Shift	CIP Tax Rate
Canton	22.0	1.650	17.94
Dedham	16.4	1.830	23.89
Dover	1.9	1.000	9.20
Foxborough	21.1	1.000	9.92
Medfield	4.5	1.000	12.27
Milton	2.9	1.830	20.34
Needham	11.7	1.750	18.17
Norwood	25.4	1.730	17.35
Randolph	11.4	1.750	17.85
Sharon	6.0	1.000	14.16
Stoughton	16.5	1.750	19.93
Walpole	12.3	1.250	13.89
Westwood	14.1	1.650	19.81

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, FY 2007 CIP Tax Shift.

larger share of the levy to nonresidential taxpayers, and its commercial tax rate of \$23.89 is the highest. In FY2007, Dedham ranked fifth in the region for the percentage of its total assessed valuation composed of commercial, industrial and personal property (CIP).<sup>12</sup>

### Commercial and Industrial Areas

Dedham’s commercial areas include retail and services that cater to residents of the town and the surrounding region. Dedham Square contains a variety of retail, office, and municipal uses surrounded by a historic residential neighborhood. Auto-oriented commercial uses line Providence Highway, serving a large trade area that extends into eleven communities. Additional commercial activity occurs in small clusters located around town.

**Dedham Square.** Dedham Square is a historic downtown anchored by the Norfolk County Courthouse and other municipal buildings. A mixed-use area located west of Providence Highway, Dedham Square provides shopping, cultural, entertainment, and service uses for local residents, visitors and employees. The district has sixty-six business-

<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts Department of Revenue, DLS, Property Tax Information, “FY 2007 CIP Tax Shift”, at <<http://www.mass.gov>>.

**TABLE 9.4**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTING BUSINESS AREAS**

Location	Land Use	Vacancy Rate	Building Condition
Dedham Square	Shopping Goods/ Restaurant/Office/ Convenience/ Institutional/Public/ Mixed Use	Low	Good
Providence Highway Gateway (Washington St. to Boston line)	Shopping Goods/ Restaurant/Office	Average	Good
Providence Highway South (Washington St. to Enterprise Dr.)	Shopping Goods	Low	Fair
RDO District West	Shopping Goods/General Services	Low	Fair
RDO District East	Office/Hotel/General Services	High	Good
Readville/Sprague St./Stop & Shop	General Services/Office/ Warehouse/Flex Space	High	Fair
East Dedham	General Services/Office Warehouse/Flex Space/ Convenience/Retail	Low	Fair

*Note: Vacancy rate rating=5% low, 6-10% average, 11 % + high, approximated. Source: Larry Koff & Associates, Windshield Survey, August 2007.*

es including restaurants, personal and business services, general shopping, and a local movie theater.

**Providence Highway Gateway** (North of Washington Street to Boston line): This area includes the Dedham Mall, which has undergone substantial redevelopment and currently has a Super Stop & Shop and the Dedham Health and Fitness Club. While Circuit City and other stores have left the Dedham Mall, new owners continue to invest in making the mall a viable retail center. In contrast, the gateway area north of the Dedham Mall contains a confusing mix of retail, wholesale and service businesses with multiple curb cuts and out-of-scale signage.

**Providence Highway South** (Washington Street to Enterprise Drive): This area contains stable big box retail uses, such as BJ's, Best Buy, Bed Bath & Beyond, Bugaboo Creek, and TGI Fridays, which draw customers from throughout the region. It also includes Dedham Plaza, a strip mall fronting on Providence Highway and Washington Street. The Washington Street side has a large number of personal service establishments while the Providence Highway side has a Star Market.

**RDO District/West** (West of Commuter Rail Line): Located off the Route 128 interchange, this area currently includes hospitality, office, industrial, warehouse, retail, service, and big box chains to the east and west of Providence Highway. In 2007, the Planning Board approved a 500,000 sq. ft. life-style center, Legacy Place, with retail, restaurant and entertainment space and an 85,000 sq. ft. office building on forty-two acres adjacent to a small neighborhood and a Marriott Hotel. A Holiday Inn, banks and commercial office buildings occupy land across Providence Highway to the west. Two parcels on Providence Highway will soon contain a CVS and a Walgreen's. A mix of offices, services, building materials, Costco, and light wholesale and warehouse uses currently lie to the rear of Stergis Way and Rustcraft Road.

**RDO District/East** (East of Commuter Rail Line): With a commuter rail stop and proximity to Legacy Place, this underutilized area has potential for mixed-use or biotech development. Currently, it is anchored by a Hilton Hotel and an MBTA commuter rail parking lot. There are a number of vacant office buildings, storage, and truck repair uses. Vehicular access to the district is confusing because it is accessible only from the Route 128 ramps.

**Readville/Sprague St./Stop and Shop.** There are four major sub-areas along the Boston boundary line zoned or used for industrial purposes. Only one of these areas, the First Highland warehouse/office industrial park off Sprague Street, has access from Dedham; the others require access from Boston. The Stop & Shop, a vacant thirty-seven acre property, has the greatest re-use potential. The Readville Yard property, zoned Limited Manufacturing, is owned by the MBTA and proposed for housing, but a developer has not been designated. An adjacent industrially zoned parcel was proposed for an eight-lot industrial subdivision.

**East Dedham** (Milton and High Streets). The land uses and zoning in East Dedham include a mix of General Business, Limited Manufacturing and General Residential. Given the presence of the Mother Brook, a number of auto-related businesses, contractor supply and services, and other similar businesses, the buffers between these uses are often not well developed. In addition, a number of the former mill buildings contain artist lofts, signaling the attractiveness of this area for residential uses. Two properties of note along the residential section of High Street include the now-closed St. Mary's School and the nineteenth century warehouse partially occupied by Ali-Med, Inc.

## LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS

### Mix of Businesses

Dedham residents have access to two full-service food markets – a new Star Market and a Super Stop & Shop -- in addition to BJ's and Costco wholesale stores. Legacy Place is anticipated to offer a Whole Foods store as well. Major theaters, restaurants, and hotels are located with good regional access along Providence Highway South. Despite the proliferation of automobile-oriented businesses, Dedham has few drive-ins and few fast-food restaurants. It also does not have a large number of medical, service- or office-related uses. Further, warehouse distribution and light manufacturing uses are limited to the MBTA and Stop and Shop properties along the Boston line.

### Vacancies<sup>13</sup>

Vacancy rates differ by land use and location. According to local sources, retail vacancy rates are generally the lowest, about five percent, and industrial vacancy rates are roughly the same, excluding the large Stop & Shop property, which has been vacant for three years and marketed by different owners for a variety of uses. In contrast, the office vacancy rate in Dedham has been estimated at twenty-one percent.<sup>14</sup> This is substantially higher than the estimated office vacancy rates for Dedham's area: 9.2 percent for the Route 128/Mass Pike sub-area and 18.1 percent for the South sub-area.<sup>15</sup>

Dedham Mall has the highest retail vacancy rate in Dedham. This partially reflects the mall's change of ownership and ongoing buildout by prior and current owners. The Allied Drive RDO District historically has had the town's highest office vacancy rate, but several properties in this area are now occupied, excluding the former Harvard Health Plan building, which lies partially in Westwood. The Stop and Shop property is a unique industrial site that remains vacant for several reasons. An adjacent industrial warehouse property owned by the Hurley Company could be redeveloped for more intense light manufacturing or warehouse use.

### Property Conditions

Dedham's commercial and industrial base does not measure up to the quality of its retail activity. The industrial areas along the Boston/Dedham line, the Stop & Shop warehouse and adjacent Readville area, East Dedham, the properties in the RDO district along Stergis Way and Commercial Circle, and a limited number of vacant properties around Allied Drive need reinvestment. The buildings, shopping plazas, and infrastructure in

<sup>13</sup> Analysis based on windshield survey, November 2007, and interviews with local realtors.

<sup>14</sup> Hunneman & Company, interview, Larry Koff & Associates, November 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Jones Lang LaSalle, "Greater Boston Market Statistics – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2007," at <[http://www.joneslanglasalle-boston.com/ma/corporate/research/research\\_portal.html](http://www.joneslanglasalle-boston.com/ma/corporate/research/research_portal.html)>.

East Dedham along Milton and High Streets tend to be in fair condition. In general, these conditions undermine the adjacent residential areas. Furthermore, some of the retail and service businesses along Providence Highway in Dedham Plaza need to be upgraded or replaced.

### Trends in Businesses and Employment

Since 2001, the number of businesses in Dedham has decreased by 6.2 percent and average monthly employment has declined by seventy-eight jobs, but the average wage has increased by 14.4 percent. Dedham's shrinking industrial base is gradually being replaced by service and trade jobs. While Dedham consistently ranks near the top of the TRIC subregion in retail trade and commercial development, manufacturing jobs have decreased by about thirty percent since the early 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) recently projected a continuation of these trends. MAPC estimates that by 2030, Dedham's employment base will consist of 15,434 jobs, representing employment growth of approximately six percent. The largest increase is expected to occur in the Professional and Business Services industries (fifteen percent).<sup>17</sup> However, MAPC also predicts that Dedham's manufacturing employment will decline by twenty-six percent during the same period. In general, MAPC's forecast for Dedham is similar to that of the larger TRIC subregion, where Professional and Business Services employment is expected to grow by twenty-six percent and manufacturing employment will decrease sixteen percent.<sup>18</sup>

### PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

Dedham has completed several planning studies, both town-wide and area-focused. The two most

recent town-wide plans, the *Dedham Master Plan* (1996) and *Community Development Plan* (2004), identified similar economic development goals.

**Dedham Master Plan (1996).** Dedham's 1996 Master Plan stressed the importance of expanding office, research, and light assembly uses and to a lesser extent, retail uses.<sup>19</sup> Dedham has adopted new zoning to implement many of its master plan goals. For example, several sections of Providence Highway have improved under the new Highway Corridor zoning and site plan review guidelines. Despite establishing the RDO district to promote research and development and technology development, however, Dedham has not lured the anticipated changes in land use.<sup>20</sup>

**Community Development Plan (2004).** The 2004 Community Development Plan highlighted the need for staffing and public intervention in support of economic development. The plan recommended revitalizing key industrial and commercial sites and adopting new policies and incentives for economic development, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and District Improvement Financing (DIF). The plan also urged protection of Dedham's limited supply of water through strict enforcement of stormwater regulations and support of land uses that minimize the demand for public water.<sup>21</sup>

**Dedham Square Specific Area Plan (1999).** The Dedham Square Specific Area Plan was developed under the leadership of a Planning Board-sponsored committee that included representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, DPW Commissioner, and Town Planner. It identified the need for as many as 500 additional parking spaces for the courts, municipal uses, and retail stores, improved traffic flow and pedestrian circulation, streetscape improvements in Dedham Square, new municipal facilities for the Police Department and Council on Aging, and a public/

<sup>16</sup> EOLWD, Municipal Employment Data, 2001-2006. These statistics represent annual averages and do not account for seasonal fluctuations in employment.

<sup>17</sup> Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), *Employment Projections 2010-2030* (January 2006), <[http://www.mapc.org/data\\_gis/data\\_center/data\\_center\\_data.html#projections](http://www.mapc.org/data_gis/data_center/data_center_data.html#projections)>.

<sup>18</sup> MAPC, *Employment Projections 2010-2030*.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth M. Kreutziger, *Dedham Master Plan* (March 1996), VIII-2.

<sup>20</sup> *Dedham Master Plan*, VIII-8.

<sup>21</sup> Larry Koff & Associates, *Community Development Plan* (June 2004), 86.

private partnership between county, town and state elected officials.<sup>22</sup>

**Dedham Square Planning and Redevelopment Study (2007).** The Dedham Square Planning and Redevelopment Study assessed redevelopment options for the Keystone site and for providing additional parking in Dedham Square. The report concluded that if the Keystone site was redeveloped for uses other than public parking, downtown's parking deficit could increase to 280 spaces, not including municipal parking needs.<sup>23</sup> The study recommended that representatives of the town, Norfolk County, and the state (DCAM and elected officials) work together on a facility and parking plan for Dedham Square.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Dedham Square and the Providence Highway corridor have attracted new investment, but the commercial and industrial districts have problems with vacancy rates, blighting land uses, stagnating development and redevelopment, general deterioration, and regulatory issues. Overcoming the barriers to achieving a coherent vision for each district will take concerted leadership by property owners, business owners and the town, and in some cases cooperation from the MBTA, the City of Boston, and state government.

**Dedham Square.** Dedham Square's future depends upon its ability to adapt to competition from Legacy Place and other retail developments, meet the expansion needs of the courts for office space and parking, meet the town's need for expanded municipal facilities, and fulfill market demand for mixed-use development. The major barrier to Dedham Square's future is the inability of the town, the courts, the county, and the state to follow through on a planning process to address issues of mutual concern. A consensus plan needs to

be refined and funding strategies identified and carried out in order to initiate a multifaceted initiative of court and registry facilities, parking for the courts and local businesses, traffic and streetscape improvements, and municipal facilities.

**Providence Highway Gateway.** This area has seen some improvement recently through updating of retail stores and reducing vacancies at the Dedham Mall. However, the area needs enhanced pedestrian amenities, and a greater overall sense of place. This could be accomplished by adding pathways to adjacent properties and improved access to the banks of the Charles River.

**Providence Highway South.** This underutilized area needs planning for future uses, redevelopment, and improved traffic flow between commercial properties and access to Providence Highway. Planning efforts should consider whether the northern area adjacent to Eastern Avenue should be, in effect, part of Dedham Square, with better pedestrian connections and compatible zoning. Another consideration might be whether a new mix of tenants, such as a grocery store, and physical improvements would make Dedham Plaza a more viable highway-oriented commercial center.

**RDO District/West.** Two possible sub-areas exist in this location: retail frontage on Providence Highway and warehouse and industrial uses off Enterprise Drive and Stergis Way. Dedham's existing zoning does not necessarily reflect current uses or a realistic future vision. Meetings with local property owners would encourage the development of ideas for public/private cooperation, a consensus vision and new zoning and roadway improvements that match the vision.

**RDO District/East.** A transit-oriented development above the MBTA parking lot, incorporating underutilized properties along Allied Drive, could transform the visual, economic and circulation characteristics of this area. A number of underutilized and vacant properties exist adjacent to the Hilton Hotel. With the addition of air rights over the MBTA parking lot and a pedestrian connection across the tracks, there may be opportunities

<sup>22</sup> Larry Koff & Associates, et al, *Dedham Square Specific Area Plan* (January 1999), 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> The Cecil Group, *Dedham Square Planning and Redevelopment Study* (June 2007), 6.

to develop a mixed-use complex in this location. A publicly financed parking garage could leverage such an outcome, especially if there were pedestrian and vehicular access to the Rustcraft Road area. With proper planning and incentives, this is a prime location for office, hi-tech, and possibly residential uses.

**Readville/Sprague Street.** Town officials, neighborhood residents, the developers, the City of Boston and MBTA need to work cooperatively on reuse plans to improve the Hurley and Readville properties while minimizing traffic impacts in Dedham. Issues of access, zoning, utilities, and coordination with the MBTA and the City of Boston continue to impede redevelopment of these important sites. Dedham has taken a clear position on both properties, supporting limited-scale residential development at the Readville Yards and light industrial uses for the adjacent Hurley parcel. Without comprehensive planning on both sites, it will be difficult to carry out a consensus plan that addresses Dedham's key concerns.

**Stop and Shop Warehouse.** Dedham needs to encourage the redevelopment of this 35-acre site as a state-of-the-art industrial park that improves access and minimizes traffic impacts. Access through Boston is limited and a rail line cuts through wetlands. Many of the facilities here need to be upgraded. Of the existing 700,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space, a little over one-half is leasable. Moreover, less than half of the existing space is located in Dedham. The balance lies in Boston.

**East Dedham.** The visual appearance and mix of commercial uses in East Dedham need to be improved. This corridor has a mix of businesses, some in deteriorated condition. A number of uses contain surface parking areas and auto-oriented uses along the frontage, with no setbacks and landscaping. Without public intervention, East Dedham's blighted commercial properties will probably continue to deteriorate. Small parcels and multiple owners make private-sector revitalization difficult.

## ZONING CONSTRAINTS

Zoning changes could help to address some of the problems in Dedham's commercial and industrial areas. The exception is the Stop and Shop warehouse site, which appears to need financial and other incentives more than zoning relief. The zoning that applies in Dedham's key business areas includes the Administrative and Professional, Research Development and Office (RDO), General Business, Highway Business, Central Business, and Local Business districts. The industrial districts, Limited Manufacturing and Limited Manufacturing Type B, are located on the western edge of town with access directed toward Boston or Route 95.

**Dedham Square.** Dedham Square is one of the few areas where Dedham has adopted zoning to allow a mix of residential and commercial uses. Across from Town Hall, a local developer recently constructed his second mixed-use building. The Dedham Zoning Bylaw limits multifamily buildings to two units, but places no cap on subsidiary units in the General Business and Central Business Districts or in Planned Commercial Developments. Parking requirements vary by housing type. If Dedham wants to encourage mixed-use developments, the Zoning Bylaw should provide more clarity and flexibility.

In addition, the boundary of the CBD excludes commercial properties on the east side of Providence Highway, south of East Street. Some of these properties, such as Staples, are located within both the Local Business District and Highway Business District. Especially with the Sprague Street Bridge reconstruction, it is appropriate to review the boundaries of the Central, Local, and Highway Business Districts east of Providence Highway from East Street south to Eastern Avenue.

**Providence Highway South, Washington Street to Enterprise Drive.** The continued vacancies in Dedham Plaza, especially along Washington Street, signal problems with this shopping center. The existing zoning (Highway Business) and permitting process for signs, parking, and physical improvements constrain reuse of portions of Dedham Plaza.

**RDO District/West.** The frontage of the RDO district along Providence Highway consists of commercial uses. This activity will be reinforced by Legacy Place. It may be appropriate to rezone land along Providence Highway to Highway Business and leave the rear portions as RDO. Alternatively, the town could consider a mixed-use RDO that would allow some types of retail uses.

**RDO District/East.** Dedham allows a Planned Commercial Development (PCD) within the RDO, but not multifamily and retail. If the town wants to encourage mixed uses within a PCD, the relationship between PCD and the rules that normally apply in the RDO District should be reassessed.

**Readville/Sprague St.** Parcels located both in Boston and Dedham constitute a portion of the former MBTA Readville Yards. One portion is zoned for residential uses on small lots while the second is zoned for industrial uses. Zoning changes may be required to facilitate reuse of these properties.

**East Dedham, Milton and High Streets.** The Table of Uses should be clarified to permit artist lofts as well as provide more stringent site planning requirements for auto uses and parking lots.

## Priority Development Areas

A review of Dedham's commercial and industrial districts indicates that other than some key sub-areas along the Providence Highway retail corridor, most of the commercial areas are in fair condition. Concerted public action in conjunction with private property owners will be needed to reposition underutilized sites and buildings to achieve their full market potential. A planning process should be undertaken for priority sites in order to build consensus and provide the right mix of incentives to foster development.

## DEDHAM SQUARE

Several public and private planning and business improvement initiatives are currently underway in Dedham Square. These efforts seek to accommodate growth for the court system, improve marketing and the mix of businesses in Dedham Square, and address traffic, parking, and landscap-

ing issues. Not all of these initiatives can be carried out at the same time, and public and private cooperation will be essential.

In June 2007, the state's Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) released a memo summarizing the status of court facility planning in Norfolk County.<sup>24</sup> DCAM concluded that a new courthouse should be built utilizing the front of the Registry of Deeds building and expanding to the rear with a surface parking lot for 260 cars. The Courthouse would house the Superior, District, and Juvenile Courts and the law library, and the Registry of Deeds would relocate to a new site, presumably within or near Dedham Square.

Concurrent with DCAM's work, the *Dedham Square Planning and Redevelopment Study* was undertaken to examine office space and parking needs of the court system and the town.<sup>25</sup> The study identified a development program and three possible sites for parking and office use to meet overlapping needs of the courts, the town, and the local merchants. According to the report, Dedham Square needs 350 more parking spaces. The Keystone site cannot fulfill the diverse needs of the Registry of Deeds, parking for the Registry and Dedham Square businesses, and retail uses.

If the Registry of Deeds moved, the Keystone site could be developed for ground floor retail along High Street and Eastern Avenue to reinforce commercial uses at the heart of Dedham Square. However, local officials and Dedham Square leaders want the Registry of Deeds to remain in its current location. Dedham Square's competing needs for parking and developable land are challenging, but it should be possible to address them if redevelopment and revitalization are undertaken as a comprehensive, cooperative exercise between town, county, and state. Toward this end, both the town and state and county officials have taken steps toward the revitalization of Dedham Square. These efforts include:

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Minnis, Memo, *Norfolk County Courts Master Plan*, (June 13, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> The Cecil Group, *Dedham Square Planning and Redevelopment Study* (June 2007).

**TABLE 9.5  
DEDHAM SQUARE POSSIBLE PARKING SITES**

Site	Current Use	Ownership	Sq. Ft.	Current Parking	Proposed Use
Keystone Site	Public parking	Town	63,000	157	Parking, ground floor retail, commercial
Eastern Ave./ Bryant St.	Commercial, Parking	Multiple owners	14,400		Mixed use, court/public
Harris St.	Warehouse	Mix	20,400		Mixed use, court/public
Post Office	Post Office	Private	36,000		
Police Station	Police Station	Town	8,200		
Ames St./ Registry of Deeds	Parking	County	179,400		Parking deck 380 spaces

- ◆ A state-funded feasibility study to review returning the Probate Court to Dedham Square. Financing for the study as been approved, although the study has not yet commenced.
- ◆ The Economic Development Department in partnership with Dedham Square Circle is submitting a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant to fund its “Engineering the Future” infrastructure and streetscape improvement project.
- ◆ In 2008, the Keystone Lot was approved as a Priority Development Site under the state’s Chapter 43D program.
- ◆ Dedham Square Circle has explored options for a parking study, which may be pursued once a clearer redevelopment plan is established.
- ◆ A Phase II Brownfield Site Assessment of the Keystone lot should be undertaken to rule out any significant contamination. A Phase I brownfields site assessment revealed slight contamination consistent with the site’s prior use as a train station. In order to make sure the Keystone lot is free from development barriers, a Phase II site assessment was recommended.
- ◆ A Police Station site reuse and relocation study has long been recommended. The Dedham Police Station Study Summary, issued in 1997, examined two options for a new police station. However, the study is now a decade old, and since any reuse or relocation of the police station must be coordinated with the Dedham’s other public facilities needs and overall planning for Dedham Square, the town needs to take a fresh look at this issue.

In addition to continuing the aforementioned studies and projects, Dedham needs ways to promote planning for the following issues:

- ◆ Once a redevelopment plan is established, a traffic and parking study should be undertaken that identifies needs of the merchants and courts and outlines a management entity and funding mechanism for developing additional parking. This would be carried out jointly by Norfolk County and the town because the state is not interested in taking the lead on developing parking as part of the court facilities improvements.

- ◆ Evaluating the feasibility of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Dedham Square to manage a variety of marketing, landscaping, parking and other related improvements.

Table 9.5 identify sites, their current uses, ownership, and acreage. A study committee will need to assess the costs, feasibility, and roles of various participants in carrying out the redevelopment program for court expansion, parking, and retail.

**STERGIS WAY/COMMERCIAL CIRCLE**

Market conditions indicate a demand for retail uses not allowed by right in the RDO. The Legacy Place retail and entertainment center will foster the redevelopment of forty-two acres in an area currently zoned RDO. Additionally, retail uses along Providence Highway reinforce the commercial draw of this area. By contrast, warehouse, service, and the material reprocessing operations off Commercial Circle and Stergis Way provide approximately forty acres of potential redevelopment for retail or business uses. With improved access, it might be possible to market this locus for back office space, flex space, or some type of mixed retail/wholesale.

Much of the property in this study area is under the control of the Stergis family. Their support for a planning study is essential. In addition, a number of reuse scenarios should be considered, depending on market conditions as Legacy Place is built

out and its impacts on this area can be more fully assessed.

Nine properties along Stergis Way and two on Commercial Circle are identified in Table 9.6. The two Commercial Circle parcels together contain twenty-five acres (1,091,178 sq. ft.) while the Stergis Way parcels contain 14.8 acres (636,896 sq. ft.). While there are some viable uses, for the most part this area is plagued by inappropriate land uses such as the two material reprocessing uses off Commercial Circle, excess surface parking, poor visibility and access from Providence Highway, a history of failed office development proposals, and blighted commercial uses at the gateway to Enterprise Drive. The two most viable uses in the sub-area are big box retail (Costco) and flex retail (wholesale/light manufacturing retail). In the long term, office use might be a possibility.

**TABLE 9.6  
PARCELS FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT: STERGIS WAY AND COMMERCIAL CIRCLE**

Parcel	Address	Land Area (acres)	Owner	Current Use
<b>Stergis Way</b>				
136-19A	75 McNeil Way	2.3	850 Providence Highway Assoc.	Office Building
149-1	850 Providence Hwy.	2.2	850 Providence Highway Assoc.	Restaurant Retail
149-2	852 Providence Hwy.	1.0	850 Providence Highway Assoc.	Factory
149-3	30 Stergis Way	1.0	1445 Realty Inc.	Warehouse Storage
149-3A	60 Stergis Way	1.0	Newood Realty Trust	BISCO Irrigation Warehouse Storage
149-3B	110 Stergis Way	1.3	Stergis	Boston Home Infusion Warehouse Storage
149-3C	45 Stergis Way	2.1	Stergis	Office Building
150-7B	75 Stergis Way	1.3	Stergis	Hobart Corp. Warehouse Storage
150-7A	125 Stergis Way	2.6	Stergis	Stergis Industrial Park Auto Repair
Sub Total		14.8		
<b>Commercial Circle</b>				
149-6	200 Commercial Cir.	8.5	200 Commercial Circle Realty Trust	Dedham Recycled Gravel
150-4	400 Commercial Cir.	16.6	Dedham Corporate Center Realty Trust	Costco
Sub Total		25.1		
Total		39.9		

**TABLE 9.7**  
**PARCELS FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT: ALLIED DRIVE**

Parcel	Address	Land Area (acres)	Owner	Current Use
176-5-90	67 Allied Drive	5.5	MBTA	Parking Lot-500 cars
176-2	122 Allied Drive	2.5	Extra Space of Allied Dedham LLC	Storage, Child care, Retail
176-4	100 Allied Drive	2.3	Northeast Realty Trust	Truck Repair
177-3	40 Allied Drive	2.9	B&A Condominium Realty Trust	Vacant

### **ALLIED DRIVE/DEDHAM CORPORATE CENTER TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT**

The Allied Drive parcels include a surface parking lot that can accommodate approximately 500 cars, a three-story converted warehouse occupied by a number of tenants, including a wholesale/retail clothing store, truck rental, and storage, Cummins Truck repair, and a former warehouse converted to office space once occupied by Harvard Pilgrim Health and currently vacant.

Dedham's *Community Development Plan* (2004) provided a transit-oriented development concept plan for the Allied Drive area. The plan illustrated a five-story MBTA/private parking garage for 2,125 cars adjacent to two free-standing office/R&D buildings fronting on Allied Drive, each with about 100,000 sq. ft. The garage could provide parking for an additional two office buildings. Another parcel included a 225-unit housing development with underground parking. The adjacent Harvard Community Health building could be replaced by a residential/hotel project with 140 housing units and 240 rooms. This transit-oriented development also included a pedestrian bridge over the commuter rail tracks. If carried out with District Improvement Financing (DIF), the project could probably support local traffic and open space improvements as part of the overall financing package.

### **READVILLE/HURLEY PROPERTY**

The twenty-one acre Hurley property is located both in Dedham (fourteen acres) and Boston (seven acres). It is currently in the Limited Manufacturing District. The property contains a number of older warehouse structures occupied by the owner, the A.J. Hurley Company. A master plan is currently being developed for industrial use of the property. Adjacent to the Hurley site is a forty-acre surplus

MBTA parcel, Readville Yards. This property is in the General Residential District. Dedham and Boston need to be involved in a planning process with the MBTA to address issues of reuse, access, and infrastructure. This would build on the planning process carried out in 2003 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the MBTA, and the Readville community groups.<sup>26</sup> Incentives to attract funding for planning and development will be critical to the success of this effort.

### **STOP AND SHOP WAREHOUSE**

This facility is an important regional resource. It consists of approximately 760,000 sq. ft. of various warehouse and related service uses on a thirty-five-acre site with at least five acres of wetlands. The Stop & Shop tenancy generated some 900 truck trips per day on Boston streets. A recent owner considered demolishing two outdated buildings on the Dedham side of the property and replacing them with a new state-of-the-art distribution building. Access would continue from Hyde Park, as wetlands probably prevent use of the rail line. Since this option lacked tenant interest, another developer tried to market the property for residential use. This concept involved annexing the property by the City of Boston and it, too, has failed. Dedham may need to consider incentives to induce the redevelopment of these properties for commercial/industrial use. A new commercial use with less impact than a residential subdivision would benefit Dedham in terms of tax revenue and employment.

<sup>26</sup> Boston Redevelopment Authority, Memo: Kairos Shen, Director of Planning, Readville Yard 5 Disposition and Redevelopment, Technical Memo summarizing 5 major categories of concern to be addressed in planning and redevelopment of Yard 5, August 11, 2003.

### **EAST DEDHAM (MILTON AND HIGH STREETS)**

This area is zoned variously as Limited Manufacturing, General Business, and General Residence. Windshield surveys indicate relatively low vacancy rates and fair conditions in the business areas. Local residents and property owners would like to improve the district's appearance. If conditions merit designation as a blighted area under federal regulations, it may be possible to obtain Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for sign and façade and streetscape improvements. A public/private planning effort will need to be undertaken to explore the problems and opportunities in this area and identify appropriate funding strategies.

### **Regional Barriers to Economic Development**

Two regional issues affect economic development in Dedham: water supply and traffic congestion. While these issues are not absolute barriers to development, they must be addressed in any economic development planning that takes place.

**Water Demand and Protection of the Dedham-Westwood Water District.** Recognizing that Dedham did not have sufficient water supply during peak summer months, the town recently joined the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). Dedham now has the ability to meet some six percent of its supply needs through the MWRA. Current projections indicate that there will be ample supply to accommodate growth. However, developers are expected to undertake water conservation and stormwater protection measures. Furthermore, new commercial development requiring large amounts of water should be carefully regulated to ensure that water conservation efforts are implemented.

**Transportation Corridor Planning.** Due to Dedham's proximity to Route 128 and the presence of major retail districts along the length of Providence Highway, Dedham hosts far more cars per day than it has residents. Understandably, transportation planning in Dedham has focused primarily on traffic flow through the town and to destination

retail and employment centers, and alleviating congestion for its residents and workers. If the town wants to pursue commercial development opportunities, however, the barriers of traffic and parking must be addressed in Dedham Square, Allied Drive, the Readville/Hurley Property, and the Stop & Shop Warehouse site.

### **Economic Development Incentives**

Since Dedham is centrally located in the region and subject to substantial competition from adjacent communities, the town should assess its opportunities and barriers for economic growth and pursue strategies that can support its goals. A review of various tools for competitiveness indicates that Dedham has the necessary infrastructure but lacks the incentives required to attract growth, especially in blighted and underutilized areas where private investment is most needed. In addition to organizational changes to focus on economic revitalization, there are tax incentives, funding sources, and zoning tools that can be used to foster economic development. Dedham will need to use these programs along with corridor traffic and stormwater management if it wants to revitalize critical economic development areas.

Many towns around Dedham lack at least one of these tools or incentives, so providing them may help to motivate businesses to locate in Dedham. Establishing priority development activities, forming an economic development committee to work with property owners and regional entities, and providing adequate funding for planning would help to carry out a revitalization program.

### **EXISTING INCENTIVES**

Dedham has taken two important steps to promote economic development. First, the town has hired an economic development director. Second, Dedham joined the Quincy Economic Target Area (ETA), which includes Quincy and ten neighboring towns. The designation of an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA) and a Certified Project, as discussed below, can be an effective tool for attracting and retaining desired businesses. Norwood, for example, has approved six Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreements to attract and retain businesses.

**TABLE 9.8**  
**SUBREGION COMPETITIVENESS FOR COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Towns	Type of Incentive						
	Direct Rail Connection	Tax Increment Financing	ED Planner	ED/Ind. Commission	Streamlined Permitting	Training/Labor Retention	Public Industrial Park
Canton	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Dedham	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dover	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Foxboro	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Medfield	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Milton	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Needham	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Norwood	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Sharon	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Stoughton	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Westwood	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Walpole	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Source: Larry Koff & Associates

**FINANCIAL INCENTIVES**

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** allows municipalities to provide flexible tax incentives to attract development and employment growth. An eligible company located in an Economic Opportunity Area designated by the Board of Selectmen would be eligible for substantial state tax credits and can, in addition, negotiate a savings in local property taxes under a TIF plan. The state tax relief, a five percent Investment Tax Credit and a ten percent Abandoned Building Tax Deduction, as well as eligibility for predevelopment and/or Brownfields financing, are major incentives for attracting businesses apart from any local tax relief that might be negotiated. Furthermore, in return for the benefits a company would receive under a TIF, the town may require that Dedham residents be given priority in filling new jobs.

**District Improvement Financing.** M.G.L. c. 40Q allows a city or town to pledge future increases in property taxes generated in a specified area (the “Development District”) to repay a bond used to finance capital improvements that benefit properties within the district. The bonds could be secured only by the pledge of new future property taxes in the Development District. Since a DIF project could involve multiple parcels and owners, preparing and securing public approval of a Development Plan and a Financing Plan requires substantial scrutiny both at the local and state level.

A **Business Improvement District (BID)** is a designated contiguous area in which at least seventy-five percent of the land is zoned or used for commercial, retail, industrial or mixed uses. In Massachusetts, BIDs are authorized and regulated under M.G.L. c. 40O. Through a special assessment, property owners within the district vote to initiate, manage, and finance supplemental services above and beyond the base of services provided by the city or town. BIDs often support the following types of services:

- ◆ District management services
- ◆ Maintenance and security
- ◆ Business services
- ◆ Promotion and marketing
- ◆ Physical improvements and property management

A BID obtains revenue for these services from annual fees or a surcharge paid by the district’s property owners in addition to their real estate taxes. Each BID establishes its own fee system and may impose a cap or an upper-limit on the amount paid by property owners. For example, the Spring-

field BID caps the amount per property at \$4,000. BIDs are managed by a board of directors. Although M.G.L. c.400 does not specify the composition or size of the board, BIDs generally include representation from property owners, retailers, residents, and corporations.

The state recommends that communities considering a BID undertake a process that includes consensus building, developing an improvement plan to address district-level needs, and establishing or identifying a management entity to implement the plan. M.G.L. c. 400 requires that property owners within the proposed district petition the local governing body to establish the BID. The petition must contain the signatures of the owners of at least sixty percent of the properties and at least fifty-one percent of the assessed valuation of all real property within the proposed BID.<sup>27</sup>

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) manages a federally funded grant program, the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**. Through various set-asides of CDBG funds, DHCD disburses grants to municipalities for downtown revitalization initiatives, planning, sign and façade, streetscape, and business assistance. The grants are extremely competitive, and a successful application usually requires advance planning and documentation of need.

### REGULATORY INCENTIVES

**M.G.L. c. 43D, the Expedited Permitting Law**, encourages communities to facilitate permitting for development or redevelopment of at least 50,000 sq. ft. of commercial or mixed-use development. The state provides grants for consulting services, staffing, and in some cases special planning studies. A community that adopts Chapter 43D also receives priority consideration for various state programs such as Public Works for Economic Development (PWED) and Community Development Action Grants (CDAG). In return, the city

<sup>27</sup> Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development, "Business Improvement Districts (BID)", <<http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/components/cs/1PrgApps/BID/default.HTM>>.

or town must agree to amend its local rules and regulations to comply with the 180-day permitting timeline required under Chapter 43D.

**Transit-Oriented/Joint Development.** With the support of the MBTA, the administration is promoting transit-oriented development (TOD), which calls for concentrating housing and commercial activity near public transportation facilities. Numerous MBTA properties located at or near T stations are involved in the TOD Program. The MBTA, the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) work with local communities to use surplus MBTA land near transit stations to catalyze high-quality, transit-oriented projects. The program provides technical assistance for outreach, planning, marketing and RFP development.<sup>28</sup>

### Marketing, Promotion, Planning

Dedham will need to reach out to the owners of commercial properties and businesses and provide for a broad-based effort to facilitate appropriate commercial and industrial growth. Marketing, promotion, joint planning, and one-stop permitting are some of the strategies that local staff and town boards should consider. Given regional competition for economic development, it will be critical for Dedham to maintain a "business friendly" climate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. ESTABLISH CONSENSUS ON THE LOCATIONS AND VISIONS FOR THE KIND OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES WANT TO PROMOTE.

Dedham needs an economic development vision and plan that includes preliminary planning for the town's eight priority economic revitalization areas (Table 9.8) and its smaller, neighborhood commercial centers that may require similar atten-

<sup>28</sup> Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, "T Projects and Transit Oriented Development," at <[http://www.mbta.com/about\\_the\\_mbta/t\\_projects/projects\\_tod](http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/t_projects/projects_tod)>.

**TABLE 9.8  
VISION FOR PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

Location	Vision
Dedham Center	Prepare a plan and carry out a locally sponsored “Main Street” program with property owners, town, DCAM, State and County support for parking, traffic, streetscape improvements as well as appropriate office and mixed use development.
Providence Highway Gateway (Washington St. to Boston line)	Working with Wilder Companies (Dedham Mall), Dedham Racket and the Town’s Open Space Committee, foster the preparation of a public/private plan to promote destination shopping, mixed use, open space and pathway connections to Dedham Square and the Charles River.
Providence Highway South (Washington St. to Enterprise Dr.)	With support of property owners, enhance Dedham Plaza and adjacent areas for Big Box and destination shopping, business and personal services, office, and mixed use where appropriate.
RDO District West (West of Commuter Rail Line)	Refine zoning to reflect current pattern of land uses, i.e. retail on frontage of Providence Highway, destination shopping and entertainment (Legacy Place), and promote hi-tech RDO near Stergis Way.
RDO District East (East of Commuter Rail Line)	Promote re-use plan for Transit Oriented Development.
Readville/Hurley Site	Identify traffic improvements that will facilitate appropriate residential development of the Readville MBTA site while concurrently providing for light industrial development of the Hurley site.
Stop & Shop Warehouse	Facilitate redevelopment of site for warehouse/distribution/biotech or Light Manufacturing.
East Dedham (Milton and High Streets)	Identify a plan and needed resources to upgrade mixed use, retail, general services.

tion. Toward this end, Dedham should take the following steps:

- ◆ Initiate a **planning process** for priority commercial and industrial sites, build consensus around best uses, and provide incentives to foster development. The process should include site evaluations in each economic revitalization area. The site evaluations should provide for a data gathering phase to develop a comprehensive profile of each site, consideration of potential uses, and designated best uses for each site. The last phase should be to develop a marketing strategy for each site, which may include recommendations for physical improvements and regulatory changes – such as zoning amendments – to the priority areas to make them more development-ready.
- ◆ **Identify incentives** for key areas/sites by taking advantage of tax incentives, funding sources, and zoning techniques to foster economic growth. In addition, Dedham should establish an Economic Development Advisory Committee to work with property owners and regional

entities, and obtain planning funding. Some funding possibilities include:

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF).** Dedham should identify the types of projects that would be appropriate for TIF agreements. A statement by the Economic Development Advisory Committee could formalize town policy for the type of projects, incentives, and support to be provided.

**Chapter 43D Technical Assistance.** Although Dedham has already adopted Chapter 43D and received a grant from the Interagency Permitting Board for planning, the town should be open to designating other Priority Development Sites and receiving additional Chapter 43D grants where appropriate.

**Business Improvement District.** A BID designation would give Dedham Square Circle a base of funding to pursue marketing and promotion, and leverage additional improvements.

**DCAM/Norfolk County.** It is critical that DCAM, Norfolk County, and the town work together on a plan to provide parking and office space. A parking authority or parking corporation jointly managed by the town, county, and a local non-profit in Dedham Square could serve as an organizational vehicle to finance and manage needed parking facilities.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).**

This source of funding can be used for sign, façade, and streetscape improvements for Dedham Square and the neighborhood centers, including the Milton/High Street areas. CDBG funds can also be used for housing rehabilitation.

**2. CONSIDER DESIGNATING ADDITIONAL CHAPTER 43D PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITES.**

A Chapter 43D Priority Development Site designation may be obtained for commercially or industrially zoned parcels that can accommodate buildings of at least 50,000 sq. ft. of gross floor areas. By designating a PDS, a city or town agrees to enable “fast-track” permitting with decisions made within 180 days. In return, municipalities receive benefits such as priority consideration for the technical assistance funding mentioned above, and marketing assistance.

**3. DEVELOPING DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR EACH COMMERCIAL AREA.**

Design guidelines work to promote improved visual quality and some degree of visual cohesiveness throughout an area. Dedham already has a provision for design review and a Design Review Advisory Board to implement it, and commercial district design guidelines could be integrated into this existing process. Since it may be important to create a distinct visual identity for each district, separate guidelines should be created for each commercial area. While this would not be appropriate for all commercial areas identified in the economic development vision and plan (see above), it should be considered for smaller, cohesive areas where a distinct visual identity would make the area more attractive and more successful.

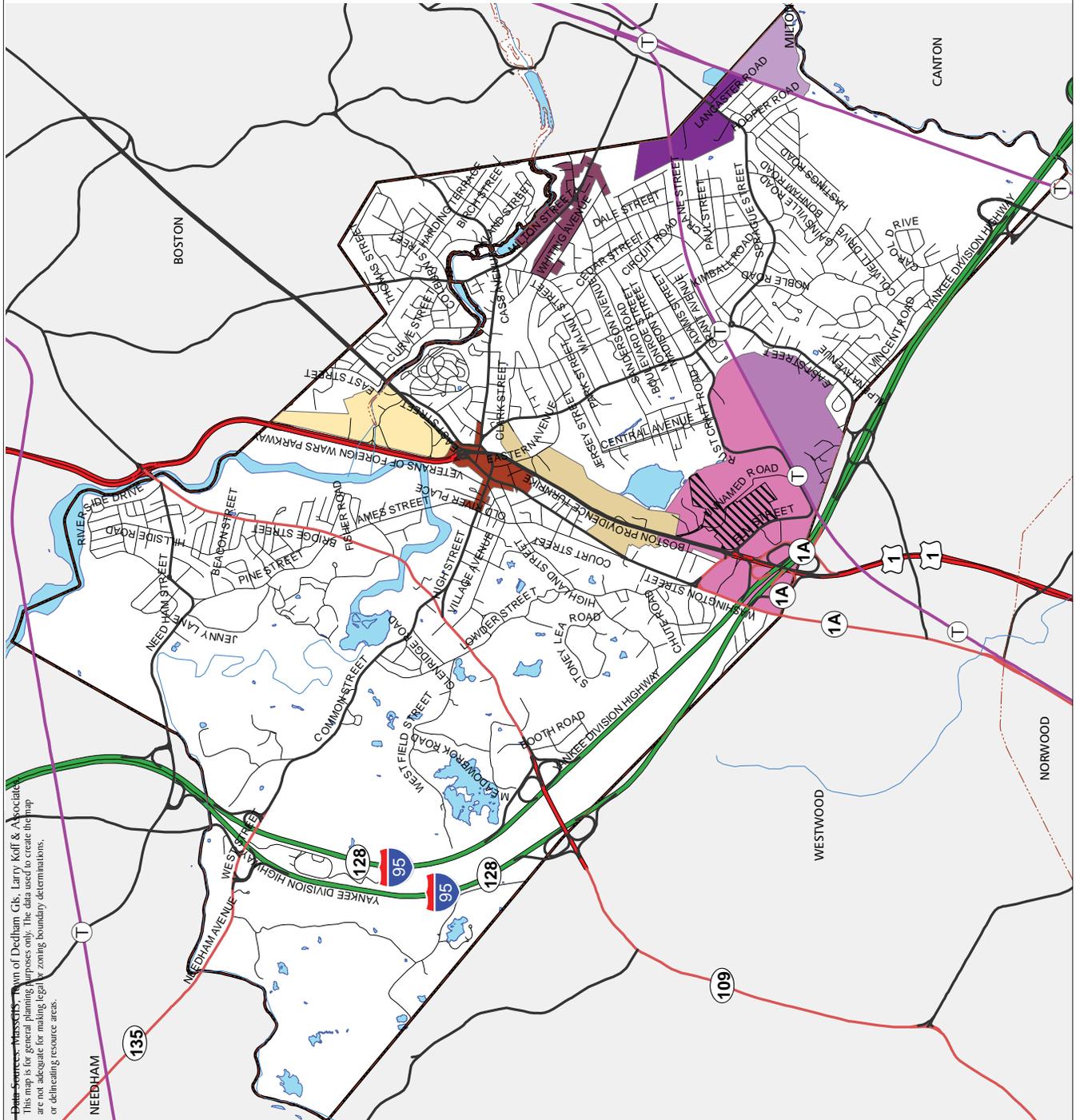
**4. UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE APPRAISAL OF PERMITTING PROCEDURES, MARKETING AND PROMOTION.**

One of the first steps in this effort would involve a self-assessment survey of Dedham’s competitive position in promoting commercial development. The Northeastern University Center for Urban and Regional Policy could help the town conduct such a survey for a modest fee. Several neighboring towns have found a self-assessment survey to be useful in setting planning priorities.

**Map 9.1**  
**Commercial & Industrial Areas**  
 April 2009

- KEY**
- Municipal Boundary
  - MBTA Stations
- ROADWAYS**
- Limited Access Highway
  - Multi-Lane Highway
  - Other Numbered Highway
  - Major Road, Collector
  - Local Roads
  - Open Water
- COMMERCIAL-INDUSTRIAL AREAS**
- Dedham Square
  - Milton & High Streets
  - RDO District East/Allied Drive
  - RDO West
  - Readville/Sprague Street
  - Route 1 Gateway
  - Route 1 South
  - Stop & Shop Site
  - Legacy Place

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES GROUP, INC.  
 Larry Koff & Associates  
 McMahon Associates, Inc.  
 Stephen Herzog



**Data Sources:** Map of Dedham GIS, Larry Koff & Associates  
 This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create this map are not adequate for making legal zoning boundary determinations, or delineating resource areas.

