

Town of Dedham Master Plan

**Executive Summary
April 2009**

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DEDHAM MASTER PLAN 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Dedham Master Plan is the product of an extensive public planning process launched by the Dedham Planning Board with a community-wide meeting in November 2007. Thereafter, the Planning Board appointed a twelve-member Master Plan Steering Committee, with representatives of town boards, citizens at large, and town staff. Over twenty-five public meetings were held to solicit input from the community.

The Master Plan report consists of twelve elements:

- ◆ Goals
- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Cultural & Historic Resources
- ◆ Natural Resources
- ◆ Open Space & Recreation
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Community Services & Facilities
- ◆ Governance
- ◆ Implementation Plan



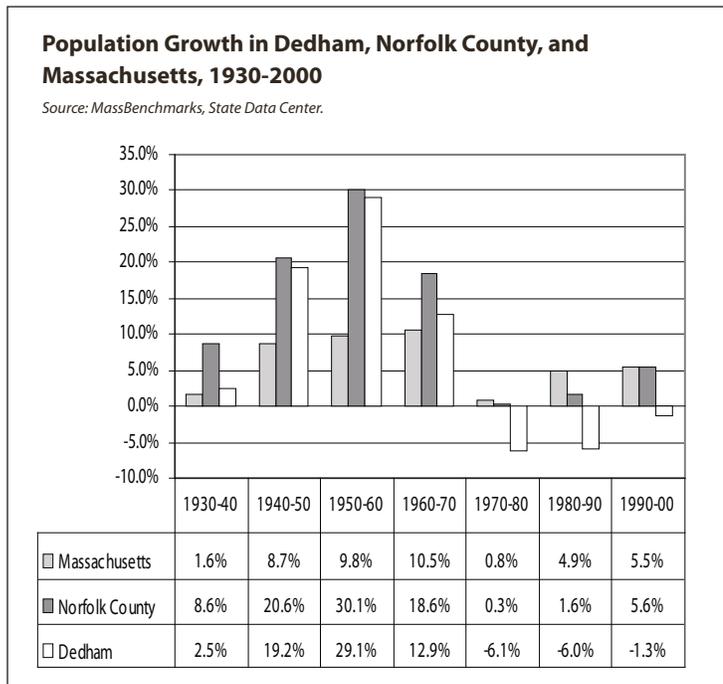
On April 22, 2009, the Planning Board held a public hearing on a draft of the new Master Plan and received public comments. This Executive Summary highlights the goals, major findings, and recommendations of the final Dedham Master Plan 2009.

POPULATION

Population dynamics affect communities in multiple ways. For example, school departments must be able to accommodate growing or declining school enrollments. Towns have to consider and respond to growing demands for elder services and determine how best to handle changing housing and transportation needs. Furthermore, facilities such as neighborhood parks, playing fields, and community centers may become stressed or underused, not only because of absolute population growth or decline but also changes in the composition of a community’s households and families, and the ages of its residents. It is essential for communities to understand their current population demographics and observe shifts and trends in order to anticipate existing and future needs.

Key Demographic Findings

- ◆ Since 1970, Dedham has experienced a decline in population. Current population estimates indicate that the town’s population has not changed significantly since 1990 and now stands at 24,046 people.
- ◆ The population in two of the most demanding age cohorts, children and older persons, have increased in size over the last several years. Estimates indicate that today, people over 55 years old represent more than one-third of Dedham’s population.
- ◆ In the last few decades, Dedham’s population has become increasingly diverse. In 1990, almost ninety-eight percent of all Dedham residents were white, but by 2000, this figure had dropped to just over ninety-three percent.
- ◆ Despite declines in population, the number of households in Dedham has increased moderately since 1990 and continues to grow. Today, there are just over 9,000 households in Dedham and the vast majority of these are families.
- ◆ The median household income in Dedham today is estimated at \$73,464. This figure is over \$10,000 higher for family households.



LAND USE & ZONING

Land use refers to the amount and intensity of a community's residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional development, along with roads, open land, and water. Patterns of development vary by the land and water resources that support them, the eras in which growth occurred, the evolution of a community's transportation infrastructure, and the adoption of zoning. Dedham's 10.3 sq. mi. land area is the result of numerous boundary changes that occurred over time as large colonial settlements were populated and divided into districts and parishes, and eventually established as new towns. The town's present shape is defined in part by water and in part by old political compromises and choices.

Dedham has regulated land use through zoning for many decades now, and the imprint of zoning can be seen in the more regimented form of newer neighborhoods and commercial projects. What also can be seen in Dedham is a disconnect – sometimes subtle, at other times conspicuous – between its zoning policies, its history, the economic realities of redevelopment, and the market.

Dedham has many “faces,” each shaped by a different period in the town's physical and economic evolution. Its development pattern can be interpreted from an ordinary street map. Definable patterns of use and intensity of use tend to follow major transportation features and they, in turn, tend to relate to major natural features.

Today, Dedham is evolving within a framework etched by mature transportation facilities, water, and wetlands. Since 1999, it has attracted redevelopment and intensification of existing development, both along the Providence Highway's retail corridor and on underutilized land near the Route 128/Route 1/1A interchange. Even though the town's general development pattern has not changed dramatically, the constellation of land uses within established areas has shifted and the intensity of use in some areas has increased. This is typical of maturely developed suburbs.

Goals

- ◆ Update and modernize the Dedham Zoning Bylaw to achieve consistency with the goals and recommendations of this Master Plan.
- ◆ Integrate principles and best practices of sustainable development into Dedham's development regulations.

LAND USE CHANGE IN DEDHAM, 1971-1999

| Class of Use | Acres in Use | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | 1971 | 1985 | 1999 | 1971-99 Chg. |
| Agricultural Uses | 86.1 | 65.0 | 62.1 | -24.0 |
| Forested Land | 1,930.7 | 1,865.5 | 1,764.7 | -166.0 |
| Mining | 7.9 | 7.9 | 7.9 | 0.0 |
| Open Land | 177.2 | 64.7 | 85.8 | -91.4 |
| Recreation | 182.8 | 168.6 | 190.4 | 7.6 |
| Multi-Family | 28.9 | 37.0 | 40.7 | 11.8 |
| Small Lot Residential (<¼ acre) | 660.4 | 666.0 | 666.0 | 5.6 |
| Moderate Lot Residential (¼ – ½ acre) | 1,340.5 | 1,356.2 | 1,379.5 | 39.0 |
| Larger Lot Residential (> ½ acre) | 522.7 | 541.3 | 572.1 | 49.4 |
| Commercial | 157.8 | 191.5 | 204.7 | 46.9 |
| Industrial | 212.6 | 356.1 | 399.0 | 186.5 |
| Public or Institutional Land | 258.8 | 272.3 | 230.9 | -27.9 |
| Transportation | 328.2 | 325.3 | 316.8 | -11.4 |
| Waste Disposal | 23.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -23.0 |
| Non-Forested Wetlands | 693.0 | 693.0 | 690.5 | -2.5 |
| Open Water | <u>222.5</u> | <u>222.5</u> | <u>221.8</u> | -0.7 |
| Total | 6,832.9 | 6,832.9 | 6,832.9 | |

Source: MassGIS, "Land Use," January 2002, from aerial photography in 1999; photointerpretation by University of Massachusetts-Amherst Resource Mapping Project.

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- ◆ Evaluate ways to encourage “village” design in Dedham’s neighborhood commercial centers.
- ◆ Improve the quality of life for residents who live in close proximity to commercial areas.
- ◆ Encourage the reuse of attractive or historic buildings that are not part of a historic district.
- ◆ Clarify and simplify regulations and procedures for the reuse or redevelopment of older buildings.
- ◆ Improve and clarify existing permitting environment, including regulations and process.
- ◆ Improve communication between and among major boards with development review and permitting authority.
- ◆ Expand opportunities for town professionals to coordinate the development review process and ensure that Dedham’s regulations and policies are consistently implemented.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Smart Growth:** Dedham has significant potential for smart growth. It has two commuter rail stations, four points of access to the interstate highway system, and a development pattern with many ingredients of smart design, such as areas conducive to neighborhood “village” development. It also lacks crucial components of smart growth policy: supportive zoning and land use policies, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies, and alternative transportation incentives.
- ◆ **Future Development:** Dedham needs to harness the full power of land use regulation so that future development occurs where there are adequate facilities to support it and provides not only economic and fiscal benefits, but also environmental benefits.

Recommendations

- ◆ Recodify and update the Zoning Bylaw and amend the Zoning Map, and update the subdivision control regulations to ensure consistency and compatibility of technical standards with the updated Zoning Bylaw and the goals and recommendations of the Master Plan.
- ◆ Change the Town Planner position from a consultant to a municipal employee.
- ◆ Inventory large underutilized parcels and examine how to maximize their potential.
- ◆ Improve communication between and among major boards with jurisdiction over projects and expand opportunities for coordination by town professionals associated with those boards.
- ◆ Evaluate the town’s capital planning process for its ability to justify impact fees, and modify the process and content of the plan as needed. Dedham needs to be prepared for the eventuality that impact fee legislation will be enacted in Massachusetts.
- ◆ Establish an annual review process to evaluate the town’s progress toward implementing this master plan, to be led jointly by the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board.

TRANSPORTATION

Located on the Route 128 corridor and divided by regional roadways, Dedham's traffic levels vary based on regional growth and trends as much as they do from changes within the town itself. Achieving balance between accommodating growth and protecting residential areas is a complicated challenge made more difficult as demands on the transportation system continue to increase. By integrating transportation planning into growth discussions, Dedham will continue to be successful in achieving this balance.



While Dedham has made progress in managing its transportation network over the past decade, challenges increase as residents travel farther for work and the web of workers traveling to Dedham widens.

To accommodate these increases, Dedham has worked to focus growth along its regional roads. At the same time as regional growth has occurred, Dedham began to look inward, experiencing renewed interest in attracting shoppers, residents, and activity into its neighborhood commercial centers, such as East Dedham and its traditional downtown, Dedham Square. As the town seeks to preserve and improve its transportation future, creating more walkable areas, improving pedestrian safety, and expanding public transit use and service will be equally as important as increasing the capacity of Dedham's roadways.

Goals

- ◆ Increase the efficiency of Dedham's roadways through effective advocacy for priority transportation projects.
- ◆ Discourage traffic on residential streets through the appropriate use of traffic calming measures.
- ◆ Ensure continued maintenance and improvement of Dedham's pedestrian infrastructure.
- ◆ Increase access to and efficiency of public transportation in Dedham, including the JBL and MBTA bus lines.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Pedestrians & Bicycle Facilities:** Despite Dedham's "walkability" in many areas, Dedham has significant barriers to the development of pedestrian and bicycle routes through town. As identified in the *Open Space & Recreation Plan 2004-2009* there are several potential locations where the town could create bike lanes or paths.

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- ◆ **Roadways:** Dedham's roadway issues include the need for general improvements, cut through traffic due to high traffic volume on regional roadways, traffic circulation across town due to the physical barrier that Providence Highway presents, and identification and preservation of scenic roads.
- ◆ **Parking:** Parking is a multi-faceted issue in Dedham. Parking ratios required by zoning can be difficult to achieve on depending on site, cost and utilization constraints. Furthermore, parking requirements are not always conducive to mixed-use and infill development and work against other town goals. Parking in Dedham Square is a specific concern, as is parking on sidewalks.
- ◆ **Public Transportation & Transit Oriented Development (TOD):** Dedham is fortunate to have two commuter rail stations within the town, as well as local and regional bus service. This infrastructure provides Dedham with opportunities to benefit from increased utilization of public transit and TOD. However, to do so requires modifying existing zoning, planning and incentives.

Recommendations

- ◆ Consider creating a transportation advisory committee to oversee the town's diverse transportation initiatives and advocate for their implementation.
- ◆ Work with JBL bus lines and the MBTA to extend bus service to employment centers, residential neighborhoods, and growth areas such as Legacy Place and NewBridge on the Charles.
- ◆ Create a town-wide traffic calming policy to institute traffic calming in various residential neighborhoods.
- ◆ Develop a TDM policy and develop relationships with its larger companies to encourage them to adopt TDM policies.
- ◆ Conduct a review of streets that present parking problems and use them as a basis to establish guidelines for allowing and managing parking on residential streets.
- ◆ Maintain sidewalks and keep them free and clear for pedestrians.
- ◆ Work with MassHighway to prepare an access management study for Providence Highway that examines access along the road as a whole, not on a request-by-request basis.
- ◆ Continue to monitor the local transportation infrastructure of Dedham Square and make strategic investments to ensure its ongoing vitality and balance.

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

For many people, the term “historic resource” conjures an image of the quintessential colonial house. However, historic resources are so much more than 200-year old homes. They include any physical remnant from a community’s past, including objects, buildings, structures, and roadways. Dedham has not only historic homes, but also civic buildings, mill structures, stone walls, cemeteries, stone bridges, and scenic roads, and all contribute to the town’s historic character and sense of place. Each of these resources – some portraying Dedham’s rural past, others its industrial heritage – are inextricably knit together to provide a unique built environment. These resources exist throughout the community and can be found within all of Dedham’s historic neighborhoods. Each resource has its own unique story to tell.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

| Historic Name | Date Listed | Number of Properties |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Historic Districts | | |
| Allin Congregational Church* | 2006 | 1 contributing |
| Dedham Historical Society* | 2006 | 1 contributing |
| Dedham Public Library* | 2006 | 1 contributing |
| Dedham Village | 2006 | 342 contributing |
| First Church Meetinghouse* | 2006 | 1 contributing |
| St. Paul’s Episcopal Church* | 2006 | 2 contributing |
| Individual Listings | | |
| Ames School | 1983 | 1 |
| Endicott Estate | 2002 | 6 |
| Fairbanks House | 1966 | 1 |
| Norfolk County Courthouse* | 1972 | 1 |

**These properties are included within the 2006 Dedham Village National Register District, but they are also listed individually in the State Register of Historic Places since each property has a preservation restriction.*

Goals

- ◆ Identify and document Dedham’s historic resources.
- ◆ Protect Dedham’s historic and archaeological heritage by identifying and instituting appropriate and broadly supported methods of historic preservation.
- ◆ Restore and preserve Dedham’s municipally-owned historic resources.
- ◆ Identify, document, and protect Dedham’s scenic roads.
- ◆ Make preservation objectives an integral part of Dedham’s development review and permitting process.
- ◆ Generate local support for Dedham’s historic resources through public outreach and education.
- ◆ Explore the possibility of providing professional support for historic preservation initiatives through the establishment of a regional preservation planner.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Scenic Roads:** Dedham has several roads that contribute to the town’s character through their natural, historic and scenic qualities. Currently, these roads are not protected by a scenic roads bylaw.

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- ◆ **Community Preservation (CPA):** CPA offers towns an opportunity to raise revenue that can be used to preserve historic resources. Since Dedham has significant historic resources, a dedicated funding source would benefit the town's historic preservation efforts.
- ◆ **Dedham Historic Districts Commission (HDC):** The Dedham HDC does not receive funding from the town. This hinders its ability to carry out preservation planning initiatives beyond those that can be accomplished by volunteers, such as a comprehensive historic resources inventory.
- ◆ **Development Review & Permitting:** Dedham currently does not integrate preservation objectives within the development review and permitting process for public and private projects. While the HDC has been consulted on some development projects in the past, it is not a consistent practice within town government.
- ◆ **Preservation Tools:** Dedham has limited tools to preserve its historic resources. Some possible additions to Dedham's preservation toolbox include Neighborhood Architectural Conservation (NAC) districts and a demolition delay bylaw.

Recommendations

- ◆ Adopt a scenic roads bylaw.
- ◆ Encourage development of NAC districts.
- ◆ Adopt a demolition delay bylaw.
- ◆ Adopt the CPA.
- ◆ Institute a regular, formal role for the Dedham Historic Districts Commission in reviewing and commenting on projects that affect town-owned historic resources.
- ◆ Integrate historic preservation objectives into the town's existing development review and permitting procedures.
- ◆ Implement preservation recommendations identified in previous planning efforts.
- ◆ Complete a comprehensive historic resource inventory.
- ◆ Seek Certified Local Government (CLG) status for the Dedham Historic Districts Commission.
- ◆ Seek support for a regional preservation planner.

NATURAL RESOURCES

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.

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</i> var. <i>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 |

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 September 11, 2007. *T = Threatened; *E = Endangered; *SC = Species of Special Concern.

Goals

- ◆ Promote conservation and protection of Dedham’s wetlands and water resources.
- ◆ Increase awareness and management of local wildlife.
- ◆ Provide public education and build awareness of Dedham’s natural resources.
- ◆ Provide consistency and a coordinated approach to implementing federal, state, and local stormwater management requirements.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Land Acquisition & Preservation:** As a largely developed community, preservation of existing open space and protection of natural resources are of critical importance to Dedham. This issue extends

beyond merely land acquisition to the development and integration of governmental policies and efforts that work toward land and resource protection.

- ◆ **Environmental Impact of Development:** Dedham’s current approach to evaluating the environmental impacts of a development is fragmented and fairly informal.
- ◆ **Water Conservation & Protection:** A critical issue in Dedham is the need to conserve water and protect water quality. It is important for the town to build on efforts of the Dedham-Westwood Water District to promote water conservation through regulation and education.



Recommendations

- ◆ Develop an environmental checklist to assist with development review.
- ◆ Continue to review and revise Dedham’s local stormwater management regulations and bylaws to ensure consistency with state and federal requirements.
- ◆ Establish municipal policy and an annual budget appropriation for wildlife management.
- ◆ Establish a plan and priorities for maintaining and increasing the town’s urban forest and public tree inventory.
- ◆ Develop and promote public conservation efforts relating to water and energy resources.
- ◆ Increase education and outreach efforts to promote appreciation and protection of the town’s natural resources.
- ◆ Increase collaboration with nearby communities and conservation groups for regional water resource and habitat protection.

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

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. 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 set priorities and take creative approaches to protecting the land they have left.

Each of Dedham's neighborhoods has open space, park, and recreation facilities. The Park and Recreation Department manages twelve sites totaling about fifty-five acres with playgrounds and active recreation amenities. It also manages the playgrounds and athletic fields at several of Dedham's public schools. In turn, the Conservation Commission is responsible for maintaining the public hiking trails located on municipal conservation land, such as those in the Town Forest.

EXISTING OPEN SPACE IN DEDHAM NEIGHBORHOODS

| 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, Society of African Missions (SMA) Fathers parcel. |
| 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 |
| Greenlodge/Sprague/Manor | Fowl Meadow and Neponset River Reservation, Little Wigwam Pond, Manor Fields, Paul Park, Greenlodge School, Capen Early Childhood Education Center, Striar Property. |

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

PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND PLAYGROUNDS

| Ownership | Number of Sites | Est. Acres | Facilities |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|---|
| Town of Dedham | | | |
| 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 |
| Commonwealth of Mass. | 5 | 626.5 | Playgrounds, basketball, tennis, hiking trails, boat launch |
| Privately Owned | 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.

Goals

- ◆ Improve the quality of Dedham's parks, playing fields, and other open spaces.
- ◆ Increase opportunities for passive recreation such as walking and biking by developing a system of trails and walking and bike paths throughout town.
- ◆ Continue detailed and systematic planning for Dedham's short- and long-term open space and recreation needs.
- ◆ Establish a consistent funding source for open space acquisition.
- ◆ Identify priority open space parcels for permanent protection and/or future acquisition.
- ◆ Promote the beautification of Dedham's roadways, streetscapes, and other transportation infrastructure.



Key Issues

- ◆ **Recreational Opportunities:** Dedham has a wealth of recreational opportunities through its facilities and open space. Not surprisingly, ongoing maintenance of facilities is an ever-present concern. 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 parcels into a town-wide open space system.
- ◆ **Open Space Protection:** Dedham recently acquired two properties to add to its open space inventory: the Striar Property and the Society of African Missions (SMA) Fathers parcel. Determining how best to utilize this land and the continued acquisition and protection of other significant parcels are important issues for the town.
- ◆ **Funding:** Funding is needed to maintain Dedham's existing recreational facilities and to increase its open space inventory. The CPA is a funding source that Dedham could use to augment its network of protected open space. (*See also, Cultural & Historic Resources.*)
- ◆ **Conservation Restrictions:** Dedham has not promoted the use of conservation restrictions as a component of its open space protection strategy. However, with limited funding imposing conservation restrictions on privately-held land would result in the same benefit of permanent protection through acquisition and thus enhance the town's open space inventory.

- ◆ **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. The town's Environmental Coordinator acts as liaison for different boards and departments dealing with open space and environmental issues. This position may need to be assessed and reshaped to accommodate Dedham's changing and growing open space and environmental needs.
- ◆ **Zoning and Open Space:** Open space has a value as a design element in new development, providing aesthetic, ecological, and sometimes recreational benefit. Zoning techniques such as "cluster" development preserve open space as new development occurs. Dedham can strengthen its efforts to preserve open space by adopting an open space-residential development (OSRD) bylaw.

Recommendations

- ◆ Continue efforts to plan for and develop the Manor fields (formerly the Striar property) site for recreational uses.
- ◆ Continue to develop and complete a comprehensive open space inventory that identifies and ranks all open space parcels within the town.
- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to provide universal access to the town's recreation facilities, parks and trails.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Encourage neighborhood associations and groups to take greater ownership and stewardship of neighborhood open spaces.
- ◆ Establish a trail stewards group.
- ◆ Continue efforts to develop a town-wide trails system.
- ◆ 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.

HOUSING

Dedham has a diverse housing stock that reflects the town's history and growth. 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/Sprague/Manor, 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.

Goals

- ◆ Provide for a diversity of housing opportunities.
- ◆ Build municipal capacity to address local housing needs.
- ◆ Encourage and facilitate quality design and maintenance of residential properties.
- ◆ Improve housing quality conditions for homeowners and tenants in each neighborhood by enforcing state and local codes.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Housing Advocacy:** Dedham does not have a town board dedicated to addressing housing issues and needs within the community. Over time, housing markets shift and populations grow and change. A housing advocacy board, such as a housing partnership committee can monitor a population's housing needs as they change, and work with town staff, local and regional organizations to work to address them.
- ◆ **Affordability:** Housing affordability continues to be a concern in Dedham despite fluctuations in the housing market. In particular, first-time homebuyers have dif-



Variety of housing styles in Dedham neighborhoods (top to bottom): Manor, East Dedham, Oakdale, Riverdale.

difficulty affording a suitable home in Dedham.

- ◆ **Preservation of Housing:** Dedham's housing contributes to the local character and offers a variety of housing choice. Preservation of Dedham's housing stock to maintain diversity, contribute to affordability, and retain local character is a critical need.

Recommendations

- ◆ Complete a housing plan.
- ◆ Establish a housing partnership committee.
- ◆ Identify town-owned, tax-title properties that may need to be redeveloped to address housing needs.
- ◆ Rehabilitate highly visible and deteriorated residential properties.
- ◆ Establish a housing rehabilitation program.
- ◆ Establish a rental code enforcement program.
- ◆ Create a housing resource guide.
- ◆ Work with Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership (SAHP) to promote first time home buyer program.

HOUSING UNITS AND TENURE

| | Housing Units | Owner occupied (%) | Renter occupied (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| DEDHAM | | | |
| East Dedham | 2,069 | 58.9% | 41.1% |
| Greenlodge/Sprague/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."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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. 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 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.

| CHARACTERISTICS OF DEDHAM’S BUSINESS DISTRICTS | | | |
|---|---|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 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 (West of Commuter Rail Line) | Shopping Goods/General Services | Low | Fair |
| RDO District East (East of Commuter Rail Line) | Office/Hotel/General Services | High | Good |
| Readville/Sprague St./Stop & Shop | General Services/Office/Warehouse/Flex Space | High | Fair |
| East Dedham (Milton and High Streets) | General Services/Office Warehouse/Flex Space/Convenience/Retail | Low | Fair |

Source: Larry Koff & Associates, Windshield Survey, August 2007.

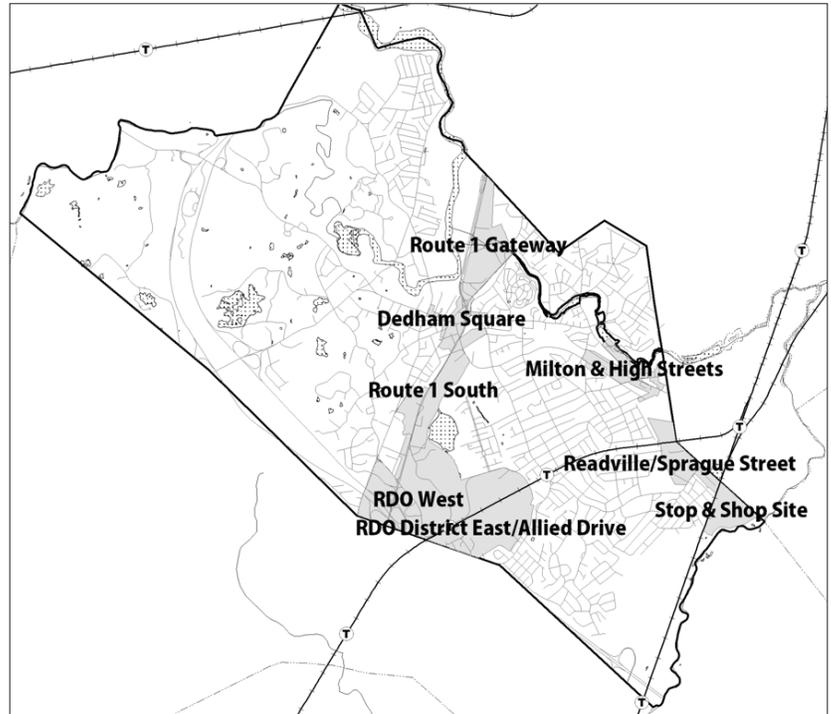
Note: Vacancy rate rating=5% low, 6-10% average, 11 % + high, approximated.

Goals

- ◆ Promote public- and private-sector support and coordination of Dedham’s economic development initiatives.
- ◆ Enhance development and redevelopment of large-scale and underutilized sites and areas.
- ◆ Encourage and support the revitalization of neighborhood commercial centers such as East Dedham, Dedham Square, Oakdale Square, and the Route 109/Bridge Street area.
- ◆ Identify market opportunities and locations for new types of economic growth.
- ◆ Support ongoing efforts to revitalize and improve Dedham Square.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Opportunities & 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. Each area has unique needs, and achieving a coherent vision will require leadership by property owners, business owners, the town, and in some cases the MBTA, the City of Boston, and state government.



- ◆ **Priority Development Areas:** Dedham has several areas that may be designated for priority development. They include: Dedham Square, Stergis Way/Commercial Circle, Allied Drive/Dedham Corporate Center TOD, Readville/Hurley Property, Stop and Shop Warehouse, East Dedham (Milton & High Streets). Dedham should undertake planning to build consensus and provide the right mix of incentives to foster development in these areas.
- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **Economic Development Incentives:** 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, Dedham can use tax incentives, funding sources and zoning tools to foster economic development.

Recommendations

- ◆ Establish consensus on the locations and visions for the kind of economic development that residents and businesses want to promote.
- ◆ Consider designating additional Chapter 43D priority development sites.
- ◆ Develop design guidelines for each commercial area.
- ◆ Undertake a comprehensive appraisal of permitting procedures, marketing and promotion. (*See also, Land Use & Zoning.*)

COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

The community services and facilities element of a master plan describes the buildings, other facilities, and human resources a local government will need in order to meet future demands for services. A public facility is any town property that has been developed for a particular public purpose and provides a base of operations for community services. It also includes local utilities, such as public water or municipal light service, and other, non-building facilities such as parks, playgrounds, and cemeteries.



In suburbs like Dedham, community facilities commonly include town halls, fire and police stations, a public library, and public schools. In addition to these “basic” public buildings, many communities have unique facilities such as town hospitals, an airport, or a function hall and grounds, like Dedham’s Endicott Estate. Together, a town’s buildings, land, infrastructure, and equipment make it possible for municipal employees and volunteers to deliver basic services to residents and businesses. Providing quality public services depends both on adequate facilities and adequate personnel to staff them, but “adequate” depends on several factors: the form and arrangement of local government, land use patterns and local development trends, and the expectations of residents.

Goals

- ◆ Plan for and finance the long-term maintenance, improvement, and necessary expansion of Dedham’s public facilities and infrastructure.
- ◆ Continue to finance capital improvements through a responsible approach to debt management.
- ◆ Continue to increase the efficiency of town operations and services.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Departmental Coordination:** With a mix of elected and appointed positions in Dedham’s town government, departmental coordination and service delivery can be inefficient at times. The Town is aware of this issue and works continually to improve communication between boards and departments. In addition, the town is considering reviewing its charter to identify organizational weaknesses.
- ◆ **Staffing:** Despite a relatively flat staffing trend over recent years, respondents to a departmental survey conducted as part of the master plan process identified a need for more personnel in some areas, either now or in the near future. Significant among these are the fire and police departments, which both expect to see increased workloads and subsequent staffing needs due to several major residential and

commercial developments that will be completed in the next few years. In addition to increased demand for services, some town departments are experiencing staff shortages because the work itself is becoming more complicated or the needs of the populations they serve have changed.



- ◆ **Facilities Constraints:** Dedham has several, pressing public facilities needs, and public safety facilities are a top priority. Both the fire and police facilities have severe space shortages, as well as multiple other issues and deficiencies. Town Hall is another high priority for Dedham. As a result of recent strategic planning efforts, the town is in a much better position to plan for and meet its capital needs. Still, one of the major questions that remains for Dedham is how much additional debt the town wishes to take on to meet its capital building goals and how much additional tax burden residents are willing to accept.

Recommendations

- ◆ Continue to establish a formal capital planning process and maintenance plan.
- ◆ Create a full-time facilities manager position to provide sustained maintenance for public facilities.
- ◆ Develop asset management policies to dispose of excess property.
- ◆ Continue to scope the town's funding needs, match them with prospective grants, and dedicate staff time to pursue them.

GOVERNANCE

Governance refers to a municipality’s form and structure of government. Although governance is often intertwined with the provision of community services and the operation of municipal facilities, a governance analysis is more concerned with a community’s political culture, citizen access to opportunities for public service and the policy-setting process, how the community resolves conflicts and makes law, and the locus of authority for major decisions. Dedham is trying to determine the best way to move forward with a review and assessment of its current government structure. A petition recently circulated to establish a Charter Commission under the Home Rule Procedures Act. Since this effort failed to gain enough signatures, Dedham is now considering other ways to evaluate its town government.

| FORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEDHAM’S REGION | | | | |
|--|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Community | Population* | Type of Town Meeting | Type of Charter* | Executive Structure |
| Canton | 21,916 | Open | N/A | BOS/Executice Secretary |
| DEDHAM | 24,046 | Representative | Home Rule* | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Dover | 5,627 | Open | N/A | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Foxborough | 16,298 | Open | Special Act | BOS/Town Manager |
| Medfield | 12,266 | Open | N/A | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Milton | 25,691 | Representative | N/A | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Needham | 28,263 | Representative | Special Act [†] | BOS/Town Manager |
| Norwood | 28,172 | Representative | Home Rule | BOS/General Manager |
| Randolph | 30,168 | Representative | N/A | BOS/Executive Secretary |
| Sharon | 17,033 | Open | N/A | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Stoughton | 26,951 | Representative | Home Rule | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Walpole | 23,086 | Representative | Home Rule [‡] | BOS/Town Administrator |
| Westwood | 14,010 | Open | Home Rule [‡] | BOS/Town Administrator |

**Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Population Estimates, 2007, Municipal Data Bank.*

† Those without Charters operate under the provisions encompassed in MGL c.39 through c.44.

‡ Town Charter available on-line

Note: Communities are member of the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) sub-region of the MAPC.

Sources: Official Town websites of the above listed communities.

Goals

- ◆ Evaluate Dedham’s form of government and its relevance to the town’s present and future operations.
- ◆ Increase education, support, and accountability for Dedham’s Town Meeting Representatives.
- ◆ Commit to long-term planning in Dedham’s capital budget process.

Key Issues

- ◆ **Elected & Appointed Boards:** Though the Town Charter mostly centralizes Dedham’s government, the structure of town government also divides authority and procedures in ways that create some problems for local officials. At times, blurred lines of authority and responsibility can result in friction and stalemates, and in extreme circumstances it can influence policy and regulatory approvals. Recognizing this, Dedham has taken steps to improve interdepartmental dialogue including regular meetings of the Town Administrator and senior staff in the town’s major operations departments.

- ◆ **Development Review & Permitting:** Boards and departments with development review and permitting duties are scattered in different parts of town government, in part due to the divisions of authority in Dedham’s charter and also because of state law. In addition, they have to comply with different statutory procedures and timetables. All of this can make it very difficult for permitting authorities to communicate. The town has worked to address some of these challenges by establishing the Development Review Team (DRT), creating the position of Economic Development Director, and adopting new permitting software to coordinate and track permit applications.
- ◆ **Changes to Form of Government:** Some Dedham residents and officials want to make organizational changes in town government. A group tried to initiate the charter review process in 2009 by collecting enough petition signatures to put a Charter Review Commission question on the town election ballot. These initial efforts were not successful, but the group plans to make another attempt in 2010.
- ◆ **Efficiency vs. Effectiveness:** While some officials state they want more efficiency in their government, they also want an effective government—one that is responsive to people, works slowly and deliberately by design, and gives citizens the opportunity to influence or participation directly in decisions. As Dedham examines the overall structure of government and the manner in which the town makes and implements decisions, the relationship between efficiency and effectiveness and relative importance of each should be considered as well.
- ◆ **Citizen Participation:** Dedham is concerned about maintaining good communication with citizens and providing access to local government. The town uses a “mini-town meeting” to give Town Meeting Representatives and citizens a chance to ask questions about warrant articles and obtain answers from town officials and department heads before Town Meeting. This system promotes effective communication between Dedham’s precinct chairs, Town Meeting members, and the general public. However, additional support and training for Town Meeting members would empower and hold them accountable, and generally improve Dedham’s legislative process.
- ◆ **Technology & Town Governance:** As communication with citizens is essential, Dedham is working to promote better use of the town website to disseminate information by posting minutes from board meetings and other public records. Dedham could also use its website to capture public energy and respond to the knowledge of its citizens.

Recommendations

- ◆ Continue efforts to establish a Charter Review Commission to review the Town Charter.
- ◆ Improve the development review process and issues surrounding permitting in general.
- ◆ Improve representative town meeting by establishing a training program for town meeting representatives.
- ◆ Undertake a strategic study and planning effort to improve the town’s website, starting with its goals and objectives and including specific measures to improve the website.
- ◆ Have a “point person” within town hall to communicate with neighborhood groups, maintain contact information, and post information about the groups on the town website.

