

PHASE I

Action: Establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee.

Primary MP element: All

Related MP elements: All

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Planning Board, Town Administrator, Planning Director

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers and existing staff

Discussion:

Although many people think that implementing a master plan is mainly the responsibility of a Planning Board, master plans involve far more than land use and zoning. Communities with many boards and committees – like Dedham – are more likely to succeed with master plan implementation if they establish a coordinating committee to keep the implementation process moving forward. This will be particularly true once the initial implementation period has passed. In consultation with the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen should appoint a Master Plan Implementation Committee (7 to 9 members). The Committee's charge should include the following responsibilities:

- ◆ Serve as a resource to town departments and boards to assist with interpreting the master plan and implementing recommended actions;
- ◆ Guide the implementation process by coordinating actions that require participation from multiple departments and boards, making periodic reports to Town Meeting, and generally providing oversight, technical assistance, and advocacy;
- ◆ Assist with public outreach and education needed to implement the plan;
- ◆ Support funding requests for master plan implementation; and
- ◆ Ensure that the master plan remains a “living document” by reviewing the status of master plan implementation and the continued relevance of master plan recommendations, and make proposals to the Planning Board as needed to amend or modify the implementation plan.

Action: Integrate master plan implementation within the Town's annual goal-setting process.

Primary MP element: Governance

Related MP elements: All

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Town Administrator, Planning Director

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham has an annual goal-setting process that helps to align the work of staff with goals established by the Board of Selectmen. This process provides an ideal opportunity to engage all town departments in the master plan implementation process and creates a mechanism for tracking the

status of master plan recommendations. In preparing their fiscal year goals for the Town Administrator, each department should be asked to include at least one achievable goal that addresses actions contained in the implementation plan. Toward this end, the goals template that department heads use to submit their goals should be modified to include, following the “Importance” and “Timing” items, a third item entitled, “Relationship to Master Plan,” with space to identify the applicable master plan goal or implementation plan action. This will encourage all departments to consider the master plan in their annual operations planning. In addition, it will help to coordinate implementation at the staff level, where most of the master plan’s implementation will actually occur (as is the case in most suburban communities).

Action: Conduct a comprehensive review and update of the Dedham Zoning Bylaw.

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Natural Resources, Economic Development, Open Space and Recreation, Housing

Leadership responsibility: Planning Board

Support: Planning Director, Environmental Coordinator, Town Counsel

Resources needed: \$70,000-\$85,000

Discussion:

Dedham recently recodified its Zoning Bylaw, which is a wise “first step” toward improving a community’s land use regulations. While recodification helps to reorganize a zoning bylaw and make it easier for many people to use, recodification is not designed to address fundamental land use policy objectives. Dedham needs to conduct a comprehensive review and update of its Zoning Bylaw to advance the land use, housing, environmental, energy, and economic development goals of the master plan and to improve the town’s permitting procedures. The following tasks should be emphasized during the zoning revision process.

- ◆ **Review, clarify, and strengthen site development regulations.** Particular attention should be paid to:
 - ◆ *Off-street parking.* Dedham’s off-street parking requirements are considerable and often excessive for nearly all types of nonresidential development, resulting in large amounts of impervious surface.
 - ◆ *Minimum open space requirements for nonresidential development.* The lack of required open space, coupled with hefty parking requirements, results in the “sea of asphalt” effect that characterizes much suburban sprawl and causes a range of negative environmental impacts.
 - ◆ *Environmental and energy performance standards for the design, construction, and operation of sites and buildings.* For each type of development (e.g. commercial, institutional, residential) Dedham should decide whether it wants to require or encourage the adoption of environmental and energy performance standards, what those standards will be, and how they will be administered or enforced. Dedham may choose to use the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system for some types of development. However, other rating systems and development objectives should be explored.

- ◆ *Landscaping and pedestrian connections between commercial and residential uses.* Adjacent residential and commercial uses require particularly thoughtful planning and site design. There may be needs for visual screening through vegetative buffers, earthen berms, or other means as well as needs to connect different land uses in order to promote walking and biking, and to move toward a more mixed-use pattern of development. The Zoning Bylaw should be updated to include development regulations that address the need for screening for aesthetic or visual purposes and also for connectivity.
- ◆ **Provide incentives for the development of a variety of housing types.** Offering alternatives to single-family home development, especially when close to transit, reduces land consumption and increases housing equity, both of which are key principles of smart growth.
- ◆ **Replace Dedham's existing Planned Residential Development (PRD) bylaw with an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) bylaw.** Dedham's PRD bylaw is intended to allow a less land-consumptive pattern of residential development. However, it requires a small percentage of open space and it is unclear or confusing on many levels. In addition, access to PRD requires Town Meeting approval on a project-by-project basis before a developer can even apply for a permit. Dedham should create a new Open Space-Residential Development (OSRD) bylaw that requires a higher minimum amount of open space, allows for a variety of housing types, and offers effective density bonuses and other incentives to make the bylaw realistic for developers.
- ◆ **Review and improve the development review and permitting process.** Dedham's current requirements for permitting and approvals are unnecessarily complicated and vague. There should be a concerted effort to clarify and streamline the permitting process, paying particular attention to:
 - ◆ The Major Nonresidential Project permitting process and special permit granting criteria;
 - ◆ Site development standards and site plan decision criteria; and
 - ◆ Parking standards.
 - ◆ Roles and responsibilities of the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Development Review Team, and other reviewing authorities.

Action: Complete the review and update of the Rules and Regulations of Subdivision Control.

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Transportation, Natural Resources

Leadership responsibility: Planning Board

Support: Planning Director, DPW Director, Director of Engineering

Resources needed: Existing staff or consulting engineer

Discussion:

Dedham needs to complete the review and update of the Rules and Regulations of Subdivision Control that began last year. Subdivision regulations set forth all the technical standards for the subdivision of land and the provision of public infrastructure, such as roads and sewers. Although not as well-known to the general public as zoning, subdivision regulations have great influence over the form and function of a city or town's built environment. To ensure consistency and compatibility of technical engineering standards with an updated zoning bylaw, municipal subdivision regulations need also to be updated periodically. Dedham could combine its remaining work on the subdivision regulations with updating the Zoning Bylaw. However, completion of this project could also be undertaken independently of the Zoning Bylaw update.

Ideally, updated technical standards should be prepared by the Department of Engineering. If the Department's workload prevents existing staff from developing the technical standards, the Planning Board will need an appropriation to hire a consulting civil engineer. In this case, it will be crucial for the consultant's scope of work to include coordination with the Department of Engineering to ensure that standards prepared for the Subdivision Regulations reflect local requirements. In addition, the Rules and Regulations of Subdivision Control should be reviewed for consistency with the town's Drainage and Stormwater Management Design Standards and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Stormwater Handbook.

Action: Change the consulting Town Planner position to a full-time Planning Director.

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Transportation, Economic Development, Housing, Governance

Leadership responsibility: Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator

Support: Finance Committee

Resources needed: \$86,000 (salary and benefits, rounded; assumes a benefits multiplier of 1.32)

Discussion:

For more than a decade, Dedham has been in the unusually fortunate position of having a town planner who served the Planning Board on a full-time basis even though he was employed as a consultant. The town planner's retirement presents an opportunity for Dedham to invest in permanent professional planning capacity. In fact, the most important investment Dedham can make in the success of this master plan will be a commitment of public funds to a full-time planning director.

The town took an important first step toward improving its planning capacity by establishing the town planner position after the 1996 Master Plan was completed. Recently, Dedham made a commitment to environmental planning and economic development by funding new professional staff positions appointed by the Town Administrator. Dedham also has professionally staffed public works and engineering departments, and many other personnel whose competent performance helps to explain why Dedham is such a well-run community. While clearly important, these positions do not substitute or obviate the need for professional planning capacity. A planning director not only serves a community's planning board, but also coordinates with and acts as a technical resource for other municipal departments, conducts or directs a variety of planning studies and special planning projects, provides leadership on planning and development issues, and brings a "best practices"

approach to local government planning. Moreover, the planning director should play a key role in helping to develop a capital improvements plan (CIP) because the success of any master plan hinges on a coherent, integrated approach to physical development: land use regulation, infrastructure, and facilities.

Toward these ends, Town Meeting should be asked to appropriate funds to the planning board's salary account to ensure that a planning director can be appointed in Fiscal Year 2010. It will be important for the Planning Board, Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen, and Finance Committee to present a unified recommendation at the Annual Town Meeting.

Action: Complete a comprehensive Historic Resources Inventory.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission

Support: Planning Director

Resources needed: Consulting Preservation Planner (Est. Cost: \$35,000)

Discussion:

To ensure that Dedham has adequate information to protect and preserve its historic resources, the Town should conduct a comprehensive historic resources inventory. Historic resource inventories provide a foundation for good preservation planning at the local level. A comprehensive inventory documents the historical and architectural significance of resources found throughout a community, including historic buildings, objects, structures, and archaeological sites, landscape features, and industrial resources. Dedham's existing historic resources inventory is outdated, and it has limited information about the architectural and historical significance of properties and secondary features such as outbuildings, stone walls, and landscape elements. Moreover, Dedham's inventory does not include all types of historic resources or historic resources found throughout neighborhoods.

Most communities find that completing a comprehensive historic resource survey requires professional assistance. Documenting historic resources in compliance with MHC standards, particularly in a community of Dedham's size and wealth of resources, usually exceeds the capacity of volunteers. Dedham should take the following steps to complete the inventory:

- ◆ Seek preservation funding from available grant sources such as MHC's Survey and Planning Grant Program. Survey and Planning grants are awarded annually on a competitive basis to fund preservation planning activities such as a historic resource survey, preservation plans, educational activities, and in some instances, staff support. However, it is important to note that Survey and Planning Grants are matching reimbursement grants, so the town must appropriate the entire amount necessary to complete the inventory and will ultimately be responsible for funding a portion of the survey costs. (*See also, Phase II.*)
- ◆ Catalogue the Historic Resources Inventory in an online database and integrate with town's GIS system. The Historic Resources Inventory should be available to municipal departments and officials and the public as a database maintained on Town's website. Organizations such as the Marlborough Historical Society (www.historicmarlborough.org) have well-designed websites

with online photographs, maps, and data on all inventoried properties, which can serve as models for Dedham. The Historic Resources Inventory should also be available as a GIS data layer for use with Dedham's other planning work.

Action: Develop an environmental checklist to assist with development review.

Primary MP element: Natural Resources

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Planning Director, Environmental Coordinator

Support: All town boards with a role in development review and permitting

Resources required: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham needs to establish criteria for evaluating the environmental impacts of a project and apply the criteria consistently during the permitting process. A uniform environmental checklist for use by boards and staff involved in development review would make the permitting process more transparent and predictable for residents and developers. It also would help to synchronize the work of town boards, for each has unique jurisdiction over particular types of permits and this can make it difficult for them to apply review standards in a consistent way.

Dedham's current approach to evaluating the environmental impacts of development is fragmented and fairly informal. For example, special permit requirements for major non-residential developments include some environmental standards and guidelines, 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. Moreover, the Historic Districts Commission has no role in commenting on development proposals, even those with the potential to have adverse impacts on historic resources.

An environmental checklist should account for impacts on natural, scenic, and historic and cultural resources. It should be created as part of the update of Dedham's ZBL or immediately following completion of the ZBL revision process. The criteria should be available both in print and on the Town's official website.

Action: Continue to develop and institute a capital improvements plan process.

Primary MP element: Community Services & Facilities

Related MP elements: Governance, Transportation, Open Space and Recreation

Leadership responsibility: Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen

Support: Capital Planning Committee, Finance Committee, Department Heads

Resources required: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should continue its efforts to establish a formal capital planning process. After a long period of taking little action to maintain and enhance its public facilities and infrastructure, Dedham has recently made substantial progress in this area. Its recent public facilities planning is part of a larger

strategic planning effort that looks at the needs of all town departments and the town's overall fiscal condition. Dedham has held two strategic planning meetings with all departments in an effort to coordinate and consolidate individual departmental plans into a comprehensive capital improvements program. Ultimately, the town should have a five- or six-year plan that:

- ◆ Evaluates all condition of all municipal assets – buildings, roads, sewers, playgrounds, fields, and parks and recreation facilities – and analyzes both their capital needs and the relationship between these needs and departmental operations;
- ◆ Considers the basic necessity of each public facility, possibilities for combining functions with other facilities, and possibilities for disposition of surplus assets;
- ◆ Sets capital improvement priorities and addresses the maintenance of town facilities;
- ◆ Contains a financing plan that includes tax dollars, enterprise funds, and outside resources such as grants or other non-local revenues;
- ◆ Articulates the town's fiscal policies; embraces clear, locally accepted criteria for funding projects from capital reserves or bond authorizations; reports the estimated fiscal (tax rate) impact of the financing plan; and applies generally accepted debt evaluation criteria to the financing plan so that local officials and Town Meeting members can make informed decisions.

Action: Review and update the Dedham Town Charter.

Primary MP element: Governance

Related MP elements: None

Leadership responsibility: Charter Commission

Support: Board of Selectmen, other town boards

Resources required: Citizen volunteers, existing staff; possibly consulting services.

Discussion:

In Massachusetts, communities can make substantive changes to their local government structure by adopting or amending a town charter. This can be accomplished under M.G.L. c. 43B, the Home Rule Procedures Act (the process that Dedham followed in the 1990s) or by petitioning the legislature for a "special act" charter. Dedham's existing charter is a home rule charter written by a charter commission. The procedures for establishing a charter commission involve a petition from fifteen percent of a municipality's registered voters, a ballot vote to create a charter commission, and electing nine commissioners.

Dedham's town charter consolidates most but not all municipal operations under the Town Administrator and locates responsibility for most but not all executive branch policy with the Board of Selectmen. Though mostly centralized, the government structure in Dedham nevertheless splits authority and procedures in ways that can compromise the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal operations. The charter assigns hiring and firing authority for most town employees to the Town Administrator, but not for employees serving as staff to elected boards. (However, the Town Administrator is involved in contract negotiations and budget decisions with all town employees). A

disconnect between elected and appointed officials and staff can result in friction or stalemates. In extreme circumstances, it can politicize operations and regulatory approvals.

Dedham is a maturely developed town with needs that are challenging to meet. At the very least, the town should conduct a review of its existing charter and determine whether structural changes could help to improve efficiency, accountability, and policy making.

Action: Update Dedham's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Land Use, Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Open Space Committee

Support: Planning Director, Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission,

Resources needed: Existing staff or consultant (est. cost: \$15,000)

Discussion:

Dedham needs to update its Open Space and Recreation Plan to provide a comprehensive framework for open space planning for the next five years. An Open Space and Recreation Plan helps a community understand its open space and natural resources, identify actions to improve, expand, and protect open space, and become eligible for grants to acquire and protect open space and develop recreation facilities. Dedham's current Open Space and Recreation Plan expires in 2009. While some tasks in the Five-Year Action Plan have been completed, others require ongoing work by the town and they should be retained in the updated plan. It will be particularly important for next plan to include a framework and details for improving and maintaining Dedham's recreation facilities. Going forward, Dedham should use the recreation facilities recommendations and action items as a roadmap for setting capital improvement plan priorities and upgrading the town's parks and recreational facilities.

Action: Develop a plan to provide universal access to recreation facilities, parks, and trails.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Parks and Recreation Commission

Support: Commission on Disability

Resources needed: Existing staff for planning and design tasks, and appropriations to fund access projects as scheduled in the capital improvements plan.

Discussion:

Dedham needs to implement the accessibility recommendations in the Open Space & Recreation Plan 2004-2009 for the town's parks, playgrounds, fields and trails. Although the town has designated and constructed accessible parking spaces at several Parks Department facilities, Dedham still needs to address the recreation facility needs of people with disabilities. Many town parks continue to pose access barriers, with inaccessible gates, paths and playground equipment. An access plan should be developed in concert with efforts to plan a town-wide trails system in order to ensure that public trails provide universal access, too. In turn, the proposals contained in these plans should be incorporated within the town's capital improvements plan.

Action: Analyze the potential of Dedham’s MBTA commuter rail stations for transit-oriented development (TOD).

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Transportation, Housing, Economic Development

Leadership responsibility: Planning Director

Support: Economic Development Director, Environmental Coordinator

Resources needed: Existing staff and ideally, citizen volunteers for an ad hoc steering committee

Discussion:

Dedham needs to understand and capitalize upon the potential of its two MBTA rail stations—Dedham Corporate and Endicott—for transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD encapsulates many of the objectives of smart growth by allowing higher-density, mixed-use development close to transit, thereby promoting efficient land use, walkability, access to jobs, transportation alternatives, and a diversity of housing options. A conceptual TOD analysis and plan for the Allied Drive/Dedham Corporate Station area was prepared for Dedham’s Community Development Plan in 2004. The concept plan (which includes four parcels near the Dedham Corporate MBTA station, three of which are in both Dedham and Westwood) showed the potential for a five-story MBTA parking garage, two 100,000 sq. ft. R&D/Office buildings, a large residential complex, and a hotel/residential development. While further study is needed to analyze market conditions, encourage public input, and consider other economic development priorities, the conceptual plan clearly demonstrates the TOD potential of one of Dedham’s two rail stations.

As Dedham moves ahead with TOD planning, the town should focus on the following objectives:

- ◆ Assess opportunities for higher-development, especially at the Dedham Corporate station;
- ◆ Maximize local and regional bus, walking, bicycle, and car/vanpool connections to both stations, making them fully functioning multi-modal transportation hubs that are integrated with their neighborhoods or other surroundings; and
- ◆ Identify commercial and/or light industrial development opportunities.

Depending on how this action is scheduled by the town, zoning to facilitate TOD may be included in the comprehensive zoning revision process or introduced at a subsequent town meeting as a zoning bylaw amendment. However, the comprehensive zoning revision should not be postponed until a TOD study has been completed.

Action: Improve service and alter routes of JBL Bus Line and pursue changes to MBTA bus service.

Primary MP element: Transportation

Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Town Administrator

Support: Planning Director, Economic Development Director

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham needs to advocate for improvements to its existing JBL Bus Line and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) services to provide an accessible, reliable alternative to private auto transportation. The town is currently served by JBL Bus Lines (a privately contracted bus service) and several MBTA bus routes. The JBL bus provides transportation mostly within Dedham, and the MBTA bus routes provide inter-city transportation, with destinations in Boston, Walpole, and Watertown. While Dedham is fortunate to have these bus options, a number of problems exist. People have complained that JBL is not a reliable transportation option due to the lack of dependable services. In addition, the current route should provide access to Dedham's newer major developments such as Legacy Place and New Bridge on the Charles. The MBTA bus routes also should be examined to make sure they provide access to places people want to go. Two of the bus lines currently terminate at the Dedham Mall and do not service other important destinations, notably Dedham Square or the MBTA commuter rail stations.

To maximize the benefits of local bus service, Dedham first needs to determine how it would like the bus network to operate. The town will need to consider objectives such as providing access to both local (e.g. Dedham Square) and regional (e.g. Legacy Place) shopping destinations, and increasing mobility for transportation-disadvantaged populations such as seniors, youth, and the disabled. These objectives suggest that new destinations should be added to current routes. Additionally, efforts should be made to coordinate schedules and provide connections between bus lines and the commuter rail to provide a seamless, multi-modal trip for transit customers. Once Dedham is clear on the changes it wants to make for its bus network, the Town Administrator will need to work with both JBL Bus Lines and the MBTA to negotiate changes to existing service. These changes should be coordinated with any planning for transit-oriented development or similar smart growth initiatives.

Action: Adopt the Community Preservation Act.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources, Housing, Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Historic Districts Commission

Support: Neighborhood groups, Civic Pride Committee, Finance Committee

Resources needed: Existing staff and, if CPA is adopted, citizen volunteers to serve on the Community Preservation Committee

Discussion:

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) should be a key resource for meeting Dedham's open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing needs. The CPA is local option legislation that provides a mechanism for cities and towns to fund three types of activities: open space and recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. When communities vote to adopt the CPA, they voluntarily agree to impose a surcharge on their property tax bills and restrict use of the revenue to the statutory purposes of CPA. Communities must establish a surcharge rate of up to three percent, and they may allow exemptions for some taxpayers. CPA communities receive matching funds from the state, which collects revenue for the statewide CPA trust fund through fees on real estate transfers. The actual amount of each year's match depends on funds available in the CPA trust fund and the number of communities participating in CPA. At least thirty percent of a community's annual CPA

revenue must be divided equally among the three statutory purposes: ten percent for open space, ten percent for housing and ten percent for historic preservation. The remaining seventy percent can be expended for any CPA purpose as long as the local Community Preservation Committee recommends it and Town Meeting appropriates the funds.

Dedham could use the CPA to address a variety of needs and implement several recommendations of this master plan. For example, Dedham has identified a need to restore historic properties such as the Powder House and the Village Cemetery, which could be funded with CPA revenue. In addition, the town could use CPA funds to purchase affordability restrictions on existing homes and thereby provide affordable homeownership opportunities. CPA funds also would make it possible to establish and maintain an open space acquisition fund. It will take a concerted, cooperative effort from many facets of the community to garner public support for adopting the CPA. The Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition provides public education materials and technical assistance to interested communities, but Dedham may also benefit from consulting with other CPA communities, including nearby towns such as Needham and Sharon. To date, 140 communities have adopted CPA, representing forty percent of all cities and towns in Massachusetts.

Action: Create an economic development vision and plan.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: Land Use, Housing

Leadership responsibility: Economic Development Director

Support: Planning Director

Resources needed: Existing staff and, ideally, an ad hoc citizen advisory or steering committee

Discussion:

Dedham's prior planning work, this master plan process, and efforts of local officials and staff have produced or reinforced important economic development ideas: redevelopment of specific sites, study, planning, improvement and/or redevelopment of larger areas, and revitalization of commercial districts. However, there is no clear consensus about preferred development options for any of these areas. An economic development vision and plan would help to clarify the kind of local economy that Dedham wants and options for achieving it through redevelopment and revitalization.

Dedham is fortunate to have a full-time Economic Development Director to coordinate the work that needs to be done in order to prepare a vision and plan. A working group of key stakeholders such as the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Planning Board, and private landowners should be convened to explore options for potential redevelopment sites and priority economic planning areas. These options should be vetted with developers, regional planners and state economic development officials as well, and evaluated against market reality. Ultimately, Dedham needs to institute a public process for reaching agreement about the vision for its economic future so the town is positioned to respond as development opportunities arise. A clear vision and plan will help to guide the work of town staff and provide a policy framework for boards and committees.

PHASE II

Action: Include the Department of Public Works and Department of Engineering in the development review and permitting procedures conducted by town boards.

Primary MP element: Transportation

Related MP elements: Governance, Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Support: Department of Public Works, Department of Engineering, Planning Director

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should take steps to ensure that its Department of Public Works and Department of Engineering have an active role in reviewing and commenting on the infrastructure, drainage, and utilities aspects of proposed projects during the development review and permitting process. For example, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission often place conditions of approval on projects through special permit, site plan review, and wetlands permitting, and some of the conditions involve sidewalks, roadways, and other public infrastructure. These requirements have the intention of providing public benefits, but they are not always practical for the Department of Public Works or Engineering Department from a construction and maintenance perspective. Since all public infrastructure ultimately falls under the purview of these two departments, their technical standards and recommendations need to be accounted for during the development review process and in each board's conditions of approval.

A related issue is the practice of contracting with private consultants for engineering review services and not soliciting the expertise of Dedham's own in-house engineers. All development-related boards and departments should coordinate closely to ensure that engineering needs are addressed first by the Department of Engineering, and referred to outside consultants only when issues require particularly specialized analysis or design, or a second opinion. The town may need to adjust its administrative or application fees to help offset the cost of in-house technical review because escrow accounts for consulting services cannot be used as a revenue source for municipal operating budgets.

Action: Establish a Transportation Advisory Committee.

Primary MP element: Transportation

Related MP elements: Governance, Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Department of Public Works, Department of Engineering, Planning Director

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers and existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should establish a Transportation Advisory Committee to oversee ongoing transportation planning and projects, and to set priorities, develop strategies, and advocate for implementing transportation improvements in Dedham. While the Transportation Advisory Committee should be primarily a volunteer group operating in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen, it also

should include department heads such as the Director of Engineering, the DPW Highway Superintendent, and the Planning Director as *ex officio* members. The Committee's agenda needs to be an integral part of the capital improvements plan process (*see Phase I*).

Action: Strengthen enforcement of no-parking regulations on sidewalks.

Primary MP element: Transportation
Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities
Leadership responsibility: Police Department
Support: Transportation Advisory Committee
Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should strengthen its commitment to pedestrian safety by enforcing no parking regulations on public sidewalks. Dedham has several older neighborhoods with homes that either lack garages or have limited on-site parking capacity. As the number of cars per household increases, residents and visitors will use any available on-street space to park their vehicles, including sidewalks. Increasing enforcement of Dedham's no-parking regulations for sidewalks will help to preserve this infrastructure for its intended purpose: pedestrian safety. The police department is responsible for parking enforcement in Dedham. The (proposed) Transportation Advisory Committee should work with and provide support to the police department and, if necessary, advocate for strict enforcement of no parking regulations on sidewalks. Additionally, Dedham may need to consider increasing its fines for parking violations to the extent permitted by law.

Action: Adopt a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policy.

Primary MP element: Transportation
Related MP elements: Land Use, Economic Development
Leadership responsibility: Planning Director
Support: Economic Development Director, Environmental Coordinator
Resources needed: Existing staff, and possibly collaboration with the 128 Business Council or a similar organization that promotes commuting options in Dedham's region.

Discussion:

Dedham needs to work with its larger companies and businesses to encourage employees to use transportation modes other than single-occupancy vehicles to commute to work. TDM is an umbrella strategy adopted by companies to reduce the number of workers who commute with single-occupancy vehicles. Employers typically offer financial incentives to encourage commuting through alternative modes of transportation or carpooling, such as parking cash-outs, where an employee receives payment for opting not to use a subsidized parking space; travel allowances, where an employee receives a payment instead of a parking subsidy; or transit or rideshare benefits, where employers give free or discounted transit fares.

Action: Create a town-wide traffic calming policy.

Primary MP element: Transportation

Related MP elements: Land Use, Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Planning Department, Police Department, Fire Department, Department of Public Works

Resources needed: Existing staff, assisted by a transportation planner with significant traffic calming experience. For budgetary purposes, assume \$50,000.

Discussion:

Dedham needs traffic-calming in residential areas to steer non-local traffic away from local streets and out of Dedham's neighborhoods. Traffic calming is a general term for a wide range of physical interventions that cause minor inconveniences along a vehicle's path of travel, such as turns, bumps, and narrow travel lanes, causing cars to travel more slowly or avoid a route all together. Dedham's proximity to major highways, its roadway network (which contains several major arterials), and the large number of residential streets that are prone to cut-through traffic and speeding make traffic calming necessary in a number of locations.

The town should begin by hiring a transportation planning consultant to conduct field reconnaissance in a sample of known critical traffic areas. The consultant's charge should be to help the town understand how various types of traffic calming solutions work under different conditions, using the critical traffic areas as case studies, and develop a town-wide policy. In addition, the consultant should advise the town about the costs and benefits associated with each type of intervention, assist with developing criteria that can be used to evaluate areas for traffic calming suitability, and assist with developing project selection criteria. Determining which locations should receive which types of traffic calming interventions requires a case-by-case assessment of traffic issues and potential traffic calming solutions. The unique needs of each area or neighborhood must be accounted for in order to institute an effective, safe traffic calming program.

A traffic calming policy should do the following:

- ◆ Identify and define a list of acceptable traffic calming techniques that could be used in various parts of Dedham.
- ◆ Set up a process by which traffic calming techniques can be applied for on an area-specific basis. For example, a request for traffic calming could be made by resident petition or the professional opinion of town staff, such as the Department of Public Works Director or Planning Director.
- ◆ Establish an assessment and evaluation process to determine whether an area needs or will benefit from traffic calming.
- ◆ Decide on a case-by-case basis whether to design a traffic calming project in-house or contract with an outside consultant.

Action: Seek Certified Local Government designation.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission

Support: Planning Director

Resources needed: Existing staff and volunteers (*see also, proposed hiring of a regional preservation planner under an inter-local agreement with a neighboring town.*)

Discussion:

Dedham's Historic Districts Commission should seek Certified Local Government (CLG) designation, which is granted by the National Park Service through the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). Dedham is eligible to apply for CLG designation because the town has a local historic district bylaw. The Commission should consult with MHC to determine other requirements, if any, that would need to be met. CLG designation would benefit Dedham because ten percent of MHC's annual Survey and Planning Grant funding must be distributed to CLGs. MHC funds cities and towns through annual matching grants, distributed on a competitive basis. In order to maintain CLG certification, the Dedham Historic Districts Commission must submit annual reports to the MHC.

Action: Adopt a demolition delay bylaw.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: Land Use, Housing

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission

Support: Building Department

Resources needed: Historic Districts Commission, existing staff

Discussion:

A demolition delay bylaw is a preservation tool to assist communities in their efforts preserve significant historic buildings and structures. It provides communities with the opportunity to work with property owners to try to find an alternative to demolition. During the delay period, a community can encourage an owner to preserve their building or seek a buyer who would retain the structure. The bylaw also creates a public review process for proposed demolitions of historic structures. This ensures that important historic landmarks are not destroyed without community awareness and the ability to seek an alternative. However, a demolition delay bylaw is just that: a *delay* bylaw. After the delay period expires, if the owners still want to demolish their building the town cannot prevent them from doing so.

Adopting a demolition delay bylaw would allow Dedham to postpone whole or partial demolition of historically significant buildings so that town officials and property owners can work together to assess alternatives. A community may tailor its bylaw to meet local needs. For example, Dedham can determine which properties will be subject to the bylaw and the specific term of the delay period. Some bylaws define applicability by age (e.g. all buildings over fifty years old) while other bylaws use a year-of-construction threshold, such as all structures built before 1930. Some communities with a comprehensive historic inventory have designed their bylaws to apply only to buildings included in the inventory. While most communities with demolition delay bylaws originally imposed a six-

month delay period, many have found that this is not sufficient time to find alternatives for properties that are determined “preferably preserved.” As a result, the current trend is toward 12-month or longer delay periods. The Dedham Historic Districts Commission should seek technical assistance from MHC to determine the type of demolition delay bylaw that would be most appropriate for Dedham.

Action: Create a full-time Facilities Manager position.

Primary MP element: Community Services & Facilities

Related MP elements: Governance

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator

Support: School Department

Resources needed: \$75,000-\$90,000 (salary only; approximately \$112,000 with employee benefits)

Discussion:

Dedham should create a full-time facilities manager position to manage municipal properties and implement the town’s ongoing maintenance plan. Currently, Dedham does not have full-time professional management for its public facilities. For the most part, department heads are left largely responsible for maintenance of the buildings they occupy. While Dedham took a substantial step toward centralizing facilities management by hiring a part-time facilities manager in 2001, the Building, Planning, and Construction Committee has strongly recommended establishing a full-time facilities manager and maintenance program for all of Dedham’s public facilities. The town will need to consider whether a facilities manager should oversee both municipal and school facilities maintenance.

Action: Conduct site evaluations for priority sites identified in the economic development vision and plan.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Economic Development Director

Support: Planning Director

Resources needed: Existing staff with support services from a consultant. For budgetary purposes, assume \$30,000 to \$35,000 per site for a conceptual site study.

Discussion:

Conducting site evaluations for key redevelopment areas identified in the economic development vision and plan (*Phase I*) is the first step toward successfully marketing these sites. Prospective companies in an expansion or a relocation mode consider many factors when evaluating both a specific site and a community. It will help staff and local officials involved with business recruitment to understand the opportunities, constraints, and market position of each redevelopment site. A thorough site evaluation process involves four major tasks:

- ◆ Gather background information on the site and location, general site information, resources within thirty to forty-five minutes of the site, details of any existing buildings, and a real estate market analysis.

- ◆ Consider potential options for the site. Possible uses for the site will be based on the findings of the first task, and include the size and configuration of the site, existing buildings, access to transportation and labor, utilities, and other local amenities.
- ◆ Assign best uses to each site, taking into consideration target industries in Dedham and the region, and specific needs of certain industries and whether they are a good match for the site in question. When considering best uses, a group of key stakeholders, including the current land owner(s) – similar to the stakeholder group assembled to create the economic development vision and plan – should be assembled to provide input and identify potential obstacles to proposed uses.
- ◆ Develop a marketing strategy for each site. The marketing strategy may include making physical improvements and/or regulatory changes to the site to improve its level of readiness for development.

Action: Designate additional Chapter 43D Priority Development Sites.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Economic Development Director

Support: Planning Director, Town Administrator

Resources needed: Existing staff. Note that under current Chapter 43D program rules, the town may also qualify for additional Chapter 43D planning grants for new Priority Development Sites.

Discussion:

In May 2008, Dedham Town Meeting voted to designate the town's first Priority Development Site (PDS) under M.G.L. c. 43D, which encourages commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development of particular parcels chosen by communities. A PDS is a commercially or industrially zoned parcel that can accommodate buildings of at least 50,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area that the town would like to see developed or redeveloped. In adopting Chapter 43D and designating a PDS, the community agrees to provide a "fast-track" permitting process where all permitting decisions that are required to qualify for a building permit occur within 180 days. In return, communities receive program benefits such as priority consideration for state funding assistance, and visibility and promotion through the state's online marketing system for the sites. Communities also become eligible for technical assistance grants. Dedham has designated the Keystone Lot in Dedham Square as a PDS, and the town recently received a grant to purchase and employ permitting software to increase the speed and efficiency of the permit process.

Having designated one PDS and upgraded its permitting capacity through the permitting software, Dedham is in a good position to designate other sites under Chapter 43D. Whether this is appropriate will depend on the findings of site evaluations and the amount of state support and aid available through the Chapter 43D program at that time. PDS designation could be part of a comprehensive marketing strategy for key development sites.

Action: Create a permitting guide.

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Economic Development, Housing

Leadership responsibility: Planning Director

Support: Economic Development Director, Environmental Coordinator

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should create a permitting guide that outlines necessary approval steps and timelines for various types of permits that may be required for development projects. Obtaining all necessary permits and approvals for a project can be a complicated undertaking with many steps, requirements, and involvement with a number of staff, boards, and committees. Even communities with well-organized and clear zoning bylaws and other regulatory layers may still need to provide additional guidance for developers and property owners. A permitting guide would list all permits, relevant departments and boards, submission requirements, timelines, and any other pertinent information in clear, non-regulatory language to help applicants navigate the permitting and approvals process. Since different land uses require different types of permits, Dedham may wish to create separate sections or chapters of the guide to address these different needs. The Town may want to start with one development type that tends to be most complicated—for example, commercial development or a small residential subdivision—and add other sections over time.

Permitting guides can range in complexity from simple, black and white PDF documents to electronic documents with illustrations and hyperlinks. Whatever the format, the guide should be available both in print at Town Hall and on the town's website. All staff who participate in permitting and approvals process should be familiar with the guide and should distribute it to potential applicants as early as possible in the pre-development phase of a project.

Action: Encourage an association of Dedham's neighborhood organizations.

Primary MP element: Governance

Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities, Open Space and Recreation

Leadership responsibility: Civic Pride Committee

Support: Town Administrator

Resources needed: Existing staff (limited role)

Discussion:

Dedham should continue its efforts to link various local groups together in a town-wide association of neighborhood organizations and provide support within Town Hall. Strong and organized neighborhood organizations work more effectively to beautify parks, public spaces, and other neighborhood amenities, and to otherwise improve the quality of life for residents. Linking these organizations together allows them to share knowledge and resources, network with each other, and generally increase their capacity. Responsibility for this action should remain with the neighborhood groups, but could be organized under the Civic Pride Committee. This would allow a centralized group to network with various neighborhood groups. The effort also be supported through a page on the town's website with the names and contact information for each group.

Action: Encourage neighborhood groups to become stewards of local parks.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation
Related MP elements: Land Use, Community Services & Facilities
Leadership responsibility: Parks and Recreation Commission
Support: Civic Pride Committee
Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham is fortunate to have a number of active, engaged neighborhood groups, and the town should encourage them to become further engaged in open space stewardship. Many communities have had success in transferring some maintenance responsibility of smaller, neighborhood parks to neighborhood organizations. In Dedham, groups like the Mother Brook Coalition and Dedham Square Circle could become ongoing stewards for neighborhood open spaces. Appropriate tasks might include maintaining vegetation, walking paths, and ornamental shrubs or flower beds. Implementing this task will require a partnership with staff in the Parks and Recreation Department to coordinate efforts, identify specific tasks for each park, and monitor progress.

For areas without a formal neighborhood association, neighborhood open space stewardship could occur through day-long (“done in a day”) clean-ups hosted by the Dedham’s Civic Pride Committee at neighborhood parks. This type of event could draw upon volunteers from neighborhood schools, youth groups, churches, and business owners near the parks. Although this task depends primarily on residents’ efforts, town government could designate a “point person” at the Parks and Recreation Department to support and provide some coordination assistance to the neighborhood groups.

Action: Adopt a Scenic Roads Bylaw.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources
Related MP elements: Transportation
Leadership responsibility: Planning Board
Support: Historic Districts Commission, Department of Public Works
Resources needed: Existing staff, but the town will most likely need assistance from a landscape architect or preservation planner to complete this action. For budgetary purposes, assume \$35,000 for the documentation and planning tasks listed below.

Discussion:

Dedham can protect the unique physical qualities of its scenic roadways by adopting a Scenic Roads Bylaw. A proposed scenic roads bylaw was tabled at Town Meeting several years ago because it lacked support for adoption. In anticipation of the meeting, a number of scenic roads were identified and the list is included in the current Open Space and Recreation Plan (2004-2009). Under M.G.L. c. 40, s. 15C, the Scenic Roads Act, the Planning Board would serve as the review authority for a scenic roads bylaw to ensure that “any repair, maintenance, reconstruction or paving work... shall not involve or include the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof...” within a public way.

Dedham should first identify and document the character-defining attributes of each scenic road in order to create a bylaw that is specifically tailored to conditions in Dedham. Many communities have hired a consulting planner or landscape architect to assist with documenting the identified scenic roads and drafting a bylaw due to the significant effort involved with this endeavor. The Planning Director could seek technical assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and MHC and work with the Planning Board, the Department of Public Works, the town's Tree Warden and the Historic Districts Commission to draft the Town's bylaw

Before the bylaw can be written, Dedham needs to carry out the following steps to build community support and ensure successful implementation of the bylaw once it is adopted:

- ◆ Complete an inventory and photo documentation of scenic roads.
- ◆ Each roadway candidate for scenic designation should be inventoried and documented through photographs, identifying character-defining features. This inventory should be compiled in an accessible format for use by the Planning Board, the Department of Public Works and the Tree Warden. The Planning Director should serve as the municipal staff in charge of the project, reviewing and cataloging the documentation.
- ◆ Establish criteria for projects subject to the scenic roads bylaw.
- ◆ In addition to identifying specific roads worthy of scenic designation, Dedham will also need to define the types of road projects that will be reviewed under the scenic roads bylaw. Written criteria will help the Department of Public Works plan road improvement projects and also help the Planning Board with its review process.

Action: Become a "Tree City."

Primary MP element: Natural Resources

Related MP elements: Open Space & Recreation

Leadership responsibility: Department of Public Works

Support: Board of Selectmen, Environmental Coordinator

Resources needed: \$***** (Note: We are still evaluating this.)

Discussion:

Dedham should take the necessary steps to obtain "Tree City" designation from the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA® Program. Improving the quality and size of a town's urban canopy provides a number of public benefits such as increased wildlife habitat, improved air quality, ambient cooling of both indoor and outdoor environments, improved aesthetics, and increased property values. Becoming a Tree City would provide Dedham with access to funding sources and technical assistance for expansion and maintenance of the town's trees. To meet the criteria for designation, Dedham would need to undertake the following:

- ◆ Establish a Tree Board or Department;

- ◆ Create a Tree Care Bylaw to determine policies for planting, maintaining and removing public trees; and
- ◆ Establish an annual minimum community forestry budget of \$2 per capita.

The Town has already taken steps on a few of these criteria. For example, the Department of Public Works currently consults with the Town of Wellesley's municipal arborist and works with a private tree service on tree care and maintenance. In addition, Dedham has adopted an informal policy to plant two street trees for every one street tree that is removed. Now Dedham needs to create a formal Tree Care Bylaw that requires the two-for-one tree replacement and codifies design standards for new trees, such as required species, caliper, or planting placement. Dedham estimates that it already spends \$2 per capita through tree plantings and other efforts, but it has not established an annual forestry budget.

Action: Establish a Housing Partnership Committee.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Governance

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Planning Director, Town Administrator

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers and existing staff

Discussion:

The Board of Selectmen should establish a Housing Partnership Committee (HPC) of five to seven members to advocate for housing needs at the local level. Although more than ten percent of Dedham's housing units are counted on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, this does not mean that Dedham's housing needs are actually being met. 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. By establishing a housing partnership committee, Dedham can build its capacity to recognize and respond to housing issues and trends. For example, a housing partnership committee today would 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.

The HPC needs representatives from the following types of professions: finance, law, real estate development/sales, advocacy and human services, and representation from the Dedham Housing Authority. The partnership's charge should include the following tasks:

- ◆ Prepare a housing plan for the town;
- ◆ Advise the Planning Director and Economic Development Director on matters related to housing trends, issues, plans, programs and development;
- ◆ Work with other local boards and organizations to identify common interests and concerns. Explore ways to work together and pursue mutually beneficial opportunities to support, preserve, and develop affordable housing, and respond to housing trends and issues;

- ◆ Advocate for local policies, including CPA, that support the production and preservation of affordable and mixed-income housing; and
- ◆ Educate town boards, departments, and the public about affordable housing and housing needs.

Action: Establish a housing rehabilitation program.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen, Housing Partnership

Support: Planning Director, Economic Development Director

Resources needed: For budgetary purposes, assume \$30,000 per housing unit, assuming \$25,000 in financial assistance and \$5,000 for program management. However, the actual cost per unit will depend on the program design.

Discussion:

Dedham needs a housing rehabilitation program to help lower-income property owners and tenants with basic home repair, weatherization, energy efficiency, and code compliance. The program could offer low-interest or no-interest loans to property owners whose incomes fall within designated limits. Loans would be secured by a lien or mortgage recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

A housing rehabilitation program promotes 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. It could target particular neighborhoods or be offered town-wide. Dedham could seek Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to pay for this program, either on its own or on a regional basis with a neighboring town. The CDBG program requires people receiving housing rehabilitation assistance to meet strict income guidelines, i.e., incomes up to 80 percent of area median income, adjusted for household size. In addition, the state CDBG program requires that federal funds be secured with a lien or mortgage for a minimum of 15 years. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administers the state's annual CDBG allocation from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (CDBG). Funds are available to municipalities through a highly competitive application process. DHCD gives preference to communities that demonstrate a compelling need and capacity to administer grants.

Action: Work with neighboring towns to hire a regional preservation planner.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission

Support: Board of Selectmen, neighboring towns

Estimated cost: \$55,000 salary if funded entirely within Dedham's municipal budget; less if salary is shared with an adjoining town. (For budgetary purposes, assume \$72,500 with employee benefits.)

Discussion:

Dedham should consult with one or two neighboring towns, such as Norwood or Westwood, about the feasibility of establishing a shared preservation planner position. For years, Dedham has relied on a dedicated core of volunteers to undertake preservation planning initiatives. However, this has limited the town's ability to protect and promote historic resources beyond those located in its designated local historic districts. A professional preservation planner could lead local preservation efforts. Since funding a new position in Dedham under current economic conditions would be very difficult, a regional approach should be pursued. One community would serve as the designated employer and assume responsibility for providing benefits, the cost of which would be shared by the participating towns.

Action: Institute a training program for Town Meeting Members.

Primary MP element: Governance
Related MP elements: Not applicable
Leadership responsibility: Town Moderator
Support: Town Administrator, Town Clerk
Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

The Town Moderator should work with the Town Administrator to establish a training program for Town Meeting Representatives and District Chairpersons about their duties and responsibilities. Dedham currently has 273 elected representatives (thirty-nine from each of the seven precincts) for its nearly 24,000 residents. District representatives take their responsibilities seriously and function as "precinct captains," personally approaching constituents to gather information and opinions. New representatives who may be unfamiliar with the Town Meeting process could benefit from specific training to augment their understanding of Town Meeting procedures and how to be effective in the role of representative.

PHASE III

Action: Establish municipal policy and an annual budget appropriation for wildlife management.

Primary MP element: Natural Resources
Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities
Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen
Support: Conservation Commission, Environmental Coordinator
Resources needed: Existing staff, and possibly an inter-local agreement. However, implementing this action also involves an annual appropriation for wildlife management education and public safety, to be determined as part of the process for establishing local policy.

As development encroached on a community's forest and open lands, native wildlife has lost its core habitat, edge habitat and food supplies. These pressures lead to reductions in wildlife populations

and increased contact between humans and the remaining wildlife. While much of Dedham's land is developed, wetlands and forested open spaces still exist and they provide habitat for wildlife species. Developing a municipal program to encourage successful cohabitation with urban wildlife populations should rely on fostering public education, appreciation, and respect for the wild animals that call Dedham home.

In the past several years, Dedham has addressed several wildlife conflicts: roaming populations of wild turkeys, damage from beaver dams, overpopulation of rodents, and coyotes. The town has addressed these conflicts as they arise, but recognizes that they may become more frequent. Dedham does not have formal municipal policy for addressing wildlife management needs or an annual budget for management activities such as rodent control and legal beaver trappings or dam breaching. The Environmental Coordinator estimates that if beaver trapping is needed at a particular location to address extreme flooding issues, the cost could exceed \$10,000.

Staff should work with the Board of Selectmen to adopt a municipal wildlife management policy and determine an annual appropriation for management activities. The policy should include a public awareness campaign through literature, seminars, and collaboration, and publishing information on the town's website. The Town of Wellesley provides information on its website regarding suburban wildlife concerns. MassWildlife and the Massachusetts Audubon Society also have extensive information on their websites and can serve as resources. Collaborating with other municipalities such as Lexington, Concord and Bedford, which are also grappling with wildlife management issues, and with adjoining towns could help Dedham develop a successful management program.

Action: Encourage the formation of a Trails Stewards Group.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Conservation Commission, Parks Department

Support: Environmental Coordinator, Dedham Land Trust, Planning Board

Resources needed: Existing staff (limited role)

Discussion:

Dedham should build upon its existing open space and recreation resources by improving the maintenance of and access to town trails on municipal conservation lands. To do this, the town should promote the establishment of a volunteer Trails Stewards Group to create, maintain, and promote trails. Dedham owns several public conservation parcels, including the Town Forest and Wigwam and Little Wigwam Pond conservation areas. While trails may exist on these sites, public access to them is limited by overgrowth, limited signage, a shortage of parking, and lack of public awareness. Improving access to the town's existing trails is particularly important because in areas outside West Dedham, the town's conservation lands represent the only available land for passive recreation. Developing these lands into areas for walking, hiking, and biking will not only activate open spaces with low-impact recreation activities, but will also provide walking and hiking trails and bike paths, which residents have identified as being in short supply in Dedham.

The Trails Stewards Group could work with town staff such as the Environmental Coordinator to enlist local scout groups and schoolchildren for trail improvements and promoting the town's trails

and conservation lands through trail signage, maps, brochures, and other information materials. This information should also be published on the town's website. Dedham should have a contact person at Town Hall to respond to trails issues identified by stewards or residents and to coordinate municipal and volunteer efforts. Ideally, the Environmental Coordinator should serve in this capacity.

Action: Encourage the establishment of Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: None

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission

Support: Neighborhood organizations

Resources needed: Existing staff and (proposed) regional preservation planner

Discussion:

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (NAC) provide a tool to protect historic neighborhoods by establishing regulations that are less restrictive than a local historic district bylaw yet preserve characteristics that give areas a historic quality. A NAC typically regulates scale and massing of alterations and new construction but not specific architectural detailing. Several communities in Massachusetts have already established this type of historic district, including the Cambridge Historical Commission, which has a Neighborhood Conservation District booklet on its website, <www.cambridgema.gov/historic/ncd_brochure.pdf>, as well as Newton, Wellesley, and Lincoln.

According to MHC guidelines, Dedham needs to complete a historic resources inventory before it can designate a NAC (*see Phase 1*). The inventory should serve as the basis for determining specific areas that may qualify as NAC districts. Once a potential district is identified, the town would need to establish a set of design guidelines, prepare a NAC bylaw, and designate a NAC Commission to administer the district. (The NAC bylaw and each district created under it must be adopted by Town Meeting.) Alternatively, a community can adopt a NAC bylaw first and encourage neighborhoods to propose district designations by following the process laid out in the local bylaw. This is the process that Wellesley and Lincoln followed, and in 2008, Wellesley Town Meeting approved the town's first NAC. The Dedham Historic Districts Commission should initiate a campaign to educate the public and generate community support for this initiative. MHC has literature available explaining the benefits of NACs, including *Preservation Through Bylaws and Ordinances*.

Action: Encourage business owners in neighborhood commercial areas to organize.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: None

Leadership responsibility: Economic Development Director

Support: None

Resources needed: Existing staff (limited role)

Discussion:

Dedham should encourage local business owners to establish organizations to promote and improve their businesses. Generating and organizing stakeholder support is the first step to a successful

revitalization effort. A well-organized group of business owners could develop consensus and build capacity to carry out or promote improvements in their commercial areas. Successful business organization has already occurred in Dedham Square due to the commendable efforts of Dedham Square Circle. A similar type of organization could help business owners in other parts of town. Although it is not town government's responsibility to promote private business or provide staff support to private organizations, it is in Dedham's economic interest to offer encouragement and technical assistance, provide referrals and information resources, and help local businesses get started with basic organizational tasks.

Action: Create design guidelines for neighborhood commercial districts.

Primary MP element: Land Use

Related MP elements: Economic Development

Leadership responsibility: Design Review Advisory Board (DRAB)

Support: Planning Director, Planning Board

Resources needed: \$25,000 to \$40,000 for consultant services, depending on the number of commercial districts

Discussion:

Dedham should create design guidelines to improve the visual quality of neighborhood commercial districts, employing a "village" concept to give each area a distinct appearance. Design guidelines vary in their scope and level of prescriptiveness. They also vary in terms of what elements of the built environment they are concerned with. For a neighborhood commercial district, such as the Route 109/Bridge Street corridor or East Dedham, design guidelines might influence building type, building materials and color, awnings, and signage. Design guidelines also vary in how they communicate design concepts. Although they should contain graphics, they also take the form of photographs, computer-generated graphics or diagrams, hand-drawn sketches, and illustrations. Depending on the level of expertise available within the Design Review Advisory Board (DRAB), the design guidelines could be created in-house or may require involve consultant services, or involve a combination of the two. This will determine how much funding is required from the town.

In Dedham, the creation of commercial design guidelines should reinforce the priorities established in the economic development vision and plan (*see Phase 1*). To avoid homogenizing the commercial districts, guidelines should be tailored to each area, highlighting the characteristics that make these districts unique. To do this, the DRAB, with the assistance of a consultant, will need to survey each district and develop an inventory of key visual traits, and then decide how to perpetuate those traits through guidelines. For example, this could be done by encouraging a certain type of signage, exterior paint colors, and awning types. The DRAB should meet with business owners in each area to make sure that what they are proposing for guidelines do not impose undue burdens on small businesses. Once adopted, the guidelines should be published on the town's website and made available through the Building Department. They will form the basis for design review during the permitting process under Dedham's Zoning Bylaw.

Action: Institute a rental housing code enforcement program.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities, Economic Development

Leadership responsibility: Planning Director, Code Enforcement Officer

Support: Building Commissioner, Town Administrator

Resources needed: Contingent on program design. Dedham should expect to cover most program costs through regular inspection fees.

Discussion:

The Planning Director should work with the Building Commissioner and Code Enforcement Officer to develop a code enforcement program to monitor conditions of rental properties. Rental properties may be more prone to neglect and code violations because often they are owned by absent or inattentive landlords. A code enforcement program would be centered on a comprehensive and systematic inspection of all rental properties. Each rental unit would be subject to regular inspection (for example, once every two years or once every five years), which would ensure that all units meet health and safety requirements. If a violation is found, the unit would be subject to re-inspection to ensure the problem is corrected.

Successful code enforcement programs for rental properties in other cities and towns are commonly financed by through an annual per-unit fee for property owners. If inspections occur less than once a year, the fee could be paid in annual installments to ensure adequate cash flow to the program. Ideally, the fee should be based on what is required to cover program costs. In other communities, fees range from \$28 to \$50 dollars, with more in the \$30 range. There would be an additional fee for re-inspection if a violation is found, and other adjustments to the fee schedule could be made depending on the needs of the program. In addition to housing inspections, the code enforcement program should include outreach and education for landlords as a part of the overall effort to increase code compliance and improve the condition of rental properties.

Action: Encourage rehabilitation of deteriorated, highly visible residential and mixed-use buildings.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Land Use, Economic Development

Leadership responsibility: Planning Director

Support: Housing Partnership Committee, Building Inspector, Economic Development Director, GIS Manager

Resources needed: Varies depending on extent of rehabilitation and program design

Discussion:

The Planning Director and Economic Development Director should identify highly visible residential or mixed-use properties that need rehabilitation and would have high “impact” potential once rehabilitated. Focusing intensive public support on particular properties can trigger private investment in the surrounding area. Toward this end, Dedham could establish a program that offers financial incentives to owners of deteriorated multi-family dwellings or mixed-use buildings, or deteriorated nonresidential buildings suitable for multi-family reuse.

The town could seek CDBG and other grants to support this type of program. CDBG funds can finance activities that remove “slums and blight” (as defined by HUD) as long as the community has completed a DHCD-approved slums and blight inventory. Dedham plans to prepare an inventory in East Dedham during the spring (2009). This may qualify the town to use CDBG funds to encourage rehabilitation of the exteriors of commercial buildings. By contrast, CDBG funds may be used for interior residential rehabilitation only if the occupants meet specified income limits. In both cases, the town would secure financial assistance with a property lien or mortgage. It also may be possible to use CPA funds to redevelop a deteriorated building if the project will produce affordable housing and be subject to a perpetual affordable housing restriction held by the town.

Action: Create a Housing Resource Guide.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Housing Partnership Committee

Support: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board

Resources needed: Existing staff or consultant; for budgetary purposes, assume \$3,500 to \$5,000.

Discussion:

The Housing Partnership Committee should create a resource guide for owners and renters that describes local, regional and state level housing assistance programs, including the Home Modification Program, Get the Lead Out, MassHousing’s Home Improvement Program, HUD Section 8, and resources for subsidized housing and tenant assistance. A housing resource guide can help residents readily identify programs that offer different types of housing assistance. This information should be available both in print and electronic form, and posted on the town’s website.

Action: Participate in marketing strategies for key development sites.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Economic Development Director

Support: Planning Director, Town Administrator

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Once a marketing strategy has been determined for a priority site, Dedham will need to carry out its share of the marketing responsibilities – a task that is likely to vary on a site-by-site basis, depending on ownership of the property and the incentives required to lure reinvestment. It is not uncommon for municipal economic development offices to prepare basic marketing materials (print or brochure form and published on the Town’s website) and work in partnership with local, regional, and state organizations to promote the site. Dedham has already established relationships with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) and the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce, both of which provide opportunities to attract developers and new industries to locate in Dedham. The town should continue to nurture these relationships while also developing its internal marketing capacity.

Action: Consider using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreements to support business development.

Primary MP element: Economic Development

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Economic Development Director, Town Administrator

Resources needed: Existing staff, and Town Counsel. Depending on the project, the town may benefit from retaining a consultant to assist with TIF negotiations. However, the cost of consulting services should be (and usually is) borne by the proponent of a project.

Discussion:

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can help to attract companies to Dedham. TIF is a form of tax incentive that can enhance job opportunities for local residents. A TIF designation makes a company eligible for local property tax exemptions and substantial state tax credits. In return, communities may require that local residents are given priority for new jobs. Dedham took an important step toward using this incentive when it joined the Quincy Economic Target Area (ETA), which enables the town to enter into TIFs agreements. To do this, the Board of Selectmen must designate Economic Opportunity Areas within which a TIF project can be located. Each Economic Opportunity Area and TIF agreement requires approval by the Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). In addition to local tax relief, the TIF provides a five percent Investment Tax Credit and a ten percent Abandoned Building Tax Deduction, as well as eligibility for predevelopment and/or Brownfield's financing.

Action: Develop asset management policies to dispose of surplus municipal property.

Primary MP element: Community Services & Facilities

Related MP elements: Land Use, Housing

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator

Support: School Department, Capital Planning Committee, Housing Partnership, Assessor

Resources needed: Existing staff and citizen volunteers

Discussion:

The Town should have policies for disposing of surplus land and buildings, investing the proceeds in future capital improvements, and deciding when asset disposition should be carried out for a public benefit purpose. Even though service needs change over time, communities often retain obsolete or unused property in their assets inventory. These properties, while sometimes perceived as a burden, can also present opportunities to towns looking to achieve certain development objectives. By disposing of surplus properties for reuse, municipalities can guide redevelopment to meet a particular public benefit either through reuse of the property itself or through use of proceeds from a sale. M.G.L. c. 30B prescribes the means for real property disposition. Ideally, the Board of Selectmen, with the assistance of the Town Administrator, would be responsible for developing property disposition policies for the town. Consultations with the Assessor, other department heads, boards and commissions should inform these policies.

As part of this effort, the Planning Director and Housing Partnership Committee should identify town-owned properties (including tax title properties) that may be suitable for (re)development to meet local housing needs, such as elderly housing, affordable family housing, or “starter” homes. Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, Dedham may be able to attract interest in (re)development consistent with the town’s housing plan (*see Phase 2*).

ONGOING

Action: Continue to fund capital improvements through responsible assumption of non-exempt debt.

Primary MP element: Community Services & Facilities

Related MP elements: Governance,

Leadership responsibility: Town Administrator

Support: Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee

Resources needed: Bond authorizations and annual debt service appropriations consistent with the capital improvements plan.

Dedham should continue to build its non-exempt debt capacity to fund capital improvement projects. Unlike Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusions, non-exempt debt can be authorized by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting without a ballot vote at a town election because the debt service has to be absorbed within Dedham’s levy limit. For several years, Dedham has gradually increased its ability to carry non-exempt debt in order to finance needed capital improvements. In doing so, Dedham also has improved its bond rating, which enhances its borrowing power because the town can borrow at a lower interest rate.

Dedham has pursued a responsible strategy for managing debt. Through use of its long-range forecasting tool, Dedham has established a schedule for retiring all debt. In this way, the town can forecast when it will have additional bonding capacity to fund other projects. This approach marks a change from Dedham’s traditional stance toward assuming debt. For several decades and until recently, the town shied away from borrowing, preferring not to take on debt. However, its facilities, including many key public buildings, suffered as a consequence. By increasing its capacity to issue and pay down debt, Dedham has secured a stable funding source for small- to mid-sized (up to several million dollars) capital improvements projects. This long-range forecasting approach, coupled with a comprehensive capital improvements plan will allow Dedham to adequately plan for and fund its capital improvements needs.

Action: Continue to coordinate infrastructure improvements with civic beautification efforts.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Transportation, Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Department of Public Works, Engineering Department, Civic Pride Committee

Support: Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator
Resources required: Existing staff and citizen volunteers

Discussion:

Dedham should continue its efforts to coordinate regular collaboration between the Department of Public Works, the Engineering Department, and the Civic Pride Committee. In many cities and towns, roadway and other infrastructure improvement projects can sometimes interfere with beautification efforts and aesthetic concerns. In recent years, Dedham has taken action to coordinate the infrastructure objectives and concerns of the DPW and Engineering Department and the beautification objectives of the Civic Pride Committee to ensure that infrastructure improvements, particularly at Dedham's gateways, do not detract from and ultimately can contribute to the town's aesthetic beauty. This coordination should continue to ensure a balance between transportation efficiency, public safety, and visual quality in Dedham.

Action: Increase collaboration with nearby communities and conservation groups for regional water resource and habitat protection.

Primary MP element: Natural Resources

Related MP elements: Land Use

Leadership responsibility: Environmental Coordinator

Support: Conservation Commission, Planning Board

Resources needed: Existing staff and citizen volunteers. However, projects arising from regional conservation efforts – such as acquiring open space to protect habitat – will require additional expenditures by the town, including exempt or non-exempt debt, to be determined in accordance with the capital improvements plan.

Discussion:

Dedham needs to continue its participation in efforts to review and address regional environmental concerns. Natural resource concerns and impacts are not restricted to a municipality's boundaries. Dedham's resources are intricately linked with those of the surrounding towns and the greater region, and vice versa. Actions taken in one town can have significant impacts on the natural resources of the towns that surround it. Dedham currently participates with organizations such as the Charles River Watershed Association and the Neponset River Watershed Association, and these efforts should continue. The town could also host annual forums, monthly discussion groups or other formalized meetings with neighboring towns on common natural resource, habitat, and open space protection efforts and to facilitate cooperation and joint action.

Action: Develop and promote public water conservation efforts.

Primary MP element: Natural Resources

Related MP elements: None

Leadership responsibility: Conservation Commission, Environmental Coordinator

Support: Dedham-Westwood Water District, Parks and Recreation Department

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham should expand upon the educational efforts currently undertaken by the Dedham-Westwood Water Commission. The town should create (or reproduce existing) informational brochures for local residents on water conservation methods, particularly related to outdoor irrigation use, and provide this information on its website. Currently, the Dedham-Westwood Water Commission regulates seasonal water use and promotes water conservation awareness through public forums, education programs and other informational activities. One of the ways Dedham could add to these efforts is by disseminating public information on topics such as of drought-resistant and low-water-use plantings, fertilizers, maintenance care, and pest control. Some communities also regulate landscaping practices, through zoning or general bylaws. The town could also demonstrate the use of low water or water-efficient landscape design in some of its own public landscapes, and thus serve as a leader in environmentally sensitive design. The Town of Shrewsbury is an example of a community that constructed a sustainable garden on the grounds of its town hall.

Action: Work with Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership (SAHP) to promote its First-time Homebuyer Program.

Primary MP element: Housing

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Housing Partnership Committee

Support: Planning Director

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers and existing staff (limited role)

Discussion:

The Housing Partnership should work with the Southwest Affordable Housing Partnership (SAHP) to promote and support its first-time homebuyer program. The SAHP offers downpayment assistance and financial/homebuyer counseling to first-time homebuyers in Dedham's region. Access to affordable starter homes in Dedham is difficult for first-time homebuyers with moderate incomes. Under current economic conditions, it also is difficult for many owners to retain their properties. To ease this burden, Dedham could coordinate with local organizations to ensure that residents have opportunities for counseling and financial assistance. In addition, Dedham should consider coordinating with SAHP and other regional organizations that offer foreclosure prevention counseling and assistance.

Action: Continue to seek grants to support capital improvements on a project-by-project basis.

Primary MP element: Community Services & Facilities

Related MP elements: Governance

Leadership responsibility: Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen

Support: School Department, Planning Director, Economic Development Director

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

The Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen should continue their existing efforts to supplement the town's budget for capital improvements and property maintenance by seeking specialized grants on a project-by-project basis. While grant funds are generally limited, Dedham may benefit from

exploring opportunities to supplement its capital spending with alternative funding sources. For example, adopting the CPA would provide an additional revenue stream for eligible projects. CPA funds can be used for capital improvements related to preserving historically significant buildings and recreation improvements on land acquired with CPA revenue. In addition, the Massachusetts Historic Commission offers the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) which provides competitive matching grants for public building restoration projects. MPPF is contingent upon available state funds and can be an unpredictable funding source. Should Dedham decide to adopt CPA, the Community Preservation Committee would be responsible for making funding recommendations to Town Meeting. In addition, the Planning Director, Economic Development Director, and Department of Public Works should assist with seeking other grants for capital projects at the direction of the Town Administrator.

Action: Continue to include sidewalk maintenance in the Department of Public Works' pavement management system.

Primary MP element: Transportation
Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities
Leadership responsibility: Department of Public Works
Support: Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee
Resources needed: Annual appropriations for sidewalk maintenance.

Dedham should continue to include sidewalk maintenance in the Department of Public Work's (DPW) pavement management system to provide for systematic assessment and upgrade of the town's pedestrian infrastructure. Currently, the DPW assesses, programs, and budgets for sidewalk improvement needs in conjunction with its planning for roadway paving and improvements. This allows for more efficient use of the DPW's time and resources, and results in more attention to pedestrian infrastructure overall. The town should continue with this approach and should continue to provide adequate support for sidewalk maintenance within the pavement management budget.

Action: Continue to identify parcels to form a system of paths and trails.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation
Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities
Leadership responsibility: Conservation Commission
Support: Planning Director, GIS Manager
Resources needed: Existing staff and citizen volunteers

Discussion:

The Conservation Commission should continue to work on identifying land ownership along proposed trail or "greenway" routes in Dedham and strategize to preserve and gain access to the necessary parcels. The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009 contains several 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 to a town-wide open space system and providing more opportunities for passive recreation, such as walking or biking.

The Conservation Commission and Open Spaces Committee have already begun the task of identifying parcels that would need to be acquired and assembled in order to create some of the proposed greenways. Once the land ownership pattern along a proposed trail route has been identified and assessed, the Conservation Commission should begin work to acquire the necessary parcels or obtain trail easements from private property owners to allow limited public access through the property. A trail easement is a legal agreement that allows others to use someone's land in the manner specified in the easement.

Action: Require Historic District Commission review and comment on public development projects.

Primary MP element: Historic & Cultural Resources

Related MP elements: Community Services & Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Historic Districts Commission, Planning Board

Support: Endicott Estate Commission, School Building Rehab Committee, Building Planning and Construction Committee

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers

Discussion:

Dedham should require additional scrutiny of the impacts of public development projects on its historic resources. Currently, Dedham does not integrate preservation objectives into the development review and permitting process for its own public building projects. Town-owned resources such as the Powder House, the Endicott Estate, and the Village Cemetery are just a few examples of the town's historic properties. While Dedham has been a good steward of its historic properties, it has not instituted procedures to *require* historically appropriate preservation. To improve upon this, the town should adopt a bylaw or establish an administrative rule that requires boards, commissions and departments to seek Historic Districts Commission review as part of the project planning process and prior to issuance of any building permits or certificates of zoning compliance. The Town of Concord has a similar policy granting authority to the Historic Districts Commission for review of town projects.

Action: Maintain a comprehensive open space inventory.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Land Use, Natural Resources

Leadership responsibility: Conservation Commission, Planning Board

Support: Environmental Coordinator, Planning Director, GIS Coordinator

Resources needed: Existing staff

Discussion:

Dedham needs to maintain a comprehensive open space inventory that contains all open space parcels by location, ownership and acreage, level and type of protection, and level of risk for development. The inventory also should establish priorities for the preservation of parcels. A

complete open space inventory is important for guiding Dedham's decisions about open space parcels, e.g., whether to buy the land, work with a developer to preserve some of it, work with a land owner to establish a conservation restriction, or allow the land to be developed. The inventory reported in the most recent Open Space and Recreation Plan (2004-2009) has been updated from time to time, but it does not identify high-priority parcels or code parcels according to type of protection, type of ownership, use, or development risk. To identify parcels that Dedham deems important to protect, the Town should:

- ◆ Develop a system to identify and document the *level of risk* for each parcel of open space. For example, a parcel that is protected in perpetuity would rank "0" while a privately-owned, unprotected parcel next to developed land would rank "5."
- ◆ Establish criteria for identifying priority acquisition parcels and assign a priority to them (high, medium, low). Dedham could consider adopting published standards such as the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) Criteria for Ranking Undeveloped Land for conservation. These criteria include: contiguity with existing protected open space to develop wildlife corridors; specific natural resource value such as wetlands or aquifer recharge areas; and specific natural attributes such as water supply, presence of an endangered species habitat or unusual native plant community.

Updating and enhancing Dedham's existing open space inventory should be done in concert with updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2009, and maintained annually thereafter.

Action: Protect significant open space parcels.

Primary MP element: Open Space & Recreation

Related MP elements: Natural Resources

Leadership responsibility: Conservation Commission

Support: Dedham Land Trust

Resources needed: Open space bond authorization, subject to inclusion in the town's capital improvements plan; and Community Preservation Act

Discussion:

The Dedham Conservation Commission should identify privately-owned, at-risk or otherwise valuable open space parcels and encourage land owners to donate conservation restrictions on the land or donate the land outright. Dedham still has some large parcels under private ownership that are unprotected and potentially vulnerable to development. Through development of its open space inventory, Dedham should identify parcels that would contribute to the town's open space plan, such as by creating a greenbelt or preserving land for neighborhood open space. Then, the town should develop an outreach strategy for cultivating donors of conservation restrictions, outright donations of land, or land acquisitions financed by the town. The Conservation Commission could seek assistance from the Dedham Land Trust, other land trusts in the region, and other communities to develop an approach that will be effective in Dedham. Informational materials about conservation restrictions should be available on the town's website. Community workshops, strategic mailings, and newspaper articles are other effective educational initiatives.

It is important to point out that in the absence of willing donors or cooperative developers, Dedham may have to acquire land in order to protect it, just as countless other towns have done and continue to do today. This is one of the key reasons that Dedham needs to maintain a current Open Space and Recreation Plan because without it, the town will not be eligible for Self-Help grants to assist with financing the cost of open space acquisitions. Access to CPA revenue and an open space bond authorization (as exempt debt) from Town Meeting will be critically important tools for the town in its efforts to protect open space.

Action: Annually review the number of boards and committees in town government, determine their continued relevance, and disband committees that are no longer needed.

Primary MP element: Governance

Related MP elements: Community Services and Facilities

Leadership responsibility: Board of Selectmen

Support: Town Administrator, Town Clerk

Resources needed: Citizen volunteers

Discussion:

Like most suburbs, Dedham has many town committees because in Massachusetts, local governments have historically promoted and relied upon citizen participation. Today, cities and towns find it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified people to serve on appointed committees or to run for elected office. In reviewing draft proposals for this implementation plan, a town official noted that adding more committees to Dedham's roster of public servants could simply compound the problems associated with multiple committees and a shortage of volunteers. This may be true, but implementing a master plan invariably calls for change, both immediate and incremental. For example, Dedham has talented professional staff whose service to the town will be essential to carrying out this plan. However, Dedham does not necessarily have enough staff, or an optimal arrangement of staff, to conduct the work of master plan implementation (or meet its present-day needs). The town's choice is to forego components of the master plan or reorganize its priorities in order to complete the plan's recommendations. Similarly, Dedham may have more committees today than it actually needs for the functions of local government. In that event, Dedham should consider eliminating some committees and providing active volunteers other opportunities to serve the town. It also may be appropriate to determine whether some functions currently handled by volunteer committees could be performed more efficiently by staff.