

Discussion Question Responses: Economic Development

1. **The Master Plan survey indicates that attracting additional business is a high priority for Dunstable residents. What can the town do to open up additional business opportunities within town?**
 - Respondent 1: Create Economic Development Committee similar to Groton, Westford and Chelmsford. Identify areas where town prefers development and properties where owners have an interest in developing. Create permitting and infrastructure to support new businesses.
 - Respondent 2: I think this is a question which would benefit from the active participation of current business owners. They can best inform us of what rules and regulations are most limiting and which are most helpful, along with what would encourage other businesses to locate here.
 - Respondent 3: I look at this question in a somewhat different manner. I believe that design guidelines would enhance Dunstable Center's attractiveness! This would draw in more businesses and clientele who appreciate and who have sought out the unique small town New England village atmosphere. Let's make the most of what is special about Dunstable. There are plenty of cookie-cutter chains and strip malls nearby, lets strive to keep Dunstable unique! We can attract businesses this way.
 - Respondent 4: We could streamline the permitting process for business and provide municipal water to more areas of town.
 - Respondent 5: Develop and implement an overlay district to identify types of businesses and in-town locations that would be amenable to Dunstable's core values. Update the zoning bylaws to enable small-scale businesses to set up shop in these designated areas. Drop the dry town bylaw. Develop an efficient, collaborative, end-to-end process among the town boards for entrepreneurs and businesses to apply and set up shop. Brainstorm and contact state, federal, and other resources including the U.S. Small Business Administration, and local Chambers of Commerce for funding and promotional support. Pursue various angles, including agricultural, environmental, historical preservation, and businesses that engage and support locally sourced materials. Develop a "Dunstable 2.0"

launch plan for creating awareness of business opportunities and helpful resources within town. The plan would include: Timeline and owners of proposed action items and Detailed communications plan.

- Respondent 6: Not be a dry town, establish a small business/historic overlay district in the center.

2. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (88%) indicated that they favored creating additional opportunities for small-scale neighborhood style businesses. Should additional areas of town be zoned for neighborhood-style business? If so, where should they be located and what uses should be allowed in this district?

- Respondent 1: Yes, build off areas that already exist (i.e., MUD, near Tyngsborough line, etc.). Health care and senior/assisted housing should be encouraged. Not landscaping, trucking, etc.
- Respondent 2: Hopefully, all members of this group have taken time to familiarize themselves with the current zoning regarding businesses ...sections 6.1 a through g.... What exactly is a Neighborhood style business? I am not interested in having a Deli or Service Station on my street. I am in favor of widening the guidelines for business in the Center of town and in the Mixed Use area.
- Respondent 3: I think we should have an overlay in the Town Center with strong design guidelines that encourage small businesses and adaptive re-use of barns to ensure their continued vitality. I am concerned about a statement on page 27 that says, "commercial development along 113 should be considered". I am speaking specifically about the section of Route 113 known as "East Main Street". This area should continue to be residential and agricultural. The town has made a commitment to preserve this area known as "The Gateway to Dunstable". The National Register Nomination for this area reads : "The well preserved nature of the road contributes a large proportion to the town's rural and historic character". Allowing retail development in this particular area would be crazy!
- Respondent 4: Zoning areas for business does not necessarily mean that business will settle there, but areas not zoned for business means they definitely won't. Zoning areas of north Main Street and farther out Pleasant Street would certainly open up some areas. I would not like to see some of our back roads zoned for business, because I would not like to add to the traffic burden on some of the narrower, busy streets.

- Respondent 5: Yes. There may be opportunities on or near farmland for businesses that would preserve and support the farming community, such as Agritourism (farm tours and other activities), farm stands, country store, seasonal or year-round farmers' markets, PYO, farm-to-table restaurants, source farm yield for locally produced food products sold locally or online and B&B with views. There may be opportunities on or near current recreational areas for businesses that would preserve and build upon available activities, or on or near tracts of land, such as forests that could be groomed for recreational activities, such as Ecotourism (to support conservation efforts), outdoor obstacle courses (zipline park, water park), nature tours, source natural products for field-to-table sales locally and online, nature show (televised or online), funded environmental studies (that don't disturb natural resources), camping, yoga/meditation center and B&B with views. There may be opportunities around bodies of water for businesses that would preserve, support, introduce new or build upon current activities, such as kayak and canoe rental, swimming, fishing and B&B with views. There may be opportunities within barns for business that would preserve historical significance and support the structures, such as an event facility (wedding receptions, other events and meetings), artists' loft/market, farm food co-op facility, museum and country store.
- Respondent 6: Town Center and MUD District, old green house temporary town hall lot.

3. In addition to addressing issues with the municipal water distribution system, what infrastructure improvements are needed to accommodate the needs of residents and the business community in the future?

- Respondent 1: Road improvements are needed. Sidewalk fund would be helpful, if well planned. Would be helpful to have a sidewalk fund and a committee to target area of town that sidewalks would be most used. Sewer would be nice, but probably not in my lifetime.
- Respondent 2: Solution of the water infrastructure issues will impact the viability of having no more businesses in the Center and MUD.
- Respondent 3: Do we really need more infrastructure with projected household growth slowing?
- Respondent 4: Other than keeping the roadways in good condition and lighted, I'm not sure what else the Town can do. We certainly aren't about to provide municipal sewer.
- Respondent 5: Cell tower signal; fire station, fire/rescue support,

fire hydrants (also part of the water issue); Swallow Union building maintenance and fire sprinkler system; sidewalks in town center; increase in library hours.

- Respondent 6: The renovation of Town Hall and fire station. Union School Building.

4. What should the town do to encourage agri-tourism and eco-tourism?

- Respondent 1: Create Economic Development Committee (similar to Groton, Westford and Chelmsford). Connect with the State tourism or agricultural office, as well as Merrimack Valley Tourism and possibly UMass system. Connect with towns and developers who have been successful.
- Respondent 2: The Right to Farm By-law was intended to promote our farms and related businesses. Infrastructure is already in place for someone who hopes to begin an Eco Tourism business. Both of these could certainly be activities that we could encourage in the master plan.
- Respondent 3: If we continue to preserve the farms and fields of Dunstable – agri-tourism will follow.
- Respondent 4: I don't feel I know enough about this to give a reasonable answer.
- Respondent 5: Compile and share a list of existing farms and goods/services and a list of conservation/open land/barn owners (relevant to types of business mentioned above) with relevant town boards and Master Plan Committee. Meet with town farmers and land owners to discuss what types of business may appeal to them. Become educated on agri- and eco-tourism and consider the opportunities that could provide sources of income to the town. Research potential funding resources to supplement wherever possible. The town board and Committee with NMCOG should all meet together to discuss.
- Respondent 6: Continue to support the purchase of open space, select a few town-owned properties to have guided nature walks, and maybe have a community farmers market day like the town yard sale concept.

5. What initiatives should be implemented to maintain and promote the town's agricultural economy? Should the town participate in a regional program directed at agricultural enterprises and preservation?

- Respondent 1: Yes.
- Respondent 2: Both this and question four should be addressed by

- the Agricultural Commission which currently has two vacancies.
- Respondent 3: I believe the town is already active in state programs, such as: The Mass Farm Bureau, the Grange, Right to Farm Bylaw, National Fish and Wildlife, APRs, etc. Perhaps there are others we should look into.
 - Respondent 4: Yes, regional co-operatives are a good idea. A farmer's market could also help greatly.
 - Respondent 5: One initiative could be to research and consider a regional program if it will benefit the town. Meet with town farmers and land owners to discuss what types of business may appeal to them.
 - Respondent 6: We already have adopted the Right to Farm Act. Work with farmers in a positive way so that they will open their farms to the community. Right to Farm signs should be posted at the town line.

6. Nearly 90% of survey respondents indicated that they favored adopting energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. How can the town move forward with an energy efficiency and renewable energy program? Should Dunstable become a state-designated "Green Community"?

- Respondent 1: This may be helpful when planning town/school building improvements if it helps with State financing or helps us with MassWorks.
- Respondent 2: Certainly something to strive for. (As the owner of an electric vehicle, I would love to see charging stations like those found in Tyngsborough, North Chelmsford and other towns.) I am all in favor of Criteria #4. I am unaware that we meet any of these criteria at this time and so, Yes, let's make the program a goal to work towards as we move forward under this new Maser Plan.
- Respondent 3: Yes, what I've read about adopting a "Green Community" policy is very positive. It would definitely make sense for Dunstable.
- Respondent 4: The first step should be finding out what other towns have done to become "green communities" and then plan based on what is feasible for Dunstable.
- Respondent 5: Research and secure a company or companies that will provide either substantial credits or low/no equipment fees to install renewable energy equipment (e.g. solar panels). Absolutely, we should aggressively pursue becoming a Green Community.
- Respondent 6: Yes, and we are starting to look into this ...need to update zoning bylaw to allow larger solar fields, etc.

7. What workforce development programs would help unemployed

or underemployed residents gain employment? What programs should be made available to youth and older adult workers? Has the town utilized the resources available through the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board (GLWDB) agency?

- Respondent 1: Career fair at high school (similar to Billerica) or Milestone (Middlesex Community College (MCC) older adult program) may be helpful. Since the Director of the GLWDB lives in Dunstable, it may make sense to bring her into the conversation. Note: Recently retired.
- Respondent 2: I'll have to leave this question to those who are better informed on this.
- Respondent 3: Is there a need in Dunstable for this program with unemployment less than 4%? Is the GLWDB organization the right outlet for a small town like Dunstable? Something more "local" like employment listings on Next Door would I believe have better results.
- Respondent 4: There are regional workforce development programs available; I don't feel Dunstable is equipped to provide this kind of service.
- Respondent 5: I assume that if resources are available through GLWDB for Dunstable residents, then residents who fit the criteria should be made aware and have access to these resources. Dunstable does not yet have an established commercial business base; thus, I view this question as more relevant to an educational development plan.
- Respondent 6: No response.