

# **DUNSTABLE MASTER PLAN**



**Dunstable Master Plan Committee**

**Prepared By: John Brown Associates, Inc.**

**In Association With: Bluestone Planning Group  
and David J. Friend, ITE**

**April, 1999**

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**Prepared By: John Brown Associates, Inc.  
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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# **Dunstable Master Plan**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

The Town of Dunstable is a rural eastern Massachusetts town on the New Hampshire border. The town's 16.7 square miles contained a population of 2,236 in 1990 and is estimated at 2,800 in January, 1999. Although the town retains its agricultural landscape, the number of working farms is declining and most residents work outside Dunstable. Surrounding communities are becoming increasingly suburbanized. Although almost entirely zoned for single-family residences, Dunstable has a small retail area in the village center and has land zoned for limited commercial use on the Tyngsborough border.

Pressures to subdivide large parcels of land and break up farms will increase during the next decades. Dunstable's quality of life may also be affected by growing residential and commercial development in neighboring communities. Dunstable's residents want to preserve the rural character of their town.

The Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide for Town growth and change for the next 10-20 years or longer. It establishes goals for the town and makes recommendations for carrying out these goals in the areas of land use, economic base, housing, natural and cultural resources, public facilities, and transportation. This Executive Summary summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Master Plan.

### **Process**

The process of preparing a Master Plan for Dunstable began with the appointment of a Master Plan Committee in 1997, representing the various town boards and committees involved in planning, growth and environmental protections. A planning seminar was held on Saturday, November 11, 1997, shortly before the technical studies began. This was attended by local and regional officials, representatives of the consultant team, and town citizens. Issues important to the growth and development of Dunstable were discussed. A contract with the consultant team, John Brown Associates, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts was signed in January, 1998. The consultant team included Bluestone Planning Group of Cambridge and David J. Friend, ITE, of Bedford, Massachusetts.

The Committee held meetings with the consulting team and working sessions of the Committee. An orientation meeting to discuss the consultant's preliminary findings was held on April 2, 1998. A half day public forum was held on Saturday morning, May 16, 1998 to discuss existing conditions, goals, and preliminary planning approaches. A second half day public forum was held on Saturday, October 17, 1998 to discuss alternative land use scenarios and their potential impacts. The findings of a community-wide citizen survey were also discussed (see Exhibit A at the end of this report). Comments received at the public forums, the results of the community survey, and input from public officials helped to guide the development of the Guide Plan For Future Land Use and other recommendations of this report.

### **Summary of Inventory & Analysis**

There are a number of factors which influence the development of a community such as Dunstable. They are discussed below.

## **Land Use**

The predominant land use pattern in Dunstable reflects the historic community establishment, although impacts from the accelerated residential development of the past few decades are evident. Factors that determine changes in the land use pattern include availability of utilities, soil suitability, topography, regional economics, accessibility and similar opportunities and constraints.

The Town of Dunstable contains approximately 10,714 acres (16.74 square miles) of which 10,573 acres are land and 140 acres are water bodies. Developed land (including protected open space) comprises 3,022 acres, or 28% of the town's total area. Aside from protected open space, the predominant developed land use in Dunstable is residential, constituting 40.5% of the developed land area. Of the residential uses, single-family homes constitute the vast majority of the residential development. There currently are about 852 one-family homes and approximately 23 other types of units (with two or more units per structure) in Dunstable. A total of 1,225 acres is in residential development.

Commercial uses make up 11 acres, or 0.1% of the developed land area. Limited retail facilities are located in the town center and in a few sites along Pleasant Street both east and west of the center. No industrial use has been identified in the town.

Public and semi-public uses comprise 1,453 acres, or 48% of the developed land area, including recreation facilities, public buildings, and institutional uses.

There were 1,370 acres of protected open space in Dunstable, including land owned by the Dunstable Rural Lands Trust, the Conservation Commission, the Town of Dunstable, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and private individuals. Protected open space covers 13% of the Town's land area.

There are approximately 7,551 acres of vacant and undeveloped land in Dunstable, including 1,323 acres of agricultural land, representing 71% of the town's total land area. A significant portion of the town's undeveloped land is in agricultural use, including dairy farming, livestock, horses, sheep, plant nurseries, minor crops and hayfields. Approximately 1,323 acres are used for agriculture, or 12.3% of the town's total area. There are 6,228 acres of vacant land in the town (58% of total town area), not counting agricultural land. Much of this land is undevelopable because of the presence of wetlands, unsuitable soil types, or other considerations.

## **Economic Base**

At one time Dunstable was a self-sufficient rural community that supported itself primarily through agriculture and extraction of natural resources. While agriculture remains an important part of Dunstable's economic base, the town has become increasingly integrated with the surrounding metropolitan region. The population has grown much faster than the town's economic base in recent years, and most of the residents are employed elsewhere in the region. Most of the town's recent growth may in fact be fueled by employment growth in the greater metropolitan area.

The tax base in Dunstable is primarily residential, with homeowners covering approximately 94% of the tax revenues. Industrial and commercial properties combined make up approximately 2% of the taxable property in Dunstable. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B tax provisions permit private agricultural, forestry, and recreation lands to be taxed at a lower rate as long as they remain undeveloped. Such lands constitute less than one percent of the total property value in the town.

There is a limited visible presence of commercial activity in the town. The existing retail establishments primarily serve the Dunstable community. There are two areas zoned for business use. The B-1 district is located in a small area off of Main Street near the town center. The existing convenience store and former Post Office building in the Town Center are presently located in the R-1 district just outside of the B-1 district. A new location for the Post Office was recently constructed on Pleasant Street, about 1/3

mile west of its former location. The B-3 district is a larger area along the town's eastern border with Tyngsborough, adjacent to an existing commercial area that lies in Tyngsborough.

Agriculture has historically been a vital economic activity to the town, and remains an important component of the community's rural character. As agriculture becomes less economically viable, agricultural lands are becoming increasingly attractive for other types of development.

## **Housing**

Dunstable is a rural community which has seen relatively slow growth in population and housing development over the course of time. There are still fewer than 1,000 housing units in the town, almost all of which are individual single-family homes. As the Northern Middlesex region experiences an increasing pace of development, the town of Dunstable is certain to feel some of the pressure.

Over 96% of the housing in Dunstable is single-family. There are no condominiums in the town. The zoning bylaw does not generally permit multifamily structures other than two-family homes in limited areas; however, in-law accessory apartments are allowed in single-family residences.

Existing zoning regulations require a minimum residential lot size of two acres throughout the town. However, some older homes located near the town center or homes built in cluster type developments (described as Open Space Development in the Zoning Bylaw) may have less than two acres of property.

Trends indicate an increase in new households in Dunstable. Households also tend to be slightly smaller than in previous years, and there is likely to be an increase in households composed of families with children. Population trends indicate a demand for additional housing units for separate households, older adults, and for the elderly. Regional growth pressures will bring more single-family residential development, attracting more young families to settle in Dunstable.

## **Natural Resources**

Dunstable is a rural town with a long history as an agricultural community. Residents of Dunstable value their open spaces, protected wetlands, aquifers, forests, orchards, and agricultural lands and wish to maintain the town's rural landscape atmosphere. Natural and open areas are owned by a variety of parties, including: the Town's Conservation Commission, the State, the Dunstable Rural Lands Trust, and private property owners. Over the past twenty years, through active acquisition of lands for conservation, donations of land, and encouragement of economic uses of farmlands and forests that might otherwise become available for increased residential development, Dunstable may have significantly slowed the rate of suburbanization that would have otherwise occurred.

Today, many of Dunstable's natural resource lands, such as wetlands and river banks, are protected by law. Others, such as privately-owned farmlands and forests, are only preserved voluntarily by land owners who have chosen to participate in State programs that provide tax incentives to encourage their retention as agricultural lands or forests. But these programs do not necessarily provide permanent protections if the land owners decide to withdraw from them. One of Dunstable's greatest challenges today is to identify mechanisms to permanently preserve valued natural resource lands – whether by direct acquisitions, purchase of preservation easements, or other fiscal/financial incentive programs.

Additionally, many of Dunstable's large natural resource areas today remain isolated, unlinked to other resource areas, and difficult to access. Opportunities exist to link resource areas by means of trail construction and acquisition of key parcels for conservation so that a network of linked resources can be achieved and opened to public accessibility as part of regional networks.

## **Historic, Cultural, & Scenic Resources**

Dunstable has a wealth of historic and cultural sites, landscapes and scenic roadways. Although highly valued by its citizens, many of these resources are, in fact, not well protected against future private redevelopment efforts or state government construction projects. For example, there are no local historic districts in Dunstable to provide protection to a valued area of town. Route 113, a numbered state highway and Dunstable's most scenic byway, is unprotected from future state roadway expansion or improvement projects. Though a number of properties, buildings, and areas are listed on the Massachusetts Historic Register of cultural and historic resources, they are not protected against redevelopment or subject to review unless such redevelopment projects are proposed by the Commonwealth itself. These Massachusetts Historic Register sites in Dunstable include places of former mills, homesteads, schools, taverns, stores, quarries, and an Indian battle site on Hound Meadow Hill, as well as the Congregational Church, cemeteries, and other still intact facilities.

Fortunately, Dunstable has an active Historical Commission which is now using state grant and Town monies to thoroughly research and document its many historic resources and potential districts so that some of them can be eventually nominated to and entered on the Federal Register of Historic Places as well as the State Historic Register. Additionally, the Dunstable Historical Commission has been active in preserving Dunstable's historic Town Hall.

## **Public Facilities and Services**

Historically, as a small rural town, Dunstable has not needed to provide extensive municipal services. In fact, many of its various municipal Departments and Boards continue to rely on small staffs and part-time hours of operation with extensive use of volunteers. Its Fire Department, for example, has continued to rely on a largely volunteer force to protect Dunstable's citizens and properties. Other important services - such as public education - are provided by sharing resources with the adjoining town of Groton. As a result, many of Dunstable's municipal buildings and facilities are designed to accommodate small-sized program operations and part-time staffs. In keeping with this philosophy of minimal municipal services, Dunstable's buildings, equipment and facilities have, for the most part, not been modernized, updated or expanded in recent years to meet increased space or service demands. In fact, facilities such as the Town Hall do not meet many federal and state code and accessibility requirements for the disabled; and the Highway/DPW garage does not provide the most basic of amenities for its employees.

Also historically, Dunstable's population has remained relatively small over the years and land use development (overwhelmingly residential) has remained at low densities. Therefore, Dunstable has largely been able to rely on municipal and private wells for water supply from its several underground aquifers and septic fields for wastewater and sewage disposal.

Today, however, demand and expectations for municipal services are rising while the facilities that house the departments which provide them are increasingly obsolete. In recognition of these rising demands and obsolescent conditions, for example, the Town has recently constructed a new Public Library to replace the small library at Town Hall. Other facilities, such as the Town Hall, Fire House, Highway Garage, and, of course, schools will demand attention in the future. Just recently, the Town has decided to acquire a 28 acre parcel of land for public purposes, and possibly for new town facilities. Just how that parcel will be developed is a key issue to be addressed.

## **Transportation**

Transportation and land use are inextricably related. Land use activities affect the demand on transportation facilities, and transportation services are a major determinant in siting development projects and cumulatively shaping the form of a community. The basic concept underlying the relationship between land use and transportation is *accessibility*.

The rural character of the Town of Dunstable is defined in part by its location relative to the regional highway network. The nearest major highway in the region is Route 3 which passes north-south along the western edge of Dunstable through Tyngsborough and travels from the New Hampshire border to Route 128 in Burlington.

As one of the most congested travel corridors in eastern Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) has targeted Route 3 for major improvements. Current MHD plans call for the addition of a single travel lane and breakdown lane in each direction along Route 3 for its entire 21 mile length.

Just as the rural character of Dunstable is affected by its connections with the regional highway system, so too is it influenced heavily by the configuration of the local street system and the narrow, winding nature of Dunstable roads. The existing street system in Dunstable has its origins in the system of paths and unpaved roads developed many years ago. A comparison of the roadway network in Dunstable today with the street system in 1875 indicates that few new road segments have been constructed over the past 120 years. As indicated in Table 7-3, there are presently a total of 37.6 miles of roadway in the Town of Dunstable, consuming approximately 202.6 acres of land. What makes the Town of Dunstable rather unique is that it is traversed by only one major street - Route 113 (Main and Pleasant Streets) - running east-to-west through the center of the Town for a distance of 4.8 miles from the Tyngsborough town line to the Pepperell town line. The overwhelming majority of streets in the town are local or residential streets designed with the primary intent of providing access to individual residential parcels or neighborhood subdivisions.

## **Goals**

Goals were formulated through a citizen participation process, including public meetings, community forums, interviews, and a community-wide survey. Some of these goals are inter-related. Goals in each area of concern are presented below:

### **1.0 Land Use**

- 1) Manage residential, commercial and recreational development in a way that carefully balances economic needs with the need to protect the small-town, historic character of Dunstable with other community needs.
- 2) Limit nonresidential uses to those clearly needed or beneficial to the community and are not disruptive to the character or function of the community.
- 3) Maintain and increase protected open space and recreational land uses.
- 4) Link open spaces to create open space networks.
- 5) Develop a strategy to retain agricultural and other undeveloped lands important to the character of the community.
- 6) Use the full or partial acquisition of open land as a tool to limit the growth capacity of the town.
- 7) Maintain a continuous and coordinated town planning process to anticipate future needs and plan for their resolution.
- 8) Strengthen community design and the design review process so that high standards of design excellence are maintained in all development projects.
- 9) Protect and enhance the aspects of Dunstable's existing image and character that most citizens agree epitomize the positive physical character of the community - including the town's "village" character, attractive and vital residential areas, scenic vistas, variety of open spaces, historic buildings and sites, and natural resources.
- 10) Improve land use coordination of town agencies.
- 11) Pay special attention to the entrances to the town on major roadways (gateways) since they represent a visitor's first impression of the town.

### **2.0 Economic Base**

- 1) Attract limited environmentally acceptable businesses in appropriate areas of the town which will help to provide tax revenues to support town services.
- 2) Allow only nonresidential uses which are environmentally appropriate and do not require the availability of public water and sewer services.
- 3) Coordinate vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic and parking in business areas so that they function in an optimal manner (especially in the Town Center).

- 4) Develop limited retail uses on a site near the town center while protecting Dunstable's New England village character.
- 5) Maintain high standards of design and maintenance in existing and new commercial developments.
- 6) Explore senior housing and health care facilities as a potential source of net tax income for the town.
- 7) Seek to promote the viability of the town's agricultural economy

### **3.0 Housing**

- 1) Since Dunstable is primarily a residential town, safeguard residential neighborhoods from encroachment by all forms of incompatible uses and other potentially damaging environmental influences.
- 2) Create some diversity in new residential housing units based on Dunstable's demographics, while protecting the character of the community.
- 3) Explore alternate forms of housing and life-care facilities for seniors.
- 4) Take care to carefully integrate new or expanded housing into existing districts and neighborhoods so that it is not physically or environmentally disruptive to the existing style and scale.

### **4.0 Natural Resources**

- 1) Protect aquifers, forests, groundwater resources, wetlands resources, riverbanks and watersheds.
- 2) Develop strategies to preserve farmland properties and protect agricultural soils.
- 3) Create wildlife corridor linkages and other hiking and bike trail linkages between natural resource areas.
- 4) Protect wildlife habitats.
- 5) Protect and expand conservation areas and remaining natural areas.
- 6) Provide public access to Massapoag Pond and the Nashua River Corridor without overburdening or polluting these resources.

### **5.0 Historic, Cultural & Scenic Resources**

- 1) Survey, document, and nominate qualified historic sites to the Federal Register of Historic Places to provide increased protections.

- 2) Eventually consider establishment of Local Historic Districts to provide the greatest degree of protection.
- 3) Consider creation of a local Route 113 Historic District to protect this scenic “gateway” road.
- 4) Protect scenic vistas and seek to protect and gain public access to valued scenic landscapes.
- 5) Conduct a Town Center study to clarify the future of the center.
- 6) Consider revision to subdivision regulations to establish a more rural character.
- 7) Preserve historic integrity of Town Hall.

## **6.0 Public Facilities**

- 1) Conduct Town Hall Architectural Feasibility Study/renovate and reorganize Town Hall space.
- 2) Expand space for the Police Department.
- 3) Expand and upgrade Fire Department and EMS facilities.
- 4) Provide a new Highway Garage.
- 5) Identify a new school site to alleviate severe overcrowding.
- 6) Monitor the need for future active recreational venues and playfields.
- 7) Seek to acquire public access to a recreational swimming beach and small boat ramp at Massapoag Pond.
- 8) Improve management and coordination of recreational properties.

- 9) Limit expansion of Town water supply capacity and the water distribution system to the Town Center area. Do not provide a new sewer system.
- 10) Add to cemetery lands if and when the opportunities arise.

## **7.0 Transportation**

- 1) Control and manage the traffic generated by commuters traveling through Dunstable by improving operations at congested and unsafe intersections (e.g., Town Center).
- 2) Keep unnecessary traffic off local, residential streets.
- 3) Improve the safety of pedestrian pathways and vehicular crossings in Town Center.
- 4) Create multiple-use paths between residential areas and popular destinations in Dunstable.
- 5) Promote the use of public transportation by residents and employees, when possible.
- 6) Preserve the rural character of Dunstable by ensuring that new development does not affect the ability of the existing transportation system to provide a reasonable level of service.
- 7) Promote safety in residential areas by separating vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle movements whenever possible.
- 8) Utilize former railroad rights-of-way to develop pedestrian and bicycle trails.

## Summary of Recommendations

### 1.0 Land Use

The Guide Plan For Future Land Use is a long-range projection of the most desirable future land uses at specific locations in the town, and may be subject to revision as time passes. It takes into consideration the Town's capacity to accommodate the impacts of future growth as well as the Town's desire to meet future needs (housing, economic development, open space preservation, etc.) The Guide Plan follows quite closely the Environmental Plan developed during the consideration of alternative land use scenarios (see Appendix 1-2).

Dunstable is primarily a rural community and wishes to remain so. A considerable amount of land (over 56% of the total land area) is capable of future development, located in all areas of the town. Growth can have a profound effect on the character of the town.

The Guide Plan is intended to recommend long term future land use policy. Some of its recommendations can be implemented immediately but others may await changes in real estate market conditions, the availability of Town funds or infrastructure (i.e., water, roads, etc.), or private land use decisions. The plan will also provide guidance for future zoning map changes, although some additional study may be required to identify exact or appropriate boundaries for specific map changes. Means of implementing the recommendations are discussed in Section 8, Implementation Plan.

#### 1. Residential Development.

Dunstable should continue to manage residential growth to maintain its appearance as a rural agricultural community. The existing zoning requirements for low-density residential development are appropriate. Some limited higher density development, including open space (cluster) development and senior housing is recommended in order to provide some variety in housing options to meet the needs of residents.

#### 2. Commercial/Business Development.

Although Dunstable does not want to attract retail/service growth for economic development purposes, space should be provided for such development to meet the needs of Dunstable residents. The area that is currently zoned for retail/service use is not well located, and thus is not recommended for such use in the Guide Plan. The area in the town center which is currently in commercial use can appropriately remain so, but may not be sufficient to meet future needs. An additional area for commercial development might be located on Pleasant Street (Route 113) between the town center and the new Post Office, although a specific site has not been identified (see Appendix 1-3 for criteria for selecting a suitable site).

The area along the border with Tyngsboro that is currently zoned for expanded commercial use is recommended for future office or high-tech development. This site is accessible from Tyngsboro, and would not have a significant impact on the rural character of Dunstable. It is also easily accessible to Route 3 without creating additional traffic in Dunstable.

#### 3. Public/Institutional.

The Guide Plan shows existing public and semi-public lands and their relationship to other uses. The 28-acre site in back of the new Post Office has been identified as a potential location for a municipal services center (fire, police, EMS) or other public facility. Other future public facilities can be accommodated through reuse of developed lands or in less sensitive areas that are proposed for open space use.

**4. Open Space/Recreation.**

The Guide Plan identifies areas throughout the town which are recommended for open space protection. These areas include wetlands, floodplains, lands currently classified under Chapter 61, transmission lines and former railroads, and key tracts of land currently in agricultural use. A 500 foot corridor along both sides of Main Street (excluding existing structures) is also included as open space to protect the scenic character of the road. Future protected open space will likely be in a mixture of public and private ownership. Recreation facilities, including trails, may be accommodated in some of the areas that are recommended for open space protection.

Means of implementing the open space features of the Guide Plan include Town acquisition, acquisition by private land trusts, private donation of land or development rights, donation of open space easements, enforcement of wetland protection regulations, and, to a limited degree, zoning regulations. Open Space (cluster) zoning and site plan review are zoning tools that can be used to encourage or possibly require developers to preserve valuable farm lands or natural resources. More specific recommendations related to open space and recreation are provided in Section 4, Natural Resources, and Section 6, Public Facilities and Services.

**5. Impacts of Development.**

A buildout analysis was prepared showing the long term impacts of development under the Guide Plan for Future Land Use. Table E-1 shows the amount of development that can take place at full buildout if the recommended land use policies are implemented.

**Table E-1  
Summary of Development Capacity Under Guide Plan**

Total Residential Units	1,496 dwelling units
Total Retail/Service	54,500 square feet
Total Office/High Tech	3,363,700 square feet

**2.0 Economic Base**

**1. Retail/Service.**

Dunstable should not seek to attract retail/service development for primarily economic development purposes. Some additional development is desirable, however, to provide service and retail facilities to serve the local population, and to accommodate local entrepreneurs. Some commercial development that contributes to the Town’s tax base may also be desirable as long as it does not have adverse impacts. The need to provide adequate zoning to meet the community’s future needs for commercial development of any type must be balanced with the objective to preserve the town’s rural residential character.

The Guide Plan for Future Land use eliminates the existing area in the Town Center that is zoned for commercial use (B-1), and instead shows the area in the town center that is currently used for retail business as Retail/Service. Retail and service uses in Dunstable should be primarily to provide convenience for local residents. Additional types of retail and services that might be appropriate include medical offices, a bank or ATM and/or a small restaurant.

The existing retail/service areas in Dunstable may not be sufficient to meet future needs of town residents for such facilities. An additional site could be identified along Pleasant Street (Route 113) between the town center and the new Post Office to accommodate future retail/service development.

The site should be sufficiently large so that future commercial development will not have to be spread around the town, but can be located in one place. The site design should be such that development is set back from the road and natural landscaping maintained to avoid a “strip commercial” appearance and to provide safe ingress and egress. Design controls should also be implemented to assure that the development fits the character of the surrounding area. An additional site for retail/service development should not be designated until the existing site is used to its full capacity (the former Post Office building is currently vacant). Criteria for selecting a site for additional retail/service use are discussed in Appendix 1-3 (Land Use Section).

## **2. Office/High Tech.**

The area that is currently zoned for expanded commercial use (B-3) is recommended for future office or high tech use such as those specified in the Zoning By-law. Retail uses should be excluded from this area, and design standards should be applied. High quality commercial development at this location can contribute to the Town’s tax base without presenting any significant impact on local traffic or the rural character of the community. This area can be accessed via Cummings Road in Tyngsboro, and is close to the intersection of Routes 3 and 113. Because of the lack of sewer and water, the types of businesses that might be able to locate at this site are somewhat limited; however a developer might be able to seek services from the Town of Tyngsboro, or they can develop on-site water and septic treatment facilities.

## **3. Agriculture.**

The Town should seek to promote agriculture as a viable economic activity. Actions in this regard could include:

- Facilitate communication between individual agricultural enterprises.
- Promote the use of high-value crops and farming techniques.
- Allow uses incidental to agricultural activity which can provide additional income without causing adverse environmental impacts.

Zoning provisions can also be used to promote agricultural activity by protecting prime agricultural land through site plan review or cluster requirements.

## **3.0 Housing**

As stated in the Guide Plan for Future Land Use, the low-density, rural residential character of Dunstable should be maintained. Nevertheless, a greater variety of housing options is to be encouraged in order to provide for the housing needs of various population groups, especially seniors.

### **1. Regulatory Requirements.**

The Guide Plan for Future Land Use recommends that Dunstable maintain the existing residential zoning regulations which require a two acre minimum lot size for residential development.

### **2. Open Space Development •**

Encourage open space (cluster) residential development in order to preserve open space or agricultural land while enhancing the character of new residential neighborhoods. Review the density and design requirements for open space residential development to assure that quality and environmental standards are upheld. Consider offering more incentives to developers to plan for open space development.

### **3. Senior Housing.**

Seek the development of alternative housing for seniors, such as townhouses or condominiums, or some form of special needs housing. Such development might take place in the existing R-2 zoning district or in another appropriate location to be selected in the future. Criteria for identifying locations for higher-density senior housing are provided in Appendix

3-1.

The Town of Dunstable does not presently have a housing authority, but may wish to consider forming one (or another entity such as a local housing partnership or nonprofit housing corporation) if the Town chooses to pursue the development of subsidized senior housing.

### **4. Studies.**

Form a Town housing committee to consider needed actions and possible locations related to future housing.

## **4.0 Natural Resources**

### **1. Protect Aquifers, Groundwater Resources, Watersheds and Wetland Resources.**

The Conservation Commission should continue to strictly enforce the State Wetlands Protection Act and the Rivers Protection Act and maintain the 100 foot and 200 foot development buffers around the perimeter of all wetland areas and riverbanks. Dunstable's zoning should be crafted to prevent overdevelopment above aquifer areas, particularly the Salmon Brook Aquifer, and watersheds so as not to pollute these water supply resources.

### **2. Protect Farmland Properties, Agricultural Soils, and Forests.**

The Town should establish a "Strategic Acquisition Fund" which would be readily available to acquire farms and forest lands when their owners decide to put them up for sale and possible redevelopment. Some farms whose owners have elected to receive tax breaks in exchange for retaining their lands for agricultural uses under the State's Chapter 61A regulations (or Chapter 61 forests) are temporarily protected under this statute. Owners can withdraw from this program at any time, however, by paying a penalty and then sell their land for development. Although the Town is granted a "right of first refusal" to purchase any

Chapter lands put on the market, the Town must have available a large cash reserve to take advantage of this right. Therefore, the establishment of a "Strategic Acquisition Fund" by the Town is critical if it wishes to exercise its statutory "right of first refusal" (for options, appraisals, down payments, etc).

Additionally, the Town should investigate other innovative techniques for preserving farmlands, such as the acquisition of easements, short of outright purchase. These techniques or mechanisms may include educating large landowners about the financial and tax benefits of donating property, acquisition by private land trusts, private donation of land development rights, and donation or purchase of open space easements.

The Town can also seek to permanently protect prime agricultural soils for agricultural use by investing in Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) with funds from the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture. APRs are deed restrictions that limit the uses of a piece of farmland in perpetuity, usually to prohibit most kinds of development. APRs remain with the land, even when it changes ownership. The State's APR Program purchases development rights from farmers in order to keep good agricultural land in production.

### **3. Create Linkages between Natural Resource Areas for Wildlife Corridors and for Hiking Trails.**

Create wildlife corridor linkages by connecting Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge with the Massachusetts Fitch Wildlife Management Area. Also connect Pierce Town Forest with Spaulding Proctor Reservation.

Support the State's construction of the Nashua Valley Rail Trail bike and hiking path along the Nashua River.

Additionally, support the advancement of a new greenway and bike trail along Route 113 from the Tyngsborough town line on the east to the Town Center. This greenway and bike trail would travel through key natural resource, historic, and farmland areas in Dunstable. A grant application has been made to NMCOG to support design work for this proposed Route 113 greenway and bike trail. Ultimately, this greenway trail could connect to a bikeway in Tyngsborough and the Merrimack River to form a larger regional trail system.

### **4. Protect Wildlife Habitats/Create and Preserve Diversity.**

Several approaches can be applied to preserve habitats and make existing vegetative cover more hospitable habitats.

Preserve Wetlands and their vegetative buffers. Wetlands and marshes are the most important productive wildlife areas. In addition to the wetland itself, sufficient upland vegetation should be included to preserve the two vegetative communities which make up that ecotone.

Encourage Forest practices which create ecotones. These practices include creation of openings in forest stands to encourage sprout growth. This is especially critical for animals such as deer, whose winter diet consists mostly of tender sprout growth. Additionally, old dead trees should be left for dens and nests.

Leave hedgerows along edges of agricultural fields. These habitats provide for food and cover of small animals. Encourage owners of power line rights-of-way to allow mixed shrub and sapling growth within these areas, even if only along the woodland edge.

Preserve old abandoned orchards. Orchards are productive wildlife habitats, especially for bluebirds.

**5. Protect, Acquire, and Expand Conservation Areas and Other Natural Resource Areas.**

Continue to acquire additional lands for conservation purposes and natural open space. Similar to the strategy of preserving farmland, a “Strategic Acquisition Fund” and “Strategic Land Acquisition Committee” should be established to buy open space and natural resource areas and to purchase development rights in an ongoing program of land conservation.

**6. Provide Public Access to Nashua River Corridor and Massapoag Pond.**

At Massapoag Pond, the Town should seek to acquire or gain access to a shoreline property that can serve as a beach and boat launch for the general public. Perhaps the Town could develop a partnership with the YMCA Camp to allow for use of their beach as a town swimming area during off hours, possibly through a lease arrangement. Limit the number of parking spaces at whichever property the Town gains access to so that the beach is not overused and so that the tranquility of the Pond is maintained for residential property owners adjoining the Pond. Also, support the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s acquisition of a parcel of land along the largely hidden Nashua River so that its banks can be accessed and enjoyed by the citizens of Dunstable.

**5.0 Historic, Cultural & Scenic Resources**

**1. Conduct Survey and Document All Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, and Potential Historic Districts.**

Support the Dunstable Historical Commission in their effort to fund, document and complete a thorough survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources in the town. This survey and inventory is a necessary first step to provide the required documentation to nominate eligible sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

**2. Nominate Eligible Sites and Districts to the National Register of Historic Places.**

Based on the survey and documentation of historic sites and districts, select those eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the potential districts described earlier, the Town may wish to consider nominating the entire Route 113/Main Street corridor from the Tyngsborough Town Line on the east to the Town Center as a National Register District. If accepted to the National Register, the selected sites and districts will be subject to protections when federal funds are used or sought to alter or renovate these sites. Subsequently, support efforts to nominate certain eligible documented sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

**3. Consider the Establishment of Local Historic District(s) for Increased Protections.**

Consider the establishment of Local Historic Districts to provide additional protections for properties within these districts when they are proposed to be altered or renovated by private entities and funds. A number of potential districts were described earlier. A primary candidate area to consider for establishment of a local district is the Village Center itself in the vicinity of the Town Hall, Congregational Church, and the Union School.

**4. Consider the Establishment of a Local Route 113/Main Street Historic District to Protect this Scenic Corridor.**

Establish the entire Main Street/Route 113 corridor from the Dunstable/ Tyngsborough Town Line on the east to the Village Center as a local historic district to provide protections to this valued historic and scenic corridor. Since Route 113 is a numbered State Highway, it is not protected from future State roadway expansion or improvement projects under the State Scenic Roads Law (40 S 15C).

**5. Protect Scenic Vistas and Provide Better Public Access to Scenic Sites and Landscapes.**

Protect scenic vistas, particularly those visible from public roads. Consider purchasing “view corridors” or “scenic easements” from certain public viewing places to scenic sites if such scenic corridors are threatened by development.

**6. Protect the Historic Integrity and Functional Vitality of the Village Center/Conduct a Study of the Center’s Future.**

The Village Center is the historic, civic and retail center of Dunstable. It should be protected, strengthened and its civic focus reinforced. Recently, there has been a trend to disperse some of the Center’s traditional commercial and civic functions. For example, the Post Office recently relocated from the center; the new Library has moved west on Main Street; and now there is discussion of relocating the police and fire departments from the Center. This trend toward dispersal should be reexamined with the goal of retaining Dunstable’s traditional civic and retail functions in the Center.

**7. Consider Revisions To Subdivision Regulations to Establish a Less Developed and Suburbanized Environment.**

Current subdivision regulations encourage wide roads, the construction of sidewalks, and other provisions that create a suburbanized character rather than a rural environment within new subdivisions. The 1990 "Rural Landscape and Design Study" recommended a number of subdivision controls to address these and other issues. The Town should reexamine the recommendations of the 1990 Study and amend subdivision regulations to narrow width of subdivision roads and eliminate requirements for sidewalks to provide a less suburbanized physical environment.

**8. Preserve Historic Integrity of Town Hall.**

Support the Dunstable Historic Commission’s and Town’s efforts to study the reuse, reorganization, accessibility and renovation of Town Hall while simultaneously retaining the building’s historic features intact.

## **6.0 Public Facilities**

The examination as to how to meet Dunstable's municipal space needs is now at a critical time. The relocation of the Library to new facilities on Main Street west of the Town Center has freed up significant space at Town Hall. Additionally, there is now discussion of relocating certain public functions, such as the Police Department, Fire Department, and EMS Services to a new Municipal Services Center on a 28 acre site behind the new Post Office which the Town has recently voted to acquire. This same 28 acre site is also being discussed as one of two possible sites for a new public school which will likely be needed in Dunstable. This site may also be quite suitable for a new DPW/Highway Garage. Therefore, all of these various individual decisions to provide expanded, improved, or new public facilities and schools should not be made in isolation from one another, but viewed comprehensively. Section 6 describes the opportunities and options for how Dunstable can provide for its future municipal facilities needs.

## **7.0 Transportation**

### **1. Develop Design Plan for Town Center.**

Although the Town Center will not be a particularly dense activity center, it is a focal point in the Town that must be supported by improved pedestrian access and sidewalks. The location of the new Dunstable public library on Main Street itself warrants the need for improved pedestrian connections in this area. As the development of Town Center progresses, it will be essential that pedestrian and vehicular access needs be reviewed carefully in the context of an overall design plan that addresses the orientation of the major buildings and parking spaces, building design and facade, and streetscape design. It will also be important that the density of future development in Town Center, and the location of necessary access drives, not necessitate the installation of a traffic signal on Main Street or Pleasant Street.

### **2. Establish Multi-Use Trails Committee.**

Roads in Dunstable are too dangerous now for walking, jogging, or bicycling. Concerted efforts need to be made to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety along Dunstable streets by providing a multi-use path or trail system to link important areas of the Town. There is a need for a multi-use path system that can be used by residents and non-residents alike to travel by foot or bicycle between the Town Center and major conservation lands (e.g., existing railroad beds, town forest land). Walkways and multi-use paths (not narrow sidewalks) should also be strategically placed at safe distances along Route 113 (behind existing stone walls, trees, etc.) and other major roads in Town (the "Greenway" concept). A town-wide trail plan is essential to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists while protecting the rural character that is so important to the community.

### **3. Enforce Vehicular Speed Limits.**

In the pursuit of improved safety, it is also recommended that consideration be given to: (a) a heightened police presence and more strict police enforcement of speed limits throughout the Town, but especially on Route 113; and (b) a public education program aimed at Dunstable residents and the positive effect they can have on safety by not exceeding the speed limit when they travel on Dunstable roads.

### **4. Expand Non-Traditional Transit Services (as necessary).**

Although Dunstable residents rely heavily on their autos, efforts to provide for the special needs of the

elderly and handicapped who do not have ready access to autos must be encouraged. Recent approval by Town Meeting of Road Runner service by the LRTA is to be applauded and service expanded if the need arises.

**5. Residential Street Location and Design.**

Dunstable must continue to utilize its zoning bylaws and site plan approval regulations to control traffic flow and safety to the maximum extent possible. The location of new subdivision streets and their design should reinforce community desires to keep non-residents off of local streets, encourage slow speeds, and provide for safe pedestrian/bicycle movements. To accomplish this, there must be consistent application of existing zoning and site plan review regulations regarding, for example, the length of cul-de-sacs and the width of new subdivision roads. Consideration should also be given to requiring developers to incorporate multi-use paths within their subdivision or cluster designs. This linkage can be encouraged by requiring easements or financial contributions to a community sidewalk or path fund as conditions of approval.

**6. Regional Planning Initiatives.**

The Town of Dunstable can discourage through travel and excessive speeds on town roads by resisting any roadway improvements that widen the travel lanes or increase the capacity of its existing roads. Despite these efforts, peak period congestion will continue to occur on Dunstable roads as motorists with origins or destinations in adjacent communities travel “through” Dunstable to reach Route 3 and the commercial district in Nashua, NH. The volume of “through” travelers on Dunstable roads is beyond the control of a local master plan. Nevertheless, the Town can indirectly influence the extent of through travel by actively participating in the regional transportation and land use planning processes of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments. By promoting the expansion of Route 3, representatives of the Town can do their part to maintain the functional integrity of that regional highway and thereby minimize the likelihood of motorist diversion onto Dunstable roads. Participation in the regional planning process also provides the opportunity to indirectly influence the land use and growth plans of adjacent communities that contribute so much to the volume of through travelers on Route 113.



# **Section 1: LAND USE**

## **Section 1: LAND USE**

Land use is the key element in the town's comprehensive plan. The use of land is central to the function and character of the community. All other systems support the use of the land, including transportation, public facilities, environmental protection and regulatory controls. The community's future appearance and well-being is directly related to the future use of the town's land.

Dunstable remains a rural community, although the nearby metropolitan area increasingly exerts suburbanizing pressure on the town. The town's rural character is defined by the prominence of agricultural lands and open space, as well as the distinct historical development pattern. Much of this undeveloped land is not protected, however, and may be converted to residential or commercial use if the market conditions comply. The purpose of developing a land use plan is to provide for land use changes accompanying growth, while controlling the extent to which future development impacts the attractive character of the town.

### **1.1 LAND USE INVENTORY**

The predominant land use pattern in Dunstable reflects the historic community establishment, although impacts from the accelerated residential development of the past few decades are evident. Factors that determine changes in the land use pattern include availability of utilities, soil suitability, topography, regional economics, accessibility and similar opportunities and constraints.

The current land use inventory was conducted by means of a number of methods. MassGIS (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs) provided land use data based on 1991 aerial photography, which was very valuable as a starting point. An updated 1998 land use map was compiled through the combination of these aerial photographs, field surveys, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, Planning Board records and other Town records (see Figure 1-1).

#### **Tabulation of Existing Land Use**

The mapped areas were measured to determine the acreage in each category of land use. This information is shown in Table 1-1.



**Table 1-1  
Existing Land Use (1998)**

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Total Town Area</u>	<u>Percent of Developed Land Area</u>
Residential	1,225.3	11.4%	40.5%
Commercial	11.1	0.1	0.4
Public/Semi-Public	1,452.8	13.6	48.1
recreation	(32.1)	(0.3)	(1.1)
other public/semi public	(50.8)	(0.5)	(1.7)
protected open space	(1,369.9)	(12.8)	(45.3)
Transportation and Utilities*	<u>333.0</u>	<u>3.1</u>	11.0%
<b>Total Developed Area</b>	<b>3,022.2</b>	<b>28.2</b>	
Agriculture	1,323.1	12.3	
<b>Vacant</b>	<u>6,227.9</u>	<u>58.1</u>	
Total Undeveloped Area	<b>7,551.0</b>	<b>70.5</b>	
Total Land Area	<b>10,573.2</b>		
<b>Water</b>	<u>140.4</u>	1.3%	
<b>Total Town Area</b>	<b>10,713.6</b>		

Source: MassGIS and John Brown Associates, Inc.

\* Local roads were not accounted for in the land use maps provided by MassGIS, thus a portion of land was allocated from other categories to estimate the area in local roads. This was added to regional transportation acreage to provide total area in transportation use.

An analysis of each type of land use in Table 1-1 is provided below.

### Developed Land

The Town of Dunstable contains approximately 10,714 acres (16.74 square miles) of which 10,573 acres are land and 140 acres are water bodies. Developed land (including protected open space) comprises 3,022 acres, or 28% of the town's total area.

### Residential Uses

Aside from protected open space, the predominant developed land use in Dunstable is residential, constituting 40.5% of the developed land area. Of the residential uses, single-family homes constitute the vast majority of the residential development. There currently are about 852 one-family homes and approximately 23 other types of units (with two or more units per structure) in Dunstable. A total of 1,225 acres is in residential development. Additional information on the characteristics of the housing stock is contained in the section on housing.

Residential development is located in all sections of Dunstable along existing roads. Recent subdivisions include Trask Way, Linwood Lane, Mill Brook, Horse Hill Quarry, Pereira, Great Blue Heron, Robataille, and Woods Court.

### **Commercial Uses**

Commercial uses make up 11 acres, or 0.1% of the developed land area. Limited retail facilities are located in the town center and in a few sites along Pleasant Street both east and west of the center. No industrial use has been identified in the town.

### **Public and Semi-Public**

Within this category are three distinct types of land use that are either publicly-owned or are institutions which serve the public, such as churches and non-profit organizations. Together, public and semi-public uses comprise 1,453 acres, or 48% of the developed land area.

Recreation This category consists of a number of active recreation facilities, including playfields, parks, and other recreational facilities. These are described in more detail in the public facilities section. The total land area in this category is 32 acres.

Other Public/Semi-Public This category includes public property and institutional uses that are privately owned, but which are open to and serve the public. Public property is land serving the public which is owned by a public body, including such uses as public schools, the library, Town Hall, Town parks, Town cemeteries, and waste disposal facilities. Examples of institutional uses include private schools, places of worship, private cemeteries and fraternal or service organizations. Institutional uses are located in widely scattered areas of the town, totaling 51 acres.

Protected Open Space. As of June, 1998, there were 1,370 acres of protected open space in Dunstable, including land owned by the Dunstable Rural Lands Trust, the Conservation Commission, the Town of Dunstable, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and private individuals. Protected open space covers 13% of the Town's land area.

### **Transportation and Utilities**

This category includes 188 acres of local roads and 145 acres covered by transmission lines. Transportation and utilities represent 11.0 percent of the total developed land area, including all town, state and county roads in Dunstable as well as a number of private ways open to the public.

### **Vacant and Undeveloped Land**

There are approximately 7,551 acres of vacant and undeveloped land in Dunstable, including 1,323 acres of agricultural land, representing 71% of the town's total land area.

Agriculture. A significant portion of the town's undeveloped land is in agricultural use, including dairy farming, livestock, horses, sheep, plant nurseries, minor crops and hayfields. Approximately 1,323 acres are used for agriculture, or 12.3% of the town's total area. Many of these lands are taxed under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B; however, these provisions do not provide permanent protection from future development. Some agricultural lands which have Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) status are more securely protected.

Vacant Land. There are 6,228 acres of vacant land in the town (58% of total town area), not counting agricultural land. Much of this land is undevelopable because of the presence of wetlands, unsuitable soil types, or other considerations. The amount of land that is actually developable is quantified in the next section under Buildout Analysis.

### **Water Bodies**

Water bodies comprise 140 acres, or 1.3% of the town's total area. Water bodies include Upper and Lower Massapoag Ponds, Sweet Pond, Salmon Brook, Black Brook, Hawk Brook, Joint Grass Brook, Unkety Brook, and various other ponds, rivers, and streams.

## 1.2 LAND USE CHANGES SINCE 1951

The 1976 Open Space and Recreation Plan described land use changes from 1951 to 1971. In addition to a sharp rise in acres of land used for residential development, the plan also noted a shift in agricultural uses, with a loss of pasture lands (used in dairy farming) and a slight increase in tilled farm land. Residential development during that period mainly consumed forested land, while the abandoned agricultural land reverted to forest, causing a net increase in forested land over that time. Until the late 1970s there were no planned subdivision developments, and all new residential development took place along existing roads.

Table 1-2 shows a comparison of land uses between 1951, 1971, and 1998. Prior figures are based on McConnell land use data taken from aerial photography (University of Massachusetts). Local roads and utilities were not accounted for separately, and were absorbed into surrounding land use features. Slight differences in total land area are attributable to improvements in measuring accuracy. Thus a direct comparison to past land use patterns cannot be made; however, changes in the percentage of land under developed use, agriculture and undeveloped use are revealing.

**Table 1-2**

**Comparison Of Developed Land Area 1951 – 1998**

	1951	1971	Percent	1998	Percent
	<u>Land Area</u>	<u>Land Area</u>		<u>Land Area</u>	
Developed Land	86 acres	387 acres	3.6	1,696 acres <sup>(1)</sup>	15.8
Agriculture	2,518	2,041	18.8	1,323	12.4
Undeveloped Land <sup>(2)</sup>	<u>7,640</u>	<u>8,424 acres</u>	77.7	<u>7,695</u>	71.8
Total Town Area	10,244 acres	10,852 acres		10,714 acres	

<sup>(1)</sup>For comparison purposes does not include protected open space.

<sup>(2)</sup>Includes water, which was not reported as a separate land use in the earlier study.

Since 1971 residential growth has brought about the greatest change in land use in the town. The adoption of two acre zoning throughout most of the town may have slowed the potential rate of housing construction, but it also implies a higher consumption of land per residential unit created. There was a net loss of both agricultural and forested lands over this period, although a portion of this may be accounted for by changes in measuring procedures. Agriculture still remains a significant, albeit shrinking land use in the town. The amount of protected open space was not reported for the years shown. Between 1976 and 1998, however, the extent of protected open space has increased significantly, from 341 acres to 1,370 acres.

### 1.3 BUILDOUT ANALYSIS UNDER EXISTING ZONING

The amount of developable land in Dunstable was determined by subtracting the developed land and undevelopable land from the total land area. Developed land includes all land shown to be in residential, commercial, or industrial use, as well as transportation and public/semipublic lands. Undevelopable land includes wetlands, water, and power lines shown on the MassGIS 1991 land use map, combined with wetlands and water shown on the USGS map, and FEMA flood zones. Also undevelopable are public and privately owned protected open space (does not include lands under temporary protection). See Figure 1-2, Constraints on Development.

**Table 1-3  
Quantity of Developable/Undevelopable Land**

<u>Total Land Area</u>	<u>10,714</u>
less Land Already Developed	1,592
less Wetlands and Water <sup>(1)</sup>	864
less Flood Zone	1,088
less Protected Open Space (uplands only) <sup>(2)</sup>	<u>1,135</u>
<b><u>Developable Land</u></b>	<b>6,034</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Some areas reported as wetlands overlap with land already developed; where this occurs the area was included under the total developed area and not under wetlands.

<sup>(2)</sup> An additional 235 acres of protected open space were included as wetlands.

Of the total land in the town, 1,952 acres are not developable because they are either wetlands or flood zone. An additional 1,135 acres of uplands are protected open space. Approximately 6,034 acres, or 58% of the developable land in the town remains to be developed.

The Town’s existing Zoning Map is shown on Figure 1-3. The developable land was identified by zoning district and zoning regulations were applied to determine the buildout capacity (see Appendix A for specifications). The following table shows the number of residential units and the amount of commercial space that can be developed under current zoning regulations.

**Table 1-4  
Development Capacity Under Current Zoning**

<u>Zoning District</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Buildout Capacity</u>
Single-family Residence	5,822.6	2,329 dwelling units
Commercial Recreation	63.6	25 dwelling units
General Residence	15.6	28 dwelling units
Retail Business	3.7	77,400 square feet
Expanded Commercial	128.7	3,980,400 square feet

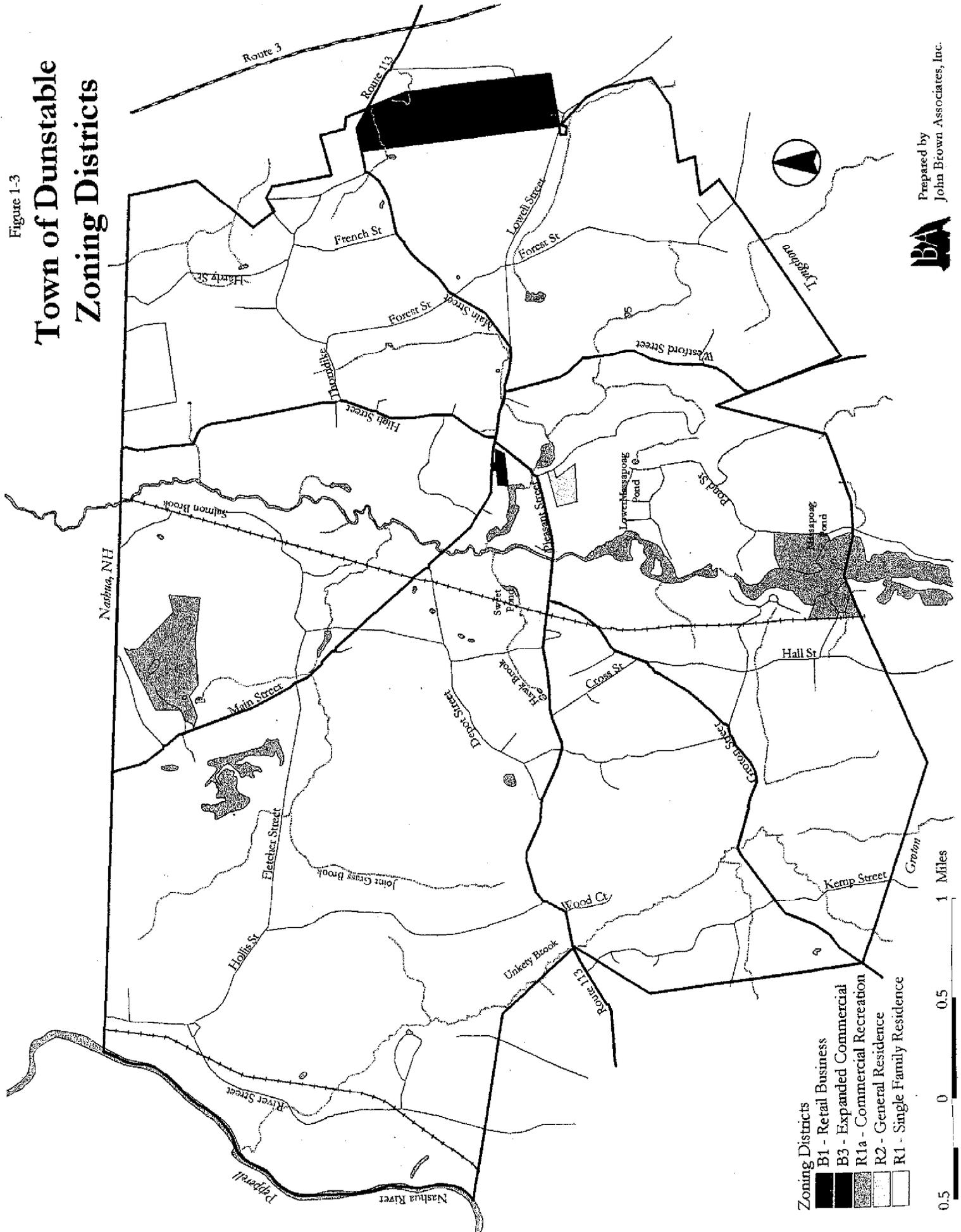
**Summary:**

Total Residential Units	2,382 dwelling units
Total Commercial/Light Industrial	4,057,800 square feet



Figure 1-3

# Town of Dunstable Zoning Districts



- Zoning Districts**
- B1 - Retail Business
  - B3 - Expanded Commercial
  - R1a - Commercial Recreation
  - R2 - General Residence
  - R1 - Single Family Residence

**1.4 LAND USE IMPACTS (Under Existing Zoning)**

Full buildout represents long term impacts from potential growth. Market forces and the ability of the Town to provide amenities to meet resident and business needs will determine the rate at which development takes place in the short term.

**Residential Growth**

The number of housing units can increase by about 2,382 units under existing zoning. The maximum number of units includes about 2,354 units of low density single-family homes and 28 units of multifamily or senior housing. In 1998 the total number of housing units in the town was 897 units. The total number of housing units in the town can potentially grow by 270%.

The population growth that would accompany the increase in housing units would represent significant costs to the town for education and other public services. Using estimates from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the number of residents may increase by about 8,567 persons. This represents a growth of 305% over the 1996 population of 2,806 persons. Education represents a major fiscal cost, thus the number of school aged children that will result from growth is an important impact to consider. According to estimates from DHCD, the number of school-aged children would increase under this growth scenario by approximately 2,048 children<sup>(1)</sup>. The increase in population and school-aged children is less from higher density residential development than from low density, single-family development.

Market forces and the ability of the Town to provide services and amenities to meet resident and business needs will determine the rate at which development takes place; thus the full impacts of the buildout may not be felt for years to come.

**Table 1-5  
Projections of Residential Growth**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Units Added</u>	<u>Units/Year</u>
1998	897		
2000	951	54	27
2005	1,086	135	27
2010	1,215	129	26
2020	1,432	<u>217</u>	22
		535	

Source: Northern Middlesex Council of Governments forecast adjusted to account for updated information.

The projected residential growth would yield a population increase of about 1,262 new residents by 2020, including about 214 new school children. Considering the prevalence of large single-family homes that are being constructed in the current market these estimates may be too low for the short term. The

<sup>(1)</sup> Most single-family homes being constructed in the current market have four bedrooms or more if they have the required septic capacity. The number of school children per four bedroom home is estimated by DHCD at 0.87. The number of persons per household is estimated at 3.62. For the multifamily dwelling units the number of persons per household was estimated at 1.7, with no school children (assuming that housing is provided for elderly).

increases in population and school children might be higher than shown, reflecting the larger families that typically occupy homes with four bedrooms or more. In the long term it is expected that Dunstable will follow the trend of declining household size.

### **Industrial and Commercial Growth**

Developable land for retail and service use in Dunstable (under existing zoning) is limited to a small area, yielding a development capacity of 77,400 square feet. Land that is developable for light industrial or high tech use can yield up to 3,980,400 square feet of building area. The commercial development that can take place in Dunstable represents the potential for about 172 additional retail/service jobs and 3,980 manufacturing or high tech jobs (estimating 1 employee per 450 square feet for office and retail space and 1 employee per 1000 square feet for industrial space.) In contrast to residential growth, industrial and commercial growth represent less of an increase in costs of government services, however they do have requirements for infrastructure which can be costly.

## **1.5 LAND USE GOALS**

The following goals and policies related to land use and community character have evolved from the public forums, community survey, and other community input. Some of these goals also relate directly to other Master Plan elements.

- 12) Manage residential, commercial and recreational development in a way that carefully balances economic needs with the need to protect the small-town, historic character of Dunstable with other community needs.
- 13) Limit nonresidential uses to those clearly needed or beneficial to the community and are not disruptive to the character or function of the community.
- 14) Maintain and increase protected open space and recreational land uses.
- 15) Link open spaces to create open space networks.
- 16) Develop a strategy to retain agricultural and other undeveloped lands important to the character of the community.
- 17) Use the full or partial acquisition of open land as a tool to limit the growth capacity of the town.
- 18) Maintain a continuous and coordinated town planning process to anticipate future needs and plan for their resolution.
- 19) Strengthen community design and the design review process so that high standards of design excellence are maintained in all development projects.
- 20) Protect and enhance the aspects of Dunstable's existing image and character that most citizens agree epitomize the positive physical character of the community - including the town's "village" character, attractive and vital residential areas, scenic vistas, variety of open spaces, historic buildings and sites, and natural resources.
- 21) Improve land use coordination of town agencies.

22) Pay special attention to the entrances to the town on major roadways (gateways) since they represent a visitor's first impression of the town.

## 1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS: GUIDE PLAN FOR FUTURE LAND USE

The Guide Plan for Future Land Use (see Figure 1-4) is based upon the following:

- Existing land use patterns
- Community goals and objectives
- Community Survey
- Analysis of impacts of alternative plans
- Long-range community needs for housing, economic growth, transportation, public facilities, open space and recreation
- Environmental and geographic concerns and limitations
- Feedback from Town officials and citizens
- Sound land use planning

The Guide Plan is a long-range projection of the most desirable future land uses at specific locations in the town, and may be subject to revision as time passes. It takes into consideration the Town's capacity to accommodate the impacts of future growth as well as the Town's desire to meet future needs (housing, economic development, open space preservation, etc.) The Guide Plan follows quite closely the Environmental Plan developed during the consideration of alternative land use scenarios (see Appendix 1-2).

Dunstable is primarily a rural community and wishes to remain so. A considerable amount of land (over 56% of the total land area) is capable of future development, located in all areas of the town. Growth can have a profound effect on the character of the town.

The Guide Plan is intended to recommend long term future land use policy. Some of its recommendations can be implemented immediately but others may await changes in real estate market conditions, the availability of Town funds or infrastructure (i.e., water, roads, etc.), or private land use decisions. The plan will also provide guidance for future zoning map changes, although some additional study may be required to identify exact or appropriate boundaries for specific map changes. Means of implementing the recommendations are discussed in Section 8, Implementation Plan.

### Land Use Categories

The following land use categories are based primarily on the use and density regulations of existing zoning districts, as well as categories of uses for which specific zoning does not currently exist.

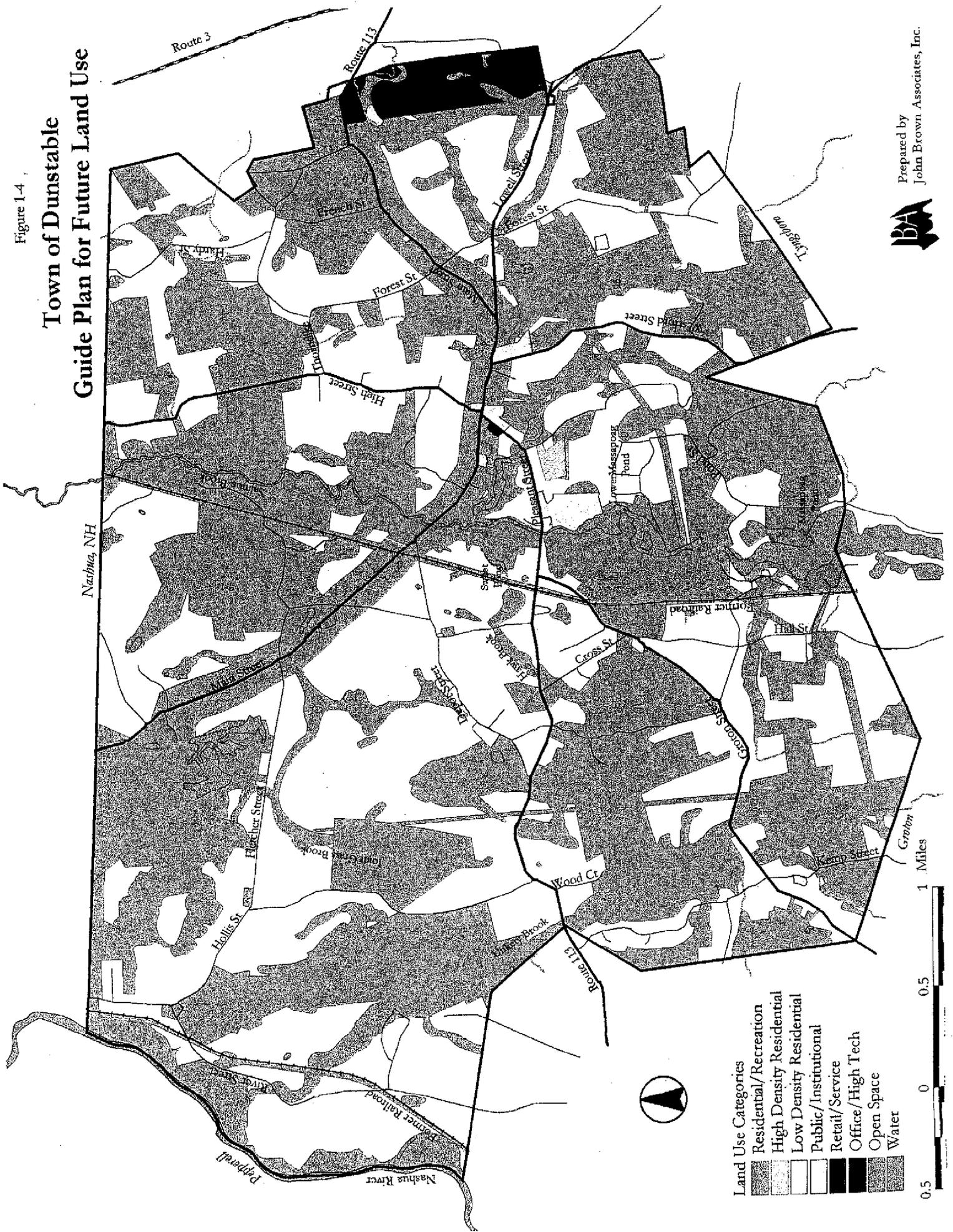
Low Density Residential – Minimum lot size is 87,120 square feet, resulting in a dwelling unit density of 0.43 units per acre. This category corresponds to the current R-1 Single-family Residence zoning district.

Moderate Density Residential – For special purpose or subsidized housing, dwelling unit density is estimated at approximately 2 units per acre, subject to septic disposal capacity. Single- and two-family residences are also permitted at a density of up to 0.81 units per acre. This category corresponds to the current R-2 General Residence zoning district.

Residential/Recreation – This category allows certain outdoor active recreation facilities for commercial or public/institutional use, as well as single-family residences with a minimum lot size of 87,120 square feet.

Figure 1-4

# Town of Dunstable Guide Plan for Future Land Use



Retail/Service – This category is similar to the Retail Business District under existing zoning.

The recommended FAR is 0.25.

Office/High Tech – This category is similar to the Expanded Commercial District under existing zoning. The recommended FAR is 0.60.

Public/Institutional – Includes land in public or institutional use or land proposed for such use.

Open Space – This is a designation for land that is already in protected open space or agricultural use or is proposed to be protected. An effort has been made to link existing open space areas to form open space networks.

### **Residential Development**

Dunstable should continue to manage residential growth to maintain its appearance as a rural agricultural community. The existing zoning requirements for low-density residential development are appropriate. Some limited higher density development, including open space (cluster) development and senior housing is recommended in order to provide some variety in housing options to meet the needs of residents. More specific recommendations related to residential development are provided in Section 3, Housing.

### **Commercial/Business Development**

Although Dunstable does not want to attract retail/service growth for economic development purposes, space should be provided for such development to meet the needs of Dunstable residents. The area that is currently zoned for retail/service use is not well located, and thus is not recommended for such use in the Guide Plan. The area in the town center which is currently in commercial use can appropriately remain so, but may not be sufficient to meet future needs. An additional area for commercial development might be located on Pleasant Street (Route 113) between the town center and the new Post Office, although a specific site has not been identified (see Appendix 1-3 for criteria for selecting a suitable site).

The area along the border with Tyngsboro that is currently zoned for expanded commercial use is recommended for future office or high-tech development. This site is accessible from Tyngsboro, and would not have a significant impact on the rural character of Dunstable. It is also easily accessible to Route 3 without creating additional traffic in Dunstable.

More specific recommendations related to commercial and business development are provided in Section 3, Economic Base.

### **Public/Institutional**

The Guide Plan shows existing public and semi-public lands and their relationship to other uses. The 28-acre site in back of the new Post Office has been identified as a potential location for a municipal services center (fire, police, EMS) or other public facility. Other future public facilities can be accommodated through reuse of developed lands or in less sensitive areas that are proposed for open space use.

**Open Space/Recreation**

The Guide Plan identifies areas throughout the town which are recommended for open space protection. These areas include wetlands, floodplains, lands currently classified under Chapter 61, transmission lines and former railroads, and key tracts of land currently in agricultural use. A 500 foot corridor along both sides of Main Street (excluding existing structures) is also included as open space to protect the scenic character of the road. Future protected open space will likely be in a mixture of public and private ownership. Recreation facilities, including trails, may be accommodated in some of the areas that are recommended for open space protection.

Means of implementing the open space features of the Guide Plan include Town acquisition, acquisition by private land trusts, private donation of land or development rights, donation of open space easements, enforcement of wetland protection regulations, and, to a limited degree, zoning regulations. Open Space (cluster) zoning and sight plan review are zoning tools that can be used to encourage or possibly require developers to preserve valuable farm lands or natural resources. More specific recommendations related to open space and recreation are provided in Section 4, Natural Resources, and Section 6, Public Facilities and Services.

**Impacts of Development**

A buildout analysis was prepared showing the long term impacts of development under the Guide Plan for Future Land Use. Table 1-6 shows the amount of development that can take place at full buildout if the recommended land use policies are implemented.

**Table 1-6  
Development Capacity Under Guide Plan for Future Land Use**

<u>Zoning District</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Buildout Capacity</u>
Low Density Residential	3,664.7	1,466 dwelling units
Residential/Recreation	4.8	2 dwelling units
Moderate Density Residential	15.6	28 dwelling units
Retail/Service	5.0 <sup>(1)</sup>	54,500 square feet
Office/High Tech	128.7	3,363,700 square feet
Protected Open Space and Public (Developable Land)	2,220.4	
Total Developable Land (acres)	6,034.2	
Total Open Space <sup>(2)</sup>	5,808.2	

<sup>(1)</sup> A site has not yet been identified. See Appendix 1-3 for criteria.

<sup>(2)</sup> Includes existing open space, new open space on developable land, and new open space on land that is undevelopable.

Using the same DHCD population per household indexes as used to calculate the potential impacts under existing zoning, full buildout under the Guide Plan for Future Land Use would result in a total population of 8,112, including 1,275 additional school children. This represents a population growth of 189% over 1998. The high tech and office space at full buildout would accommodate approximately 3,360 additional employees.

The above summary of total buildout capacity represents the amount of development possible if the Guide Plan is fully implemented and every parcel of developable land is developed. Due to the limitations of market absorption, full buildout may not occur until some distant time in the future. Short term projections as shown in Table 1-5 are based on market factors and will not be materially affected by land use policy.

**Appendix 1-1**  
**Buildout Specifications Under Existing Zoning**

<b><u>Zoning District</u></b>	<b><u>Formula</u></b>	<b><u>Derived from following constraints:</u></b>
Single-family Residence	0.40 units/acre	Minimum lot size 87,120 square feet (Zoning By-law Section 11.1)
Commercial Recreation	0.40 units/acre	Minimum lot size 87,120 square feet (Zoning By-law Section 11.1)
General Residence	No formula See right for regulations	Minimum lot size 87,120 square feet for first unit, 20,000 square feet for 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> units, and 15,000 square feet for each additional unit (Zoning By-law Section 11.1)
Retail Business	0.48 FAR	Parking = 1 space/200 square feet (Zoning By-law Section 12.2.2), Maximum height 30 feet
Expanded Commercial	0.71 FAR	Parking = 1 space/1000 square feet (Zoning By-law Section 12.2.2), Maximum building coverage = 25%, Maximum parking coverage = 25%, Maximum height 30 feet (Zoning By-law Sections 10.3, 11.1)

**Table Notes:**

- For Single-family Residence and Commercial Recreation districts developable area is reduced by 20% to account for streets and wastage.
- FAR stands for effective floor area ratio after all dimensional and density restrictions are applied.
- Section 12.2.2 of the Zoning Bylaw requires 1 parking space per 140 square feet for most retail and service uses, which provides excessive parking for most uses that might be developed in Dunstable, thus an average of 1 space per 200 square feet of floor area is applied.
- It is assumed that all parking takes place on surface level lots.
- 350 s.f. per parking space is estimated to include parking spaces, roadways and landscaping.
- A building height of 30 feet is assumed to allow three stories.

## **Appendix 1-2** **Land Use Scenarios**

### **1. Alternative Land Use Scenarios**

#### **Introduction**

Three alternative future land use scenarios were prepared to consider a variety of options available to the town. The potential impacts of each approach were presented and compared to existing zoning now in place.

Each of the three scenarios took into consideration existing land use and zoning, septic capacity, and other environmental factors. The first scenario focused on preserving large amounts of open space and reducing the amounts of residential and commercial development, while the second scenario focused on providing space for a variety of residential and commercial development while maintaining the rural character of the town. The third scenario incorporated some of the ideas from each of the other scenarios to allow a moderate variety of development, the protection of vital natural resources, and the preservation of open space.

Most of the land use categories corresponded to districts defined in the existing Zoning Bylaw. A few land uses are included in the scenarios that are not prescribed in the Zoning Bylaw. Public/Institutional uses mostly reflect existing development, although some additional development for these uses might take place. Open Space is also not presently defined as a zoning district; the scenarios show land that is currently protected in addition to specific areas that might be protected in the future. Two new categories were shown in the scenarios, including Special Residential and Special Development District. These categories include residential use at a variable density to permit development at a scale appropriate to the village center area.

**Scenario 1, Environmental Plan**, emphasized the preservation of natural resources, placing the greatest restriction on future growth. The most prominent feature of this plan was the extensive addition of open space. In addition to areas that are currently protected, areas shown as open space include all wetlands and floodplains, all areas currently protected under Chapter 61, transmission lines and former railroads, and other areas that are environmentally sensitive or would provide open space linkages. A 500 foot corridor along both sides of Main Street (excluding existing structures) was also included as open space to protect the scenic character of the road.

All of the residential areas in this scenario correspond to the existing zoning districts. Commercial areas were eliminated except for the existing commercial uses in the town center. (Note that the existing commercial use lies outside of the existing commercial zoning district.)

**Scenario 2, Growth Plan**, allowed more residential and commercial growth than the first scenario. The area of open space was increased somewhat over the existing area with the addition of certain critical resource and wetlands areas and some Chapter 61 lands. Throughout most of the town the residential density remains at 2 acre lots as in the existing zoning. The area within ½ mile of the town center was shown as Special Residential. In this category the general residential density would be 1 lot per acre, while a higher density would be allowed with a special permit if the development complies with a traditional village scale. Criteria for granting a special permit would need to be defined. The other residential categories shown correspond to existing zoning districts.

All of the existing commercial areas between the intersections of Groton and Pleasant Streets and Lowell and Main Streets were retained in addition to both of the areas that are within existing commercial zoning districts. The commercial areas near the town center would be limited to retail and service uses, while the area along the border with Tyngsboro would contain office and high-tech commercial uses with no retail.

(Continued)

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Scenario 3 – Composite Plan.** This scenario applied some of the ideas from the other two scenarios with some minor variations. The open space in this scenario included all of the open space shown in Scenario 2 plus some additional Chapter 61 lands. This scenario retained 2 acre residential density throughout most of the town. The area within ½ mile of the town center (excluding existing sites) is shown as Special Development District. Unlike the similar category described under Scenario 2, the underlying density of this area is 2 acres per lot. However a higher density would be allowed if the development conforms to a traditional village scale. Again, criteria for granting special permits would need to be defined. Other residential categories correspond to the existing zoning districts.

The Retail/Service category included both the existing commercial sites near the town center and the area that is currently zoned for commercial use. The Office/High-Tech category was reduced by approximately half of its current area.

**Comparison of Impacts of Various Scenarios**

Buildout analyses for the Land Use Scenarios were prepared. Table 7 shows the amount of developable land in each land use category under each of the scenarios, while Table 6 shows the buildout capacities for each of the scenarios.

**Table A1-1  
Comparison of Alternative Scenarios: Developable Land**

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Scenario 1 Environmental Plan</u>	<u>Scenario 2 Growth Plan</u>	<u>Scenario 3 Composite Plan</u>
Low Density Residential	3,677.0 acres	4,827.0 acres	4,084.3 acres
Residential/Recreation	4.8	9.6	4.8
Moderate Density Residential	6.0	15.6	15.6
Special Residential	-	405.6	-
Special Development District	-	-	310.2
Retail/Service	0.0	4.6	3.7
Office/High Tech	0.0	128.7	74.6
Protected Open Space (Developable Land)	2,346.4	643.1	1,541.0
Total Developable Land (acres)	6,034.2 acres	6,034.2	6,034.2 acres
Total Open Space <sup>(1)</sup>	5934.2 acres	3,803.8 acres	4,984.1 acres

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes existing open space, new open space on developable land, and new open space on land that is undevelopable.

(Continued)

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Table A1-2  
Comparison of Alternative Scenarios: Potential Development Capacity**

<u>Potential Development</u>	<u>Scenario 1 Environmental Plan</u>	<u>Scenario 2 Growth Plan</u>	<u>Scenario 3 Composite Plan</u>
Low Density Residential	1,471 d.u.	19,31 d.u.	1,634 d.u.
Residential/Recreation	2 d.u.	4 d.u.	2 d.u.
Moderate Density Residential	11 d.u.	28 d.u.	28 d.u.
Special Residential	-	406 d.u.	-
Special Development District	-	-	208 d.u.
Retail/Service	0 s.f.	96,200 s.f.	77,400 s.f.
Office/High Tech	0 s.f.	3,980,400 s.f.	3,964,918 s.f.
<b>Total Dwelling Units</b>	<b>1,484 d.u.</b>	<b>2,369 d.u.</b>	<b>1,872 d.u.</b>
Retail/Service	0 s.f.	96,200 s.f.	77,400 s.f.
Office/High Tech	0 s.f.	3,980,400 s.f.	2,307,200s.f.
<b>Total Commercial Square Feet</b>	<b>0 s.f.</b>	<b>4,076,600 s.f.</b>	<b>2,384,600 s.f.</b>

**Potential Impacts**

The following table shows a comparison of the potential impacts of development under existing zoning and under each of the scenarios at full buildout. A greater diversity of housing types (i.e., senior housing,) might lower the demographic impacts, as such alternative types of housing units tend to have smaller households with fewer school children than single-family homes. Although the population impacts from Scenario 2 are similar to the impacts from full buildout under existing zoning, the distribution of residential development is more compact, preserving a substantial amount of open space in other parts of the town.

**Table A1-3  
Potential Impacts of Alternative Scenarios (At Full Buildout)**

	Potential Dwelling Units	Potential Population <sup>(1)</sup>	Potential School Children <sup>(2)</sup>	Potential Commercial <i>Square Feet</i>	Potential Employees <sup>(3)</sup>
<b>Existing Development</b>	897	2,806		NA	162
<hr/>					
<b>Potential Development</b>					
Existing Zoning	2,382	5,622	953	4,057,800	5,858
Scenario 1 (Environmental Plan)	1,484	3,502	594	0	0
Scenario 2 (Growth Plan)	2,369	5,591	948	4,076,562	5,900
Scenario 3 (Composite Plan)	1,872	4,418	749	2,384,600	3,468

<sup>(1)</sup> Estimates 2.36 persons per single-family home. (Based on NMC0G forecasts)

<sup>(2)</sup> Estimates 0.40 school children per single-family home. (Based on NMC0G forecasts)

<sup>(3)</sup> Estimates one employee per 450 square feet for retail space, and one employee per 700 square feet for office/high-tech space.

(Continued)

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**2. Buildout Specifications for Guide Plan For Future Land Use (and Alternative Scenarios)**

Presented below are the buildout specifications for the Guide Plan For Future Land Use and the Alternative Land Use Scenarios:

<u>Land Use Categories</u>	<u>Formula</u>	<u>Derived from following constraints:</u>
Low Density Residential	0.40 units/acre	Reflects existing zoning for Single-family Residence District <sup>(1)</sup> .
Residential/Recreation	0.40 units/acre	Reflects existing zoning for Commercial Recreation District.
Moderate Density Residential	avg 1.80 units/acre	Reflects existing zoning for General Residence District. It is possible that the allowable density may be increased in the future to accommodate other types of housing.
Special Residential <sup>(2)</sup>	avg 1.00 unit/acre	Minimum lot size 43,560 square feet unless special permit allows smaller lot size. Assumes average of 1 unit per acre.
Special Development District <sup>(2)</sup>	avg 0.67 units/acre	Minimum lot size 87,120 square feet unless special permit allows smaller lot size. Assumes average of 1 unit per 1.5 acres.
Retail/Service	0.25 FAR <sup>(3)</sup>	Recommended intensity for low density retail/service use.
Office/High Tech	0.60 FAR <sup>(3)</sup>	Recommended intensity for office/high tech use.

Table Notes:

- <sup>(1)</sup> For Low Density Residential and Residential/Recreation districts developable area is reduced by 20% to account for streets and wastage. Formula reflects this.
- <sup>(2)</sup> Not included in Guide Plan.
- <sup>(3)</sup> FAR stands for maximum floor area ratio (ratio of gross floor area to lot area).

**3. Descriptions of Land Use Categories in Alternative Scenarios**

All Categories are the same as those described in Section 1.6, Guide Plan for Future Land Use, with the exception of the following:

Special Residential. This category is intended to provide village-scaled residential development near the town center. The general minimum lot size in this category is one acre, however smaller lots may be developed by special permit if the proposed development is appropriate to the scale and character of the town center. Criteria for approval need to be determined.

Special Development District. This category is similar to the Special Residential Category described above, but contains a general minimum lot size of two acres.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Appendix 1-3**  
**Criteria For Selecting A Suitable Retail & Service Site**

Dunstable is a relatively rural town located in a region which is rapidly becoming urbanized. The town has chosen to retain its open space, agricultural, and rural character to the extent possible. However, the town recognizes the need to accommodate some limited retail and service uses to meet the needs of community residents. The community survey undertaken in June, 1998 indicated a desire for banking or ATM facilities (38% of respondents), restaurant (19% of respondents), drug/variety stores (10%), and food (10%). Medical and dental services were also mentioned by many in written comments.

A drug/variety store or chain food store is unlikely to come to Dunstable because of market considerations and the desire of such uses to be in shopping centers. This leaves banking/ATM facilities, restaurant use, and medical and dental as potential unmet needs. The current site in the town center used for the convenience store (Convenient Mann) and the adjacent site which formerly housed the Post Office can continue to be utilized for limited retail and service uses but traffic and environmental issues make it difficult to accommodate any substantial increase in commercial activities at this location.

It is proposed that the Town consider a single site located between the old Post Office and the new Post Office for limited retail and services uses, including possible banking/ATM facilities, restaurant and other limited commercial uses (including medical and dental offices, if needed). Five acres would be adequate to accommodate approximately 50,000 square feet of floor space at a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.25 (one story building using 25% of the lot). This is the optimum amount of retail and service space required to meet the needs identified and to provide some limited area for unanticipated uses of a similar nature – plus landscaping, parking, setback and amenities.

Any site selected would have to respect all environmental limitations (such as wetlands) and provide access and egress that is designed for safety and convenience. Other possible design controls are discussed elsewhere in this report.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

# **Section 2: ECONOMIC BASE**

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

## **Section 2: ECONOMIC BASE**

### **Introduction**

This section of the Master Plan provides a review of recent trends in Dunstable and the surrounding area so as to better anticipate future needs and market pressures, and states specific goals and recommendations for assisting the maintenance and growth of the town's economy. A social and economic profile of the town is provided, as well as local and market area characteristics that may impact the direction of future development.

At one time Dunstable was a self-sufficient rural community that supported itself primarily through agriculture and extraction of natural resources. While agriculture remains an important part of Dunstable's economic base, the town has become increasingly integrated with the surrounding metropolitan region. The population has grown much faster than the town's economic base in recent years, and most of the residents are employed elsewhere in the region. Most of the town's recent growth may in fact be fueled by employment growth in the greater metropolitan area.

Although the focus is on Dunstable, data on adjacent communities and regional groups is included for comparative purposes, and to provide a fuller sense of the integrated economic base. Dunstable is part of the Lowell Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), which includes Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford, in addition to Dunstable. The Lowell PMSA includes these towns plus Groton, Massachusetts and Pelham, New Hampshire. See Figure 2-1, Regional Context.

### **2.1 POPULATION**

#### **Size and Growth**

The population of Dunstable has grown at a rapid rate in the past half century, almost tripling between 1960 and 1990. The projected rate of growth is expected to slow somewhat, although it remains higher than the region or the state. According to NMCOG projections the population will have grown at a rate of about 60 persons per year between 1980 and 2000, while it is expected to grow by about 36 persons per year over the following twenty year period. Dunstable's population on January 1, 1999 was approximately 2,806 persons.



(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Table 2-1  
Population And Growth Rates Since 1960 And Projections To 2020**

	<u>Dunstable</u>	<u>Massachusetts</u>	<b>Middlesex County</b>
1960	824	5,148,578	1,238,742
1970	1,292	5,689,170	1,397,268
1980	1,671	5,737,037	1367034
<b>% Change (1960 - 1980)</b>	<b>102.8</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>
1990	2,236	6,016,425	1,389,462
<b>% Change (1980 - 1990)</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>1.2</b>
1996	2,585	6,073,550	
2000	2,870	6,388,885	1,459,675
<b>% Change (1990 - 2000)</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.1</b>
2010	3,300	6,720,604	1,503,594
2020	3,600	6,931,000*	205,752
<b>% Change (2000 - 2020)</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>5.7</b>

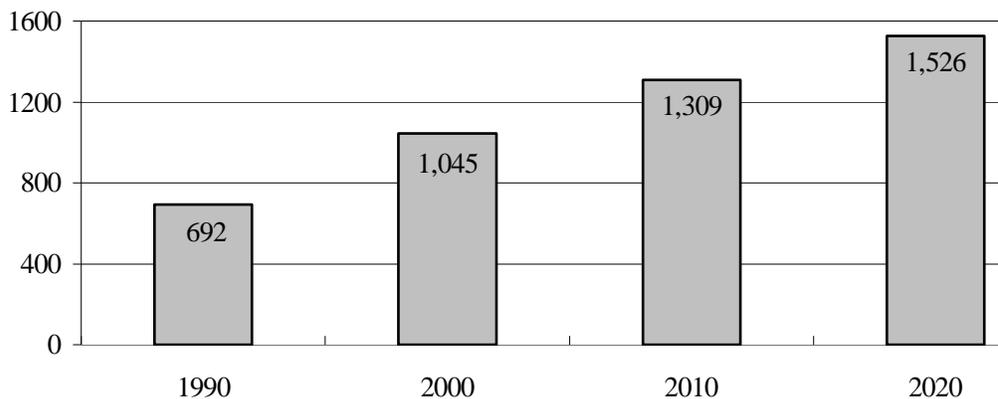
Source: U.S. Census, MISER, NMCOG

\* 2020 population projection for Massachusetts from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### Households

On January 1, 1999 there were 897 households in Dunstable. The number of households grew by 25% between 1990 and 1998. Household size and the forecasted rate of household growth is discussed in the Housing Section.

**Figure 2-2  
Projected Household Growth in Dunstable**



### Social Characteristics

The population characteristics show a fairly even age distribution. See Table 3-1 in the Housing Section for age distribution and projections. In 1990, just over 27% of the population was under

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

18 years old, while approximately 6% were age 65 and over. Another 21% were in the 45-64 age group that is approaching retirement. The number of persons in the younger age cohorts is expected to decline in the coming decade, while the number of persons over 45 is rapidly increasing.

The ethnicity of Dunstable residents is predominantly White, with a small number of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

**Table 2-2  
Racial And Ethnic Characteristics**

	1990	
	<u>Persons</u>	<u>%</u>
White	2,204	98.6
Black	7	0.3
American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	4	0.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	12	0.5
Hispanic Origin	9	0.4
Other	0	0.0

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

The educational attainment of residents in Dunstable is higher than the state average. Approximately 31% of the population in 1990 had attended 4 or more years of college or university, while approximately 89% had graduated from high school. A similar profile exists in 1998.

**Table 2-3  
Educational Attainment (18 years & older)**

	<u>% Completed High School</u>	<u>% Completed 4+ Years College</u>
Dunstable	89.3%	31.3%
Middlesex County	84.3%	35.4%
Massachusetts	80.0%	27.2%

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

## 2.2 ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Labor Force and Unemployment

In 1990 the annual average of persons in the civilian labor force was 1,301, representing a participation rate of approximately 77% of the population 16-69 years old. In 1997 there was an average of 1,531 people in the civilian labor force. Of these, 47 were unemployed, resulting in an unemployment rate of 3.1%. The unemployment rate has been in steady decline since its peak in 1991, following trends across the region and state. Over the last decade, unemployment rates in Dunstable have been consistently close to the state average, but lower than the rates in Northern Middlesex County as a whole.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Table 2-4  
Average Annual Labor Force And Unemployment, 1986 - 1996**

	<u>Dunstable</u>		<b>Lowell PMSA</b>		<u>State</u>	
	<u>Labor Force</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>	<u>Labor Force</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>	<u>Labor Force</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>
1986	1,031	3.4	142,689	4.1	3,058,283	3.8
1987	1,039	2.8	143,737	3.3	3,086,092	3.2
1988	1,276	1.9	148,307	3.3	3,154,492	3.3
1989	1,286	3.1	149,338	4.4	3,179,750	4.0
1990	1,351	5.6	153,661	6.6	3,242,000	6.2
1991	1,360	8.0	150,721	9.9	3,161,800	9.1
1992	1,396	7.8	150,899	9.9	3,162,000	8.5
1993	1,394	4.4	149,310	8.0	3,164,100	6.9
1994	1,419	4.7	147,805	6.7	3,167,100	6.0
1995	1,432	4.1	148,129	5.5	3,167,500	5.4
1996	1,459	3.4	149,847	4.1	3,189,100	4.5
1997	1,531	3.1	156,757	3.9	3,260,200	4.0

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training

**Occupation of Residents**

In 1990, approximately 69% of Dunstable’s labor force was employed in managerial, professional, technical, or sales occupations. Service and finance/investment/real estate fields together employed about 37% of Dunstable’s labor force. In contrast, about 26% were employed in manufacturing, and just under 18% were employed in wholesale and retail trade. Generally, Dunstable has a diverse and balanced occupational composition.

**Table 2-5  
Occupational Groups Of Residents**

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>
Managerial/Professional/ Tech/Sales/Admin	449	833
Service	90	113
Farm/Forestry/Fishing	20	25
Prod/Craft/Repair	126	142
Oper/Fabr/Laborer	118	99
<b>Total</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>1,212</b>

Source: U.S. Census

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Table 2-6  
Employment By Industry of Town Residents**

	<u>1980</u>		<u>1990</u>	
Agriculture & Mining	24	3.0%	31	0.2%
Construction	80	10.0	85	7.0
Manufacturing	242	30.1	314	25.9
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	52	6.5	73	6.0
Wholesale & Retail Trade	126	15.7	217	17.9
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	36	4.5	46	3.8
Services	205	25.6	405	33.4
Government	<u>38</u>	4.7%	<u>41</u>	3.4%
Total Residents Employed	803		1,212	

Source: U.S. Census

**Places of Work**

People who are employed in Dunstable mainly reside in Dunstable or the neighboring towns. Only a small portion of the Dunstable workforce are employed in the town, as the ratio of jobs in Dunstable to the resident workforce is very low. (In 1996 there were 1,459 persons in the town's workforce and only 162 jobs.) The largest places of employment are the cities of Lowell and Nashua, NH, and towns to the south of Lowell along Route 3.

**Table 2-7  
Top Origins/Destinations of Persons Traveling To or From Dunstable for Work in 1990**

<u>Town of Residence of Dunstable Employees</u>	<u># of Persons</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Workplace of Dunstable Residents</u>	<u># of Persons</u>	<u>%</u>
Dunstable	89	66.4	Lowell	159	13.7
Groton	15	11.2	Nashua, NH	142	12.3
Tyngsborough	10	7.5	Dunstable	89	7.7
Lowell	8	6.0	Chelmsford	69	6.0
Hollis, NH	6	4.5	Billerica	57	4.9
Nashua, NH	6	4.5	Bedford	48	4.1
			Tyngsborough	42	3.6
Total	<u>134</u>		Groton	36	3.1
			Westford	32	2.8
			Burlington	28	2.4
			Other cities and towns	<u>895</u>	51.7
				1,158	

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Approximately 6% of the labor force in Dunstable worked at home or walked or biked to work in 1990. This represents over half of Dunstable residents employed in Dunstable, as shown in the table above. Of the remaining work force, approximately 43% traveled 30 minutes or less to work, while 19% traveled longer than one hour by vehicle.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Income Distribution**

According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in Dunstable in 1989 was \$62,515. (More recent income data for the town is not available.) In comparison, the median household income in Massachusetts in 1989 was \$37,431, while the median household income in Middlesex County was \$45,378. The number of persons in Dunstable 1989 whose household income was below the poverty level was 34, or approximately 1.5% of the population. The percentage of persons below the poverty level in Dunstable was considerably lower than Middlesex County (2.8%) or Massachusetts (8.9%). The poverty rate in 1997 is probably about the same. Due to the cost of living in the region, the actual number of persons living in poverty may be higher than indicated by the poverty rate (which is defined nationally).

**Table 2-8  
Income Distribution - 1989**

	<u>Households</u>	<u>%</u>
Less than \$10,000	20	2.9
\$10,000 - \$24,999	55	7.9
\$25,000 - \$49,999	170	24.6
\$50,000 - \$99,999	351	50.8
\$100,000 or more	96	13.9

Source: U.S. Census

**2.3 TAX BASE**

The tax base in Dunstable is primarily residential, with homeowners covering approximately 94% of the tax revenues. Exempt properties constitute 4% of total property value in the town. Industrial and commercial properties combined make up approximately 2% of the taxable property in Dunstable. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B tax provisions permit private agricultural, forestry, and recreation lands to be taxed at a lower rate as long as they remain undeveloped. Such lands constitute less than one percent of the total property value in the town.

**Table 2-9  
Total Property Values in Dunstable by Land Use Category, January 1, 1998**

	<u>Total Property Value</u>	<u>% (Excluding Exempt)</u>
Residential	\$177,308,770	94.0
Commercial	2,036,130	1.1
Industrial	1,413,400	0.7
Personal Property	7,267,300	3.9
Chapter 61, 61A, 61B (Agriculture, Forestry, Recreation)	<u>695,712</u>	0.4
Total non-exempt	188,721,312	
Exempt (4.1% of Total)	<u>8,052,000</u>	
Total Assessment	\$197,173,312	

Source: Town of Dunstable Assessors Department

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**2.4 ECONOMIC BASE**

The economy in much of eastern Massachusetts has fully recovered from the recession in the early 1990s. With very few places of employment in Dunstable the town’s economy is dependent upon the surrounding region for employment. Employment in the Lowell PMSA declined after a peak in 1988, but has risen modestly in recent years. The structure of the economy has shifted in recent years, as more employment growth has taken place in the high tech, service and trade industries, and less in manufacturing industries. Projections for the near future show considerable job growth in the region, especially in high tech and computer related industries.

In 1996 a total of 38 businesses in Dunstable employed approximately 162 persons. This does not include persons who were self-employed or worked informally. The average annual wage for employees in Dunstable in 1997 was \$32,068. The highest number of jobs were in government (40%), and in construction (26%). A sizable number of jobs, 24%, were in wholesale and retail trade. There were no jobs in manufacturing. Employment in other industries was not disclosed to protect the confidentiality of individual firms.

**Table 2-10  
Employment by Industry in Dunstable**

	<u>Dunstable</u>					<u>Northern Middlesex</u>	
	<u>1990</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>% (1996)</u>
Average Annual Wage	\$25,478	\$22,890	\$22,533	\$27,819	\$32,068	\$35,827	-
Number of Establishments	42	27	37	38	40	5,924	-
Total Employment	161	113	136	162	183	104,070	-
Government	conf	conf	conf	73	73	12,115	11.6%
Agriculture & Mining	conf	conf	conf	conf	conf	650	0.6
Contracting & Construction	47	61	63	36	48	4,586	4.4
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	26,534	25.5
Transport Comm. Utilities	conf	conf	conf	conf	conf	6,246	6.0
Wholesale & Retail Trade	15	8	14	27	44	22,541	21.7
Finance Insurance Real Estate	0	0	0	conf	conf	3,627	3.5
Services	61	5	11	16	14	27,771	26.7%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training (covered employees only)  
 Conf: Withheld to protect confidentiality.

**Employers**

While the number of persons employed in Dunstable has fully recovered after the recession of the early 1990s, there are now fewer firms operating than before the recession. According to information supplied by the community in 1993, there were no establishments employing more than 10 persons. The largest employers at that time were the Town of Dunstable, with 9 full time employees, Tully or McGovern Farms, with 8 employees, Dunstable General Store, with 6 employees, and Convenient Mann Store, with 4 employees.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **Market Area Characteristics**

Dunstable is a rural community in northern Middlesex County. The town is nearest to the regional centers of Nashua, NH, and Lowell, MA. Dunstable has good access to regional transportation corridors via Route 113, which crosses through the town, and Route 3.

The Northern Middlesex County region has experienced substantial growth in recent years. Although over-speculation resulted in high commercial vacancies in the early 1990's, the market has absorbed much of this excess space by now, and the region is likely to see more development take place. A dearth of office space in eastern Massachusetts has led to a recent boom in construction that is reaching into suburban areas. Dunstable has managed to escape much of the growth pressure, retaining a rural-agricultural character distinct from some of the neighboring communities, although residential growth is increasing.

### **Commercial Development in Dunstable**

Dunstable is predominantly a residential community and would like to remain so. There is a limited visible presence of commercial activity in the town. The existing retail establishments primarily serve the Dunstable community.

There are two areas zoned for business use. The B-1 district is located in a small area off of Main Street near the town center. The existing convenience store and former Post Office building in the Town Center are presently located in the R-1 district just outside of the B-1 district. A new location for the Post Office was recently constructed on Pleasant Street, about 1/3 mile west of its former location. The B-3 district is a larger area along the town's eastern border with Tyngsborough, adjacent to an existing commercial area that lies in Tyngsborough. The B-2 district, which is not located anywhere on the zoning map, is similar to the B-1 district but also allows certain auto uses and general contractor's offices by special permit.

The B-1 district allows retail, service, and professional office uses, as well as residential use. Manufacturing, high tech uses and offices are permitted in the B-3 district, while residential use is prohibited. Noxious uses such as waste disposal facilities are also specifically prohibited.

Agriculture has historically been a vital economic activity to the town, and remains an important component of the community's rural character. As agriculture becomes less economically viable, agricultural lands are becoming increasingly attractive for other types of development. Thus, in order to protect the community character, an economic development issue is the possible promotion of agriculture or other economically viable uses for agricultural lands in their undeveloped state.

## **2.5 ECONOMIC BASE GOALS**

The following goals have evolved from the community survey, public forums and other community input:

- 8) Attract limited environmentally acceptable businesses in appropriate areas of the town which will help to provide tax revenues to support town services.
- 9) Allow only nonresidential uses which are environmentally appropriate and do not require the availability of public water and sewer services.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

- 10) Coordinate vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic and parking in business areas so that they function in an optimal manner (especially in the Town Center).
- 11) Develop limited retail uses on a site outside of the town center while protecting Dunstable's New England village character.
- 12) Maintain high standards of design and maintenance in existing and new commercial developments.
- 13) Explore senior housing and health care facilities as a potential source of net tax income for the town.
- 14) Seek to promote the viability of the town's agricultural economy

## **2.6 ECONOMIC BASE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Retail/Service**

Dunstable should not seek to attract retail/service development for primarily economic development purposes. Some additional development is desirable, however, to provide service and retail facilities to serve the local population, and to accommodate local entrepreneurs. Some commercial development that contributes to the Town's tax base may also be desirable as long as it does not have adverse impacts. The need to provide adequate zoning to meet the community's future needs for commercial development of any type must be balanced with the objective to preserve the town's rural residential character.

The Guide Plan for Future Land use eliminates the existing area in the Town Center that is zoned for commercial use (B-1), and instead shows the area in the town center that is currently used for retail business as Retail/Service. Retail and service uses in Dunstable should be primarily to provide convenience for local residents. Additional types of retail and services that might be appropriate include medical offices, an ATM and/or a small restaurant.

The existing retail/service areas in Dunstable may not be sufficient to meet future needs of town residents for such facilities. An additional site could be identified along Pleasant Street (Route 113) between the town center and the new Post Office to accommodate future retail/service development. The site should be sufficiently large so that future commercial development will not have to be spread around the town, but can be located in one place. The site design should be such that development is set back from the road and natural landscaping maintained to avoid a "strip commercial" appearance and to provide safe ingress and egress. Design controls should also be implemented to assure that the development fits the character of the surrounding area. An additional site for retail/service development should not be designated until the existing site is used to its full capacity (the former Post Office building is currently vacant). Criteria for selecting a site for additional retail/service use are discussed in Appendix 1-3 (Land Use Section).

### **2. Office/High Tech**

The area that is currently zoned for expanded commercial use (B-3) is recommended for future office or high tech use such as those specified in the Zoning By-law. Retail uses should be excluded from this area, and design standards should be applied. High quality commercial development at this location can contribute to the Town's tax base without

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

presenting any significant impact on local traffic or the rural character of the community. This area can be accessed via Cummings Road in Tyngsboro, and is close to the intersection of Routes 3 and 113. Because of the lack of sewer and water, the types of businesses that might be able to locate at this site are somewhat limited, however a developer might be able to seek services from the Town of Tyngsboro, or they can develop on-site water and septic treatment facilities.

### **3. Agriculture**

The Town should seek to promote agriculture as a viable economic activity. Actions in this regard could include:

- Facilitate communication between individual agricultural enterprises.
- Promote the use of high-value crops and farming techniques.
- Allow uses incidental to agricultural activity which can provide additional income without causing adverse environmental impacts.

Zoning provisions can also be used to promote agricultural activity by protecting prime agricultural land through site plan review or cluster requirements.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

# **Section3: HOUSING**

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Section 3: HOUSING**

Dunstable is a rural community which has seen relatively slow growth in population and housing development over the course of time. There are still fewer than 1,000 housing units in the town, almost all of which are individual single-family homes. As the Northern Middlesex region experiences an increasing pace of development, the town of Dunstable is certain to feel some of the pressure. Planning will determine whether the town can suitably accommodate the varied housing needs of its population.

This analysis consists of several components: a review of existing housing conditions, including costs, availability and affordability; an analysis of demographic trends affecting housing; an assessment of housing needs by various population groups; a list of community goals related to housing; and some recommendations to achieve Dunstable’s housing goals.

**3.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING HOUSING CONDITIONS**

**Existing Housing**

As of January 1, 1999 there were approximately 897 housing units in Dunstable, an increase of 160 units since 1990.

The age of the housing stock in Dunstable is shown in Table 3-1. Almost 74% of Dunstable’s housing was constructed after 1959. The peak decade for home construction was the 1980s, while the pace of construction has continued through the 1990s.

**Table 3-1  
Age of Housing Stock, Dunstable, MA**

<u>Year Built</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1939 or Earlier	125	13.9
1940 to 1949	34	3.8
1950 to 1959	72	8.0
1960 to 1969	128	14.3
1970 to 1979	169	18.8
1980 to 1989	209	23.3
1990 to 1998	160	17.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>897 units</b>	

Source: U.S. Census, Town of Dunstable Building Permit data

The type of housing structures in Dunstable in 1998 is displayed in Table 3-2. Over 96% of the housing in Dunstable is single-family, while buildings with two or more units comprised approximately 3% of housing in 1998. There are no condominiums in the town. The zoning bylaw does not generally permit multifamily structures other than two-family homes in limited areas; however, in-law accessory apartments are allowed in single-family residences.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Table 3-2  
Units By Type of Housing Structure, 1990 and 1998**

<u>Units in Structure</u>	<u>April, 1990</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Single-family	706	95.8%	866	96.5%
2-4	23	3.1	23	2.6
5 or more	0	0.0	0	0.0
mobile homes	0	0.0	0	0.0
other	<u>8</u>	1.1	<u>8</u>	0.9
Total	737		897	

Source: U.S. Census, Town of Dunstable Building Permit Data (as of January 1, 1999)

About 78% of the occupied housing units in Dunstable in 1990 had three or four bedrooms. Approximately 15% percent had one or two bedrooms. As typical of rural areas, many of the older homes in the town are considerably larger than modern nuclear family homes. The median number of rooms in all housing units in Dunstable in 1990 was 7.0.

Existing zoning regulations require a minimum residential lot size of two acres throughout the town. However, some older homes located near the town center or homes built in cluster type developments (described as Open Space Development in the Zoning Bylaw) may have less than two acres of property.

The rate of occupancy by homeowners is higher in Dunstable than in the region as a whole. Approximately 92% of housing units in Dunstable in 1990 were owner-occupied. A total of 54 units were renter-occupied.

**Availability**

Vacancy rates are an indicator of the availability of housing units. A vacancy rate of 5% is considered to be ideal because it allows occupants to move freely in the marketplace. A vacancy rate of under 5% indicates that there is demand for additional housing.

Vacancy rates for single-family homes have been consistently low in Dunstable. In 1990 the vacancy rate was 1.8% for all owner occupancy units. According to real estate professionals interviewed, there are generally about 20 homes on the market at any given time. Many homes are being made available through new development. Currently about half of the homes in the market are newly built.

The vacancy rate for rental units in 1990 was 8.5%. There are very few, if any, rental units on the market presently. Turnover for rental units is quite low.

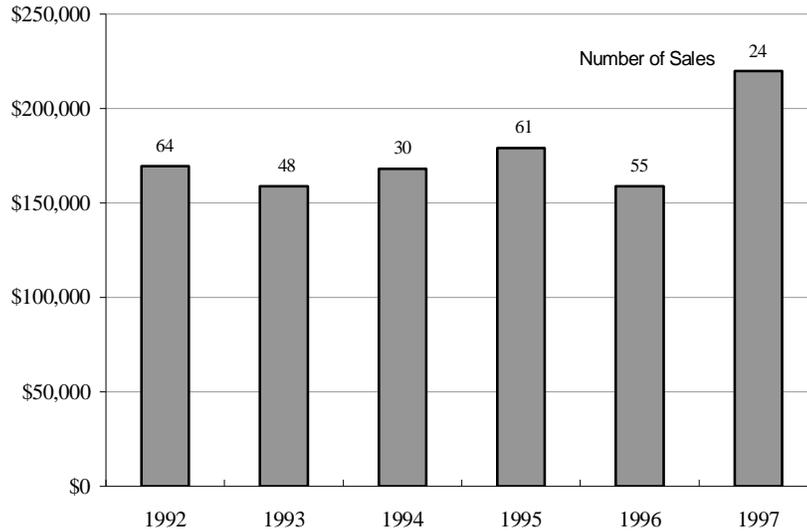
**Housing Costs and Affordability**

There were 24 residential units sold in 1997, of which all were single-family homes. The median sales price for a single-family home in 1997 was about \$220,000. The median price of homes has fluctuated throughout the 1990s with an average of \$166,900. This broad fluctuation is due in part to the small number of houses sold each year and in part to fluctuation in interest rates. In

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

comparison, the median sales price for single-family homes in Groton in 1996 was \$220,900, while the median sales price for homes in Pepperell was \$149,000.

**Figure 3-1  
Median Residential Sales Price Dunstable 1992-1997**



Source: Banker & Tradesman

The cost of renter-occupied housing in Dunstable has also increased. Although the rate of the increase was somewhat less than that for owner-occupied homes between 1980 and 1990, current estimates show higher rates of rent increase since 1990. In 1990 median gross rent was \$613 per month, an increase of 167% over 1980. The current market rate in the region for renting a 3-4 bedroom house is \$1,500 to \$3,000. Most units are rented directly by the owners; it is not known if there are any rental units available at this time.

Affordability of housing is measured not only in terms of the price of housing, but also in terms of the household living in it. A generally accepted standard used to define affordability of housing is that it should cost no more than 30% of household income. A guideline used by banks when evaluating home mortgage applications is that monthly payments do not exceed 30%-33% of household income.

Homeowners (with mortgages) in Dunstable in 1990 spent an average of 22% of their income on housing costs, while renters spent about 26% of their incomes on housing. Housing costs in eastern Massachusetts have continued to rise faster than incomes in the 1990's. The gap between housing costs and household income is steadily widening.

It should be noted that the term "affordable housing" is relative, since it depends on the income of the household. Affordable housing is not the same thing as subsidized housing for persons of low and/or moderate income, although subsidized housing is one type of affordable housing.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### 3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AFFECTING HOUSING

There are several demographic trends that affect the quantity of demand for different types of housing.

Population growth is shown in Table 2-1 of the Economic Base Section. Table 3-3 provides a breakdown of the age structure. There was an increase in the number of residents in the 30 to 44 year old age range between 1980 and 1990, but a decline is expected in the coming decades. This is the age at which many people are married and are starting families, or are living in independent households. The number of persons under 20 is also expected to decline.

In contrast, there has been a significant growth in the older age cohorts. The number of persons 65 and over increased by about 39% from 1980 to 1990, while the 45 to 64 year old age group that is approaching retirement increased by over 61%. The rate of growth in these age groups is accelerating; in 1996 there were an estimated 300 senior citizens in the town, more than double the number in 1990. Population forecasts show the most significant population growth in coming decades taking place in these age cohorts, which will total 44% of the population by the year 2010.

**Table 3-3  
Age Distribution 1980 - 2010**

	<u>1980</u>		<u>1990</u>		<u>2010 (projected)</u>		<u>Percent Change (1990 – 2010)</u>
	<u>Persons</u>		<u>Persons</u>		<u>Persons</u>		
0-4	98	5.9%	182	8.1%	132	5.1%	-27.5%
15-17	484	29.0	425	19.0	433	16.7	1.9
18-29	283	16.9	387	17.3	399	15.4	3.1
30-44	424	25.4	646	28.9	482	18.6	-26.6
45-64	288	17.2	465	20.8	768	29.6	69.1
65 & over	<u>94</u>	5.6	<u>131</u>	5.9	<u>383</u>	14.7	<u>194.6</u>
Total	1,671		2,236		2,597		16.2%

Source: U.S. Census, MISER

Population projections provide a sense of future housing demand, although they are subject to uncertainty. Current estimates suggest that the population projections provided by MISER underestimate population growth. The population in 1996 was 2,640, already higher than the population projected for 2010.<sup>1</sup> However, the relative change among age groups may still be assumed to be accurate.

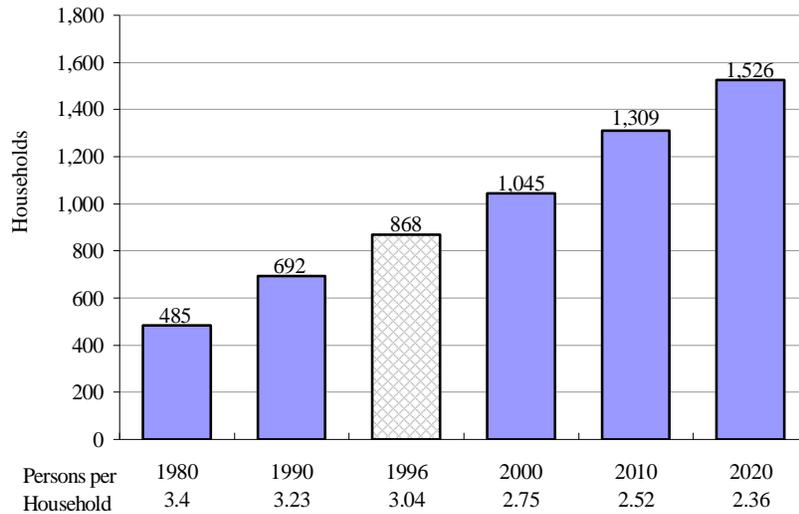
The number of households in Dunstable increased from 485 in 1980 to 692 in 1990, an increase of 44.1% in this period, compared to an overall population growth of only 33.8%. This disparity is related to the decline in the number of persons per household in Dunstable from 3.4 persons in

<sup>1</sup> Population projections provided by NMCOG shown in the economic development section of this report appear to be more accurate in light of current estimates, but do not provide information by age cohort.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

1980 to 3.23 persons in 1990. This decline reflects a regional, indeed national trend, to smaller household size. This trend is expected to continue into the future.

**Figure 3-2  
Household Forecast for Dunstable**



Source: MISER, 1996 estimate from Dunstable 1996 Annual Report

The proportion of family households headed by females in 1990 was 4.8%. This did not change significantly from 1980. The proportion of households in Dunstable that were not families rose from 11.3% in 1980 to 14.3% in 1990.

**Regional Growth**

The Northern Middlesex Region has experienced unprecedented residential and nonresidential growth in recent decades. Between 1985 and 1995 close to 10,000 acres of land in Northern Middlesex County were consumed by development. This growth was distributed across the region, with the greatest amount of vacant land becoming developed in the towns of Westford, Chelmsford and Pepperell. The rate of growth has accelerated through the mid-1990s.

Intense commercial growth has taken place in the region, generating a substantial amount of employment. An expanding concentration of large employers is located in the metropolitan area north of Boston. Future employment growth in the region can be expected to attract a significant population seeking housing.

Dunstable has largely escaped the growth pressures to date, but as development consumes available land in neighboring towns the market for new construction in Dunstable will become stronger.

To conclude, trends indicate a rapid increase in new households in Dunstable. Households also tend to be slightly smaller than in previous years, and there is likely to be an increase in households composed of families with children. Population trends indicate a demand for additional housing units for separate households, older adults, and for the elderly. On the other

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

hand regional growth pressures may bring more single-family residential development, attracting more young families to settle in Dunstable.

### **3.3 HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

As the preceding discussion has shown, housing in Dunstable primarily consists of single-family homes with large lot sizes. There are no multifamily residences or condominiums in Dunstable, and very few homes available for renters. Demographic changes that are taking place suggest that a greater diversity of housing types would benefit Dunstable residents who may not be able to afford to purchase or maintain a larger home, or who might desire an alternative type of dwelling.

Housing, a basic necessity of life, has become increasingly expensive. As housing prices have risen throughout Massachusetts in recent years, more and more residents are being priced out of the housing market. Families and individuals are forced to spend an increasing share of their incomes on shelter, meaning they have less money to spend on other things.

Several groups have been more greatly affected by increasing housing costs than the population as a whole. These include young adults, the elderly, single heads of households, would-be first time homebuyers, and persons with low or moderate income. Not all of these people are eligible for, or desire, subsidized housing. They are households that have been priced out of the housing market by rapidly rising costs.

Alternatives to single-family homes include condominiums, townhouses, and multifamily structures, as well as other types of planned developments. They may be targeted toward specific populations such as elderly persons or low-moderate income families, or they may have a mixture of occupants from various income and age levels. Such housing units tend to be less expensive than single-family homes, and require much less maintenance on the part of the homeowner/occupant.

#### **Older Adults**

The most rapidly growing age group in Dunstable are the persons over the age of 65 years old. Many of these people are either approaching or have reached retirement and have grown families. After retirement many people are living on fixed incomes that often do not keep pace with rapidly rising costs, and are likely to be affected by increasing housing costs. Some older individuals and couples may be living in a large house they no longer need or want, but cannot move because there is no suitable, affordable, housing available. Home and property maintenance may also become burdensome for elderly persons, adding to the cost of living in single-family homes.

#### **Young Adults/First-Time Homebuyers**

Young adults, including singles and young families, frequently need to rent housing until they become more established and can save enough for a down payment on a home. Some young adults may value the mobility that living in a rental unit offers, but want to stay in their hometown. Many of Dunstable's young adults cannot afford rents charged in private apartments or the down payment and carrying costs of a single-family home. Frequently these first time homebuyers turn to the condominium market when they are ready to purchase.

Nationally, the rate of homeownership among young adults has declined substantially since 1980, after 35 years of increasing rates. The National Association of Realtors (NAR) ascribes this trend

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

to both the increase in purchase prices for homes, and also to the increase in rents which makes it difficult to save the money necessary for a down payment.

The NAR calculates a First-Time Homebuyer Affordability Index, which indicates the ratio between would-be homebuyer income and the income needed to purchase a home. The First-Time Homebuyers Affordability Index for the fourth quarter of 1996 was 80.7, which means that the typical would-be first-time homebuyer has less than 80.7 percent of the income needed to qualify for a mortgage on a "starter home." This index is computed using national averages, with the typical "starter home" price assumed to be \$117,600 for that year. Under current affordability conditions, a family earning \$40,000 would have sufficient income to qualify for a \$116,800 loan on a \$146,000 home.

While incomes in Dunstable may be higher than the national average, housing costs are also higher. Therefore it may be assumed that would-be first-time homebuyers in Dunstable are experiencing the same or greater difficulty.

### **Low and Moderate Income Housing**

There are no subsidized affordable housing units in Dunstable. Multifamily housing for the elderly or low and moderate income families under Federal or State programs is permitted in the Zoning Bylaw in the R-2 district (Section 7.1), although no such development has taken place to date. According to zoning regulations, the current R-2 district may accommodate up to approximately 28 dwelling units. Aside from multifamily dwellings, Federal or State-subsidized housing vouchers might be sought as another alternative to provide housing for low and moderate income persons in Dunstable. The Chelmsford Housing Authority provides Federal Section 8 housing vouchers to applicants from Dunstable, although there are not currently any vouchers being used in Dunstable.

State Standards. A way of assessing demand for subsidized units is through the standards set by the state. Section 20 of Chapter 40B of state law (often referred to as Chapter 774) sets a standard that 10% of the housing stock in a community be available for people with low and moderate incomes. Under the 10% standard, Dunstable should have a total of approximately 74 units. The State guidelines are based on the 1990 U.S. Census count of year-round housing units.

The low and moderate income housing stock is generally counted as the number of units which are subsidized in the town under State or Federal housing assistance programs. Subsidies may apply toward developing the housing supply (i.e., benefits to private developers or public agencies that build or maintain housing units) or to the housing recipients in the form of vouchers. Subsidized housing stock may include units for elderly and handicapped persons, as well as for low and moderate income families. Income limits for qualifying households vary depending upon the federal or state program which subsidizes housing.

Chapter 774 allows the State to override local zoning via the comprehensive permit procedure to provide for the construction of affordable housing units up to the 10% standard. Discretionary state funding can also be withheld from a community if it is deemed not to be making a good faith effort to meet its obligations. The Local Initiative Program (LIP) encourages local governments to work in partnership with developers, providing an opportunity for input into the design and development of projects reserving 25% of their units for low and moderate income persons.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

To date no developers have sought comprehensive permits to develop affordable housing in Dunstable, although there is the possibility that such a proposal will come forward at some point in the future.

### **Special Needs Housing**

There are no housing options in Dunstable at this time for persons with special needs, such as the elderly or handicapped in any income category. Senior housing may include assistance in home care, meals, and medical care. The provision of elderly housing would prevent or delay seniors from having to leave the town when they are not able to live in single-family homes or live independently.

The term "handicapped" includes people with a wide range of disabilities which include physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. Each of these groups have different, but special, housing needs. Persons with mental or emotional disabilities may need a living situation that includes care. Physically challenged individuals often require special construction that includes extra-wide doors, lower counters and special bathroom facilities. These special types of housing are frequently ignored by the private sector.

Privately financed elderly and handicapped housing could yield an economic benefit to the town because they would increase tax revenues and require fewer town services than single-family development, which generally attracts families with school children. This type of development may also increase the market for local businesses.

## **3.4 HOUSING GOALS**

The following goals have evolved from the community survey, public forums, and other community input:

- 5) Since Dunstable is primarily a residential town, safeguard residential neighborhoods from encroachment by all forms of incompatible uses and other potentially damaging environmental influences.
- 6) Create some diversity in new residential housing units based on Dunstable's demographics, while protecting the character of the community.
- 7) Explore alternate forms of housing and life-care facilities for seniors.
- 8) Take care to carefully integrate new or expanded housing into existing districts and neighborhoods so that it is not physically or environmentally disruptive to the existing style and scale.

## **3.5 HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS**

As stated in the Guide Plan for Future Land Use, the low-density, rural residential character of Dunstable should be maintained. Nevertheless, a greater variety of housing options is to be encouraged in order to provide for the housing needs of various population groups, especially seniors.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **1. Regulatory Requirements**

The Guide Plan for Future Land Use recommends that Dunstable maintain the existing residential zoning regulations which require a two acre minimum lot size for residential development.

### **2. Open Space Development**

Encourage open space (cluster) residential development in order to preserve open space or agricultural land while enhancing the character of new residential neighborhoods. Review the density and design requirements for open space residential development to assure that quality and environmental standards are upheld. Consider requiring open space development in some areas or offering more incentives to developers to plan for open space development.

### **3. Senior Housing**

Seek the development of alternative housing for seniors, such as townhouses or condominiums, or some form of special needs housing. Such development might take place in the existing R-2 zoning district or in another appropriate location to be selected in the future. Criteria for identifying locations for high-density senior housing are provided in Appendix 3-1.

The Town of Dunstable does not presently have a housing authority, but may wish to consider forming one (or another entity such as a local housing partnership or nonprofit housing corporation) if the Town chooses to pursue the development of subsidized senior housing.

### **4. Studies**

Form a Town housing committee to consider needed actions and possible locations related to future housing.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **Appendix 3-1** **Criteria For Evaluating Senior Housing Sites**

The ideal site is usually not available so that some compromises may have to be made. Most environmentally sound sites near the center of the community are acceptable. Sites to be avoided are those that are isolated from the community (physically and socially), are on marginal lands, or are imposed on neighborhoods of a different design scale.

#### Environmental Criteria

- Development should not be permitted in a flood plain.
- Development should not be permitted in a wetland
- The proposed project should respect other natural features, such as hills, major tree stands, etc. The proposal should be designed to blend in with the existing topography of the site.
- Very steep sites are probably unsuitable.

#### Land Use Criteria

- The site, or the design of the proposed development, should not adversely affect existing adjacent land uses.
- For assisted housing, sites conveniently located to commercial and municipal facilities are preferred. Some elderly and moderate income families may not have access to an automobile or may have only one automobile.

#### Infrastructure

- The site could be served by Town water facilities if located near the Town center; otherwise it should have an adequate on-site water supply.
- The site should have the necessary septic capacity for on-site treatment.
- The site should be served by roadways that meet Town standards.
- Development should not unduly impact already heavily congested roadways and intersections.

#### Physical Features

- The site should be a minimum of 5 acres in size.
- The site should have sufficient depth from the principal roadway to support the proposed development and maintain a rural appearance from the roadway.
- The site should be capable of encouraging a housing design that will offer attractiveness, privacy, and protection from adverse impacts through the creative use of grade changes, landscaping, screening, building orientation and other design techniques.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

# **Section 4: NATURAL RESOURCES**

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

## Section 4: NATURAL RESOURCES

### Introduction

Dunstable is a rural town with a long history as an agricultural community. Residents of Dunstable value their open spaces, protected wetlands, aquifers, forests, orchards, and agricultural lands and wish to maintain the town's rural landscape atmosphere. Natural and open areas are owned by a variety of parties, including: the Town's Conservation Commission, the State, the Dunstable Rural Lands Trust, and private property owners. Over the past twenty years, through active acquisition of lands for conservation, donations of land, and encouragement of economic uses of farmlands and forests that might otherwise become available for increased residential development, Dunstable may have significantly slowed the rate of suburbanization that would have otherwise occurred. (A complete list of public and private protected lands are included in Appendix 4-1.)

Today, many of Dunstable's natural resource lands, such as wetlands and river banks, are protected by law. Others, such as privately-owned farmlands and forests, are only preserved voluntarily by land owners who have chosen to participate in State programs that provide tax incentives to encourage their retention as agricultural lands or forests. But these programs do not necessarily provide permanent protections if the land owners decide to withdraw from them. One of Dunstable's greatest challenges today is to identify mechanisms to permanently preserve valued natural resource lands – whether by direct acquisitions, purchase of preservation easements, or other fiscal/financial incentive programs.

Additionally, many of Dunstable's large natural resource areas today remain isolated, unlinked to other resource areas, and difficult to access. Opportunities exist to link resource areas by means of trail construction and acquisition of key parcels for conservation so that a network of linked resources can be achieved and opened to public accessibility as part of regional networks.

For a complete and thorough inventory of resources, issues, and recommendations concerning Dunstable's natural resources, refer to Dunstable's "1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan".

### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

(Some of the following information has been summarized from the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan)

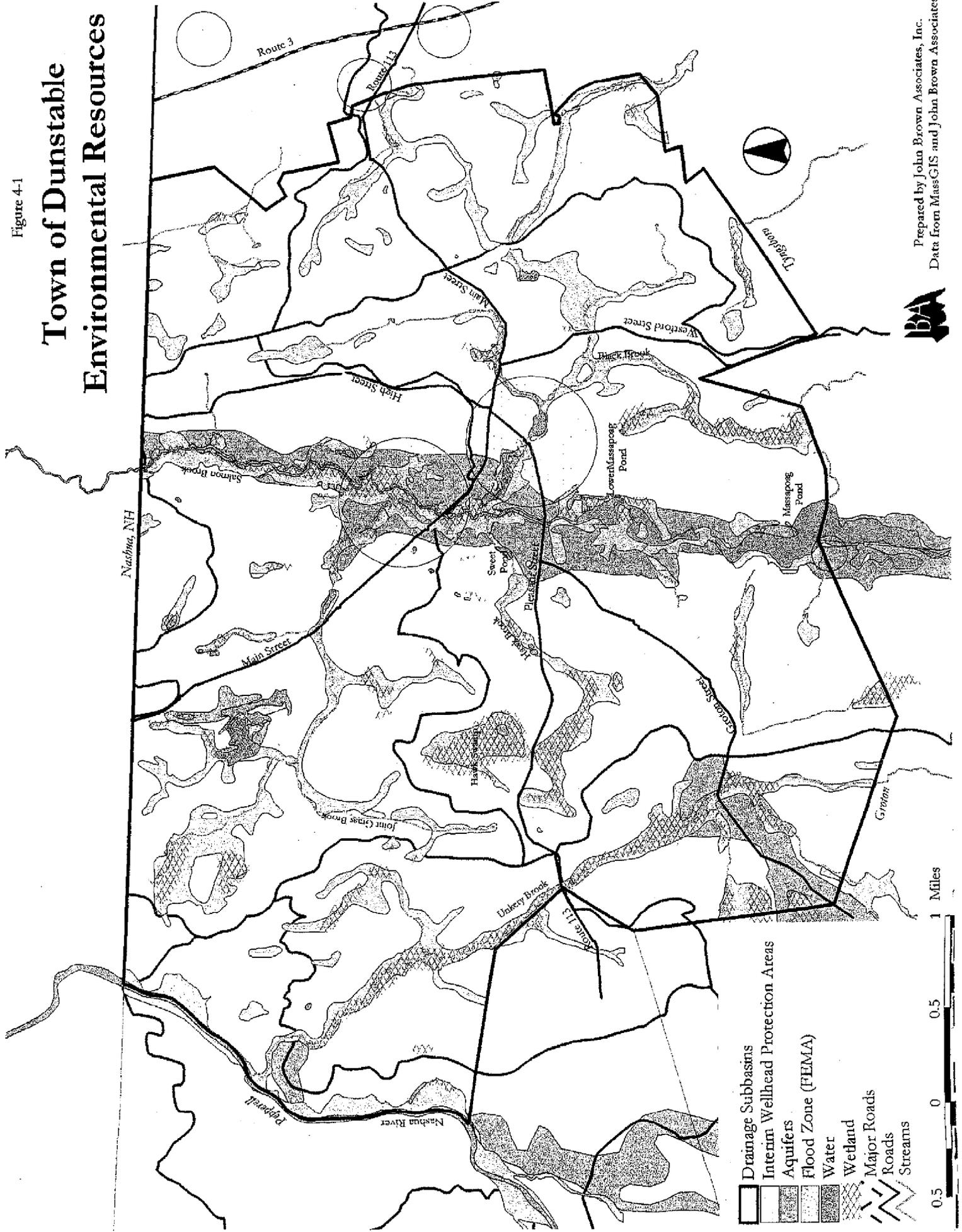
Dunstable possesses a wealth of natural resources - it's farms, wetlands, ponds, orchards, rivers and brooks, forests and watersheds. Many are protected permanently, and some temporarily. But many other valued landscapes are not protected at all and are ultimately vulnerable to development. Described below is a summary of Dunstable's natural resources and their importance to Dunstable's ecosystems and sense of community character. See Figure 4-1, Environmental Resources, for the location of Dunstable's significant environmental features.

#### Open Fields, Farmlands and Chapter 61A Farmland

According to aerial photographs, active agricultural land accounts for about 1,320 acres of Dunstable's total acreage in 1998, or 12% of the town's total land area. Today Dunstable has nearly 30 farms with more than 1,700 acres classified under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61A. Not all of these acres are actively farmed. Nevertheless, Chapter 61A classification requires that the land must provide a yearly minimum economic return from agriculture of not less than \$500 in order to receive reduced tax assessment rates.

Figure 4-1

# Town of Dunstable Environmental Resources



Prepared by John Brown Associates, Inc.  
Data from MassGIS and John Brown Associates

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

Chapter 61A provides temporary, but not necessarily permanent protection of agricultural lands in exchange for tax credits to property owners. These laws offer tax credits to land owners who retain their land in agricultural (or forestry) uses rather than selling or developing the land. Chapter 61A is administered on an annual basis. (Chapter 61 requires forestry land owners to commit to ten years of forestry use at a time.) Owners can withdraw from this program at any time by paying a penalty. Although the Town is granted a "right of first refusal" to purchase any Chapter lands put on the market, the Town must have available a large cash reserve to take advantage of this right. For practical purposes, Chapter 61A lands are protected only tenuously and temporarily. Today, there is concern that several key farms in Dunstable may be offered for sale in the future as pressures for new housing development grows. The Town must therefore be prepared to either acquire these properties when and if they are offered for sale or see them potentially converted to residential use.

**Forests and Chapter 61 Forests**

Forests are by far the largest land use in Dunstable, covering about 7,600 acres in 1998, or approximately 71% of the Town's total land area. Over 1,000 acres in town are classified as managed forests under Chapter 61. Dunstable lies within the Central Hardwoods - White Pine-Hemlock Forest vegetation zone, as mapped by the DEM. One sizable mass of forest is an area of 356 contiguous acres in the south along Westford Street near Massapoag Pond, where the Town's Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge (96 acres) and the Staples Conservation Restrictions (15 acres) and 112 acres of land in Chapter 61 adjoin the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Fitch Wildlife Management Area (133 acres), most of which lies in Tyngsborough.

**Permanently Protected Conservation and Open Space Lands**

In 1998, Dunstable had 1,370 acres of public and private land permanently protected for conservation and open space recreation - three times the land amount under protection twenty years ago. Many gaps remain in the network of resources that may need protection, but significant progress has been made through the efforts of Dunstable's Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and the Dunstable Rural Land Trust. See Figure 4-2 for the location of Dunstable's protected and unprotected open space.

**Table of Land Use/Area**

Type of Land Use (1998)	Acreage	% of Town Area
Forest	7,598	69.9 %
Agriculture	1,323	12.3 %
Conservation/Recreation	1,370	12.8 %

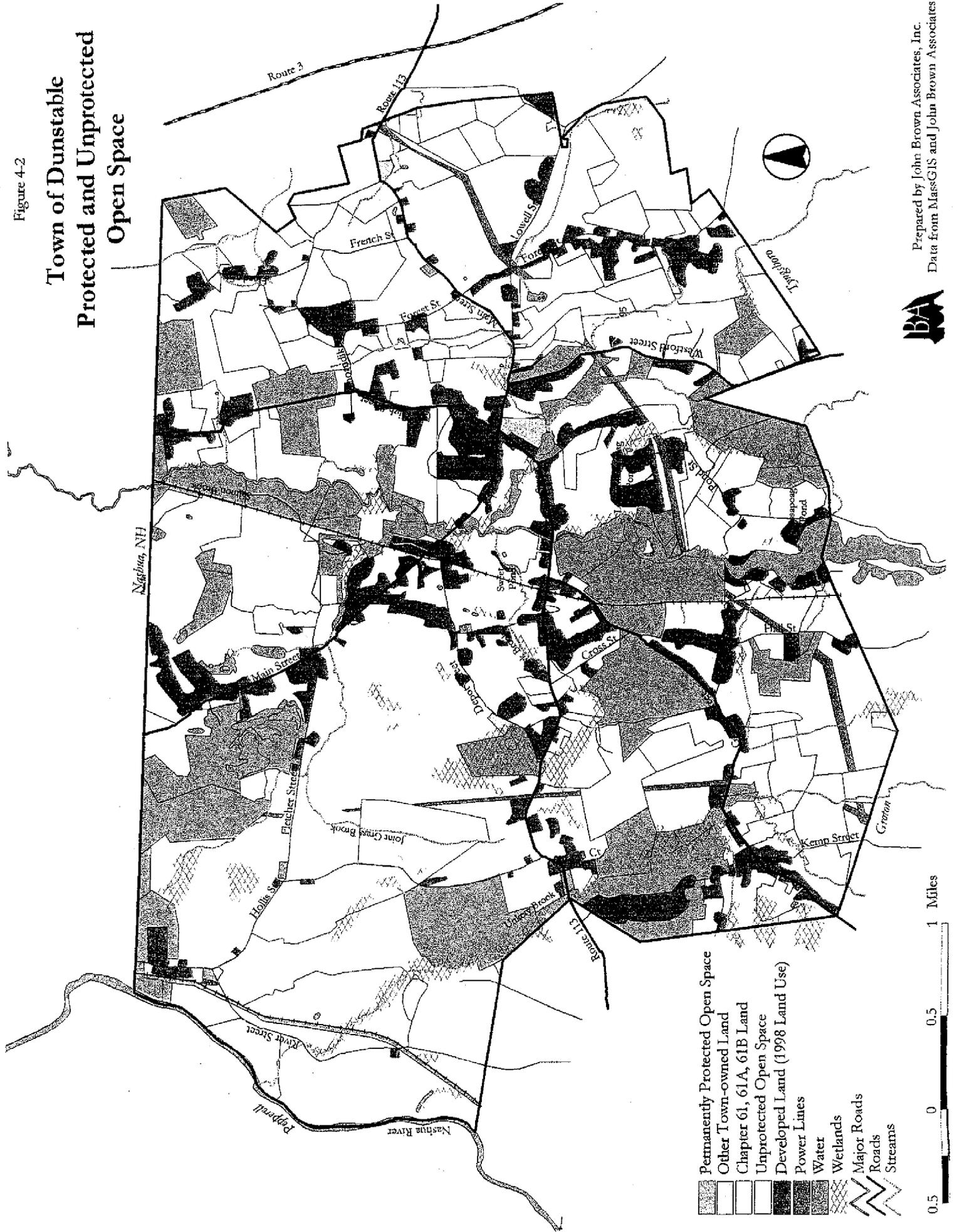
Source: Dunstable Master Plan Table 1-1, Existing Land Use

**Water Resources: Surface Water**

Dunstable possesses a wealth of ponds, rivers, brooks, wetlands, aquifers and other groundwater resources. All water which falls on Dunstable eventually drains into the Merrimack River to the east of town. The town's drainage pattern, however, can be divided into three smaller watershed areas: 1) the Nashua River watershed, 2) the Salmon Brook watershed, and 3) the Eastern Upland watershed.

Figure 4-2

# Town of Dunstable Protected and Unprotected Open Space



(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **Nashua River Watershed**

The Nashua River Watershed covers 538 square miles in 31 communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Dunstable's percentage of this watershed is quite small. The Nashua River is a meandering stream of relatively low velocity. It is almost invisible within Dunstable since no roads cross it or closely approach it. Because the river has cut steep embankments, the river tends to be hidden from view. (Soon, however, the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Management will construct a Nashua Valley Rail Trail regional bike path parallel to its shore along the old Ayer to Hollis Depot Railroad rail bed that will allow cyclists, horseback riders, and hikers to have new access to the river.)

The Nashua River generally meets the standards for its Class B water quality classification in large part because of 11 new enlarged and improved wastewater treatment plants that have been constructed upstream during the past two decades.

The Nashua River through Dunstable is attractive for canoeing. An access to the river in Dunstable is presently being acquired by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. This will be the only piece of public land adjacent to the Nashua River in Dunstable. Unkety Brook is Dunstable's main tributary to the Nashua River. Unkety Brook meanders slowly through Dunstable, has a low embankment, and is bordered by wetlands for most of its length.

### **Salmon Brook Watershed**

The Salmon Brook Watershed meanders through the center of town from Massapoag Pond in the south to the New Hampshire border in the north. Its watershed covers the greater part of town, including the most developed areas. Its main tributaries in Dunstable are Joint Grass Brook, Hawk Brook and Black Brook. Glacial stream outwash soils underlay much of the watershed's low-lying areas. Because these glacial outwash deposits are highly permeable, much of the watershed is an aquifer recharge area. This area, tends to be highly productive of ground water for domestic and municipal wells.

The few standing bodies of water which exist in Dunstable, such as Massapoag Pond, are located within the Salmon Brook watershed. The main water-based recreational activity in this watershed is swimming and boating on Massapoag Pond. However, there is no formal public access to the Pond in Dunstable.

Salmon Brook is used for fishing and canoeing. Access to the Brook is at Pleasant Street at Spaulding-Proctor Reservation and at Main Street at Sargeant Conservation Area. A take-out is located at the Arched Bridge Conservation Area.

### **Eastern Upland Watershed**

The upland glacial till area of Dunstable is drained by three intermittent streams which flow into Locust and Flint Ponds in Tyngsborough.

### **Statutory Methods of Protection**

The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act of 1996 regulates development within 200 feet of a perennial rivers and streams. Projects within this buffer zone, if allowed at all, must have "no practicable alternative" and "no significant adverse impact" on the resource. However, the upland region beyond this 200 foot buffer area plays an important ecological role by serving as the recharge area for rivers. The Dracut Conservation Commission administers this Act. Typically, development is allowed within 100 feet of rivers only under extraordinary circumstances. However, certain types of development are sometimes allowed between 100 feet and 200 feet of streams. Ponds and streams are also regulated under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **Water Resources: Wetlands**

Wetlands are areas characterized by standing waters, hydric soils, and water tolerant vegetation, and typically occur along the shorelines of ponds and streams as well as in isolated depressions in upland areas. As is typical for this region, the majority of wetlands in Dunstable are non-forested bordering wetlands associated with streams or ponds. Wetlands provide several benefits both to humans and to ecological communities. Important wetland functions regulated under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act include pollution control, flood control, storm damage prevention, wildlife habitat, fisheries, ground water supply, and public and private water supply. Beyond these regulated functions, wetlands provide areas of scenic value and opportunities for passive recreation such as nature study bird watching and photography.

In Dunstable, wetlands perform several functions. In the Nashua River Watershed they contain flood waters along Unkety Brook. For the Salmon Brook watershed, wetland marshes act as areas to accept flood waters. They also serve in recharging ground water. Unlike the wetlands in the other two watersheds, the Eastern Till watershed has smaller wetlands which are perched on elevated plateaus of rocky till. Wetlands here can be seen as a series of sponges which retain fast-running water of the brooks that connect them, then slowly release it.

### **Statutory Methods of Protection**

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act regulates development activity within 100 feet of wetlands and other water bodies (the buffer zone). The Dunstable Conservation Commission administers the law and considers applications for activities in wetland zones. Generally, wetland alteration is allowed only in small areas where there are no feasible alternatives, and is subject to the condition that an equivalent amount of wetland must be replicated elsewhere. In wetland buffer zones, work is often allowed subject to an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. Although the Dunstable Conservation Commission has some discretion in deciding how much development to allow in wetlands and buffer zones, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to override any Conservation Commission decision. Although this important state law currently protects wetlands and their surrounding buffer zones, this protection should not necessarily be considered permanent, as environmental laws are subject to change.

### **Water Resources: Groundwater Resources and Aquifer Recharge Areas**

A resource of special importance is groundwater aquifer areas since approximately 95% of Dunstable's population depends directly upon on-site wells and 100% depend upon on-site sewage or wastewater disposal. To date, there have been no reports of on-site sewage septic system failures in Dunstable. Because Dunstable relies on these aquifers for its water supplies and wells, water quality must be protected from overdevelopment and pollution.

#### **Salmon Brook Aquifer**

The most extensive groundwater areas existing in town are glacial stream deposits along the Salmon Brook Watershed. Not only are these deposits extensive, but they are recharged by several major streams, the most important being Salmon Brook and the Massapoag Ponds. Although most of the town relies on on-site wells, the Salmon Brook aquifer is the source of Dunstable's present small public water supply.

#### **Unkety Brook Aquifer**

The Unkety Brook, which flows over permeable material, could be a highly productive aquifer. It is likely the most significant groundwater resource after Salmon Brook's aquifer.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

### **Nashua River**

Because the deposits bordering the river are largely silty alluvium, they limit the river's recharging ability, thereby rendering the Nashua River a lesser groundwater resource.

### **Statutory Methods of Protection**

The Massachusetts State Environmental Code, Title 5, restricts the placement of on-site sewage disposal systems where soils are too porous or too impermeable to prevent contaminated groundwater. Areas of high groundwater, such as wetlands are also considered unsuitable for the installation of on-site septic systems.

### **Flood Hazard Areas**

There are extensive floodplains along Dunstable's three major streams: the Nashua River, Unkety Brook, and Salmon Brook.

### **Nashua River**

Each spring, when the river floods, the river's high embankments are increasingly undercut. Substantial tree growth along the embankments have prevented this erosion from becoming severe. However, erosion still undercuts the vegetation at its roots, as evidenced by the many fallen trees at the river's edge. Only during extreme floods does the river overflow its high embankments to inundate the flat delta areas.

Perhaps the greatest single factor governing the extent of future flooding is the development which will occur in the watershed. As development occurs, natural cover which now modifies water runoff will be destroyed and replaced with buildings and pavement. If development occurs without runoff controls, flooding may be more frequent and severe.

### **Unkety Brook**

When Unkety Brook floods to the west of the Nashua Valley Railroad Trail, this is usually due to backing up from the Nashua River flooding. The Brook itself has an extensive floodplain along the broad wet meadows which border it.

### **Salmon Brook**

Salmon Brook floods its adjoining marshes during periods of severe spring flooding. These floodplains provide a natural storage basin during these flood periods without damaging natural formations or built structures. If development occurs within these flood prone areas, however, the probability of damaging floods may increase.

### **Fisheries and Wildlife Habitats**

(Summarized from the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan)

Wildlife are found wherever a specific plant community provides a hospitable habitat. A wildlife habitat must contain three essential elements: food, cover and water. Where this combination is found, a concentration of various wildlife populations will also be found. Dunstable offers a wealth of such environments to support wildlife. Dunstable has also taken proactive efforts to protect its wildlife population. For example, the Tully Wildlife Refuge, 165 acres of wildlife habitat, is managed and protected by the Dunstable Rural Land Trust.

**Inventory of Wildlife Habitats.** A variety of habitats abound in Dunstable that support a variety of wildlife.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

Forest Streambed Habitat

This environment supports a variety of animals such as white-tailed deer, fox, squirrels, hare, rabbits, raccoon, beaver, otter and small carnivores.

Woodland - Field Habitat

Abandoned fields which are sprouting sapling growth and the edges of fields where they abut woodlands are especially productive areas of wildlife, especially game birds and songbirds. Species to be found here include partridge, quail, pheasants, woodcock, and a variety of mammals of the forest streambed habitat.

Woodland-Wetland

This is primary habitat for many waterfowl and most songbirds. Kingfishers, killdeer, great blue heron, buteo hawks, owls as well as songbirds thrive in this environment.

Marsh-Open Water Habitat

These wetlands adjoin stream banks or pond shorelines. This is the main habitat for water birds including the common mallard, black duck, Canadian goose, and American bittern.

Stream Habitat

Fish and aquatic mammals are found in the streams of Dunstable. They include trout, large-mouth bass, and pickerel. The Division of Fisheries and Game stocks Unkety and Salmon Brooks.

Vernal Pools

These small springtime wetlands play a crucial role in the life cycle of many amphibians, serving as fish-free breeding waters. With amphibians on the decline worldwide, it is critical to identify vernal pools for successful breeding. Vernal pools are protected under the Wetlands Protection Act.

**Corridors for Wildlife Migration.** Dunstable's major wildlife corridor is the Nashua River, which is recognized as having international importance as a migratory flyway. It is named as a priority for protection under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan - an agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Within the town itself, Salmon Brook and Massapoag Ponds and their associated wetlands are likely to be significant wildlife corridors, serving as the central spine of open space to which most of Dunstable's network of wetlands connects.

**Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.** According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Commonwealth's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, many State-listed rare species are found in the stream and wetland habitats of Dunstable. There are five areas in town where state-listed rare species and significant natural communities have been documented. Studies are ongoing to document vernal pools where the blue-spotted salamander has been observed to breed.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

Table 4-2  
Rare Species and Significant Natural Communities

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>State Status</u>	<u>Year Last Observed</u>	<u>Year First Observed</u>
<b>Vertebrates</b>			
Blue spotted salamander	SC	1996	1996
Great Blue Heron	WL	1996	1983
Spotted Turtle	SC	1993	1993
Wood Turtle	SC	1989	1988
Blanding’s Turtle	T	1982	197-
Southern Bog Lemming	SC	1976	1976
<b>Vascular Plants</b>			
Low Bindweed	E	1928	1928
Indian Paintbrush	H	1898	
Pod-Grass	T	1928	1928
<b>Natural Communities</b>			
Graminoid Fen	-	1981	1981
Bog, Poor Fern	-	1988	1988
<b>Other Types</b>			
Certified Vernal Pool	-		

Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, May 1998  
Key: E = Endangered; T = Threatened; SC = Special Concern; WL= Unofficial Watch List

**4.2 NATURAL RESOURCES GOALS**

The following goals reflect an overall policy to preserve, protect, and enhance, where possible, Dunstable’s many valued natural resources since these resources define the very character of the town as a beautiful and natural rural environment. These goals were derived from Dunstable’s recently prepared “1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan”, direction provided by the broadly represented Steering Committee which guided this Comprehensive Plan, from public comment offered at several public forums conducted by the Steering Committee during the course of this Study, and a broadly distributed community survey.

- 1) Protect aquifers, forests, groundwater resources, wetlands resources, riverbanks and watersheds.
- 2) Develop strategies to preserve farmland properties and protect agricultural soils.
- 3) Create wildlife corridor linkages and other hiking and bike trail linkages between natural resource areas.
- 4) Protect wildlife habitats.
- 5) Protect and expand conservation areas and remaining natural areas.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

- 6) Provide public access to Massapoag Pond and the Nashua River Corridor without overburdening or polluting these resources.

### **4.3 NATURAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

Dunstable highly values its natural resources - its aquifers, wetlands, ponds, rivers, wildlife, farmlands and forests - which together constitute the town's prized rural character. Some of these resources, such as its wetlands, are highly protected by state statutes and regulations. Other resources, such as farmlands and forests, are often only temporarily protected under the state's Chapter 61 laws. Yet other resources, such as its riverbanks and lake shores, are often not accessible to the general public for their enjoyment. Therefore, Dunstable must establish stronger protections for its resources which are now either weakly or only temporarily protected, and must provide greater public access to its hidden resources without despoiling those resources by exposing them to overuse.

#### **1. Protect Aquifers, Groundwater Resources, Watersheds and Wetland Resources.**

The Conservation Commission should continue to strictly enforce the State Wetlands Protection Act and the Rivers Protection Act and maintain the 100 foot and 200 foot development buffers around the perimeter of all wetland areas and riverbanks. Dunstable's zoning should be crafted to prevent overdevelopment above aquifer areas, particularly the Salmon Brook Aquifer, and watersheds so as not to pollute these water supply resources.

The Town should also, nominate and obtain designation of the Salmon Brook Valley as a State Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). To qualify as an ACEC, an area must have at least four natural resources and the designation must be strongly supported by the local community. Once an area becomes an ACEC, any project which would require State approvals must be reviewed through MEPA, the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. Having an ACEC can increase local control. By putting the State on notice that the resources of the area deserve protection, an ACEC gives local citizens more chance for input into the State permitting process.

#### **2. Protect Farmland Properties, Agricultural Soils, and Forests.**

The Town should establish a "Strategic Acquisition Fund" which would be readily available to acquire farms and forest lands when their owners decide to put them up for sale and possible redevelopment. Some farms whose owners have elected to receive tax breaks in exchange for retaining their lands for agricultural uses under the State's Chapter 61A regulations (or Chapter 61 forests) are temporarily protected under this statute. Owners can withdraw from this program at any time, however, by paying a penalty and then sell their land for development. Although the Town is granted a "right of first refusal" to purchase any Chapter lands put on the market, the Town must have available a large cash reserve to take advantage of this right. Therefore, the establishment of a "Strategic Acquisition Fund" by the Town is critical if it wishes to exercise its statutory "right of first refusal".

Since there will never be sufficient monies in this fund to purchase all the lands that the Town may wish to, the Town should first establish a priority list of lands which it knows or suspects may be subject to sale and redevelopment and then prioritize which Chapter properties it would be willing to make an offer on, depending upon the funds available in the "Strategic

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

Acquisition Fund”. Then, the Town could contact the owners of especially important Chapter lands to negotiate purchase or easements before such lands are placed on the market.

To fund these priority acquisitions, the Town must implement mechanisms that ensure both a long-term source of available funds and the ability to spend cash on short-term notice if need be. The creation of a land acquisition funding mechanism should be presented and justified to the citizens of Dunstable in terms of a solution to meet one of Dunstable’s most important goals and within the context of a favorable fiscal cost/benefit outcome. A generalized cost/benefit analysis is documented in the “Open Space Pays” analysis in Appendix 4-2, which concludes that moderate amounts of land acquisition are less fiscally expensive for the Town than the development that would otherwise occur. Some of the funding mechanisms to consider include:

- Pursue land acquisition grants from State and Federal sources.
- Consider a local open space bond issue to provide acquisition funds. The advantage of bonds is that they spread the cost of land purchases over many years. Since these land acquisitions will benefit future generations, it is reasonable to ask them to pay for some of the original purchase costs.
- The Town may wish to include an annual budget item for land acquisition.
- The Town should consider use of some of the monies raised by bonds or appropriations to establish an emergency land acquisition fund to purchase farmlands in time-critical situations, including land made available to the Town under Chapter 61’s Right of First Refusal option.

Additionally, the Town should investigate other innovative techniques for preserving farmlands, such as the acquisition of easements, short of outright purchase. These techniques or mechanisms may include educating large landowners about the financial and tax benefits of donating property, acquisition by private land trusts, private donation of land development rights, and donation or purchase of open space easements.

The Town can also seek to permanently protect prime agricultural soils for agricultural use by investing in Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) with funds from the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture. APRs are deed restrictions that limit the uses of a piece of farmland in perpetuity, usually to prohibit most kinds of development. APRs remain with the land, even when it changes ownership. The State’s APR Program purchases development rights from farmers in order to keep good agricultural land in production.

### **3. Create Linkages between Natural Resource Areas for Wildlife Corridors and for Hiking Trails.**

Create wildlife corridor linkages by connecting Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge with the Massachusetts Fitch Wildlife Management Area. Also connect Pierce Town Forest with Spaulding Proctor Reservation.

Support the State’s construction of the Nashua Valley Rail Trail bike and hiking path along the Nashua River.

Additionally, support the advancement of a new greenway and bike trail along Route 113 from the Tyngsborough town line on the east to the Town Center. This greenway and bike trail would travel through key natural resource, historic, and farmland areas in Dunstable. A grant application has been made to NMCOG to support design work for this proposed Route

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

113 greenway and bike trail. Ultimately, this greenway trail could connect to a bikeway in Tyngsborough and the Merrimack River to form a larger regional trail system.

#### **4. Protect Wildlife Habitats/Create and Preserve Diversity**

Several approaches can be applied to preserve habitats and make existing vegetative cover more hospitable habitats.

Preserve wetlands and their vegetative buffers. Wetlands and marshes are the most important productive wildlife areas. In addition to the wetland itself, sufficient upland vegetation should be included to preserve the two vegetative communities which make up that ecotone.

Encourage forest practices which create ecotones. These practices include creation of openings in forest stands to encourage sprout growth. This is especially critical for animals such as deer, whose winter diet consists mostly of tender sprout growth. Additionally, old dead trees should be left for dens and nests.

Leave hedgerows along edges of agricultural fields. These habitats provide for food and cover of small animals. Encourage owners of power line rights of way to allow mixed shrub and sapling growth within these areas, even if only along the woodland edge.

Preserve old abandoned orchards. Orchards are productive wildlife habitats, especially for bluebirds.

Land owned by the Conservation Commission and the town should be managed using the suggested forestry practices.

#### **5. Protect, Acquire, and Expand Conservation Areas and Other Natural Resource Areas.**

Continue to acquire additional lands for conservation purposes and natural open space. Similar to the strategy of preserving farmland, a “Strategic Acquisition Fund” and “Strategic Land Acquisition Committee” should be established to buy open space and natural resource areas in an ongoing program of land conservation.

According to the “1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan”, many areas are conservation priorities. These priorities include purchase of parcels which would complete or link greenways along: the Nashua River, and Salmon, Unkety and Black Brooks; the Gateway corridor to Dunstable along Route 113 east of the town center; hilltops; wildlife habitat; historic places; and farmlands. If a 300 foot wide greenway is completed along the several brooks and Route 113, this could add up to 997 acres of conservation land. In many areas, a wider greenway would be needed to include wetlands, their buffers and aquifer recharge areas.

The Salmon Brook Greenway is about half complete with nearly five miles of streambank in conservation land. A strong beginning has been made for the Unkety Brook Greenway and along Black Brook. On the other hand, Dunstable’s stretch of the Nashua River, another important wildlife corridor, has very little conservation land.

#### **6. Provide Public Access to Nashua River Corridor and Massapoag Pond.**

At Massapoag Pond, the Town should seek to acquire or gain access to a shoreline property that can serve as a beach and boat launch for the general public. Perhaps the Town could develop a partnership with the Cambridge YMCA Camp to allow for use of their beach as a

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

town swimming area during off hours, possibly through a lease arrangement. Limit the number of parking spaces at whichever property the Town gains access to so that the beach is not overused and so that the tranquility of the Pond is maintained for residential property owners adjoining the Pond. Also, support the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's acquisition of a parcel of land along the largely hidden Nashua River so that its banks can be accessed and enjoyed by the citizens of Dunstable.

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

**Appendix 4-1**  
**Protected Lands**

Included in the following Appendix are lists of protected lands in Dunstable, as follows:  
(From the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan)

**Lands of Conservation and Recreational Interest** (Public and Non Profit Lands)

**Private Lands** (Available to the Public)

**Private Lands: Agriculture** (Chapter 61A & APR)

**Private Lands: Recreation** (Chapter 61B)

**Private Lands: Forest** (Chapter 61)

(Appendix 1-2 continued)

# INVENTORY of LANDS of CONSERVATION and RECREATION INTEREST

## PUBLIC and NON PROFIT LANDS

Site	Ownership	Management	Acres	Funds Used	Zoning	Public Access	Handicapped Access	Activities and Use	Degree of Protection
Lupten Parcel	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	18	private	R-1	none (backland)	none	wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Allgrove Gift	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	15	gift (Allgrove)	R-1	none (backland)	none	wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Unquetyasset Brook Meadow	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	14	gift (McGovern)	R-1	Pleasant St. (parking for 3 - 4 cars)	view	hiking, fishing, birdwatching	perpetuity
Fiat Rock Hill	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	8	gift (Chaney)	R-1	none (backland)	none	wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Tully Wildlife Refuge	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	165	private	R-1	Fletcher and Main Streets	none	hiking, x-c skiing, fishing, horseback riding, nature study, scenic views	perpetuity
Tully Conservation Area	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	3	gift (Tully)	R-1	through Arched Bridge Cons. Area, or by boat	none	fishing, nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Horse Hill Quarry	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	38.15	gift	R-1	at Hall St.	none	wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Sweet's Pond Cons. Area	Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	same	0.156	gift	R-1	none	none	wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Spaulding-Proctor Reservation	Town Conservation Commission	Conservation Commission	98	gift (Mason, & Roxbury Latin School)	R-1	at Pleasant St. and Groton St.	none	hiking, x-c skiing, horseback riding, boating, fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Pierce Town Forest	Town	Town Forest Committee	131	town	R-1	at Groton St.	none	forestry, hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, nature study	perpetuity
Gage Town Forest	Town	Town Forest Committee	34	gift (Gage)	R-1	none (backland)	none	forestry	perpetuity

Site	Ownership	Management	Acres	Funds Used	Zoning	Public Access	Handicapped Access	Activities and Use	Degree of Protection
Arched Bridge Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	12	gift (Biron)	R-1	at High Street, includes boat landing for Salmon Brook	none	hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, boating, horseback riding, nature study	perpetuity
Kennedy Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	50	town	R-1	through Arched Bridge Cons. Area, or by boat	none	hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, horseback riding, nature study	perpetuity
Proctor Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	35	tax title	R-1	through Kennedy Cons. Area, or by boat	none	hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, horseback riding, nature study	perpetuity
Bacon Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	14	town	R-1	through Town Fields	none	hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Biron Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	10	gift (Biron)	R-1	at Westford St.	none	nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Craven Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	2	gift	R-1	at Pleasant St.	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Chapman Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	1.7	town	R-1	on Pleasant St.	none	nature study	perpetuity
English Wildlife Refuge	Town	Conservation Commission	34	gift (English)	R-1	at Westford St.	none	hiking, nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge	Town	Conservation Commission	96.3	gift (Farnsworth)	R-1	at Westford St.	none	hiking, nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Gardner Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	3	town	R-1	on Pleasant St.	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Goldthwaite Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	1.3	town	R-1	by boat only	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity

Site	Ownership	Management	Acres	Funds Used	Zoning	Public Access	Handicapped. Access	Activities and Use	Degree of Protection
Hogg Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	27	town & gifts	R-1	by boat only	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Holmes Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	5	town	R-1	by boat only	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Joingrass Brook Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	21	gift (Craven)	R-1	at Mill and Swallow Streets	none	hiking, nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Keyes Meadow Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	18	town	R-1	at Groton St.	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Sargent Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	3	town	R-1	on Main St.	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Urqhart Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	4	tax title	R-1	through Sargent Cons. Area	none	fishing, nature study	perpetuity
Sawyer Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	5	gift (Hogg)	R-1	at Main St.	none	nature study, wildlife habitat	perpetuity
Shaw Conservation Area	Town	Conservation Commission	3	town	R-1	at Pleasant St.	parking for 2 cars, pond view	skating, fishing, picnicking, nature study	perpetuity
Town Fields and Common	Town	Recreation Com. and Parks Dept.	15	town, gifts	R-1	extensive parking at Main St.	yes, see ADA Plan in Appendix	ball sports, tennis	unknown
Larter Field	Town	Recreation Com. and Parks Dept. Larter Field Subcommittee	26.3	gift	R-1	at Groton St.	planned, see ADA Plan in Appendix	ball sports, hiking, horseback riding	perpetuity
Horse Hill	Town	Recreation and Parks Dept.	6.25	gift	R-1	at Hall St.	none	future game field	perpetuity
Hawk Swamp	Town	Town	6	town	R-1	at Depot St.	none	wildlife habitat	unknown

Site	Ownership	Management	Acres	Funds Used	Zoning	Public Access	Handicapped Access	Activities and Use	Degree of Protection
Old Town Wellfield and Old Town Scales	Town	Town	1.5	town	R-1	at Pleasant St.	none	water supply protection	unknown
New Town Wellfield	Town	CR held by Cons. Com.	14	town	R-1	limited, through Sargent Cons. Area	none	water supply protection	perpetuity
Central Cemetery	Town	Cemetery Commission	23	town	R-1	at Main and Westford Sts.	roadways in cemetery	cemetery	perpetuity
Meeting House Hill Cemetery	Town	Cemetery Commission	0.5	town	R-1	at Main St.	none	cemetery	perpetuity
Blood Cemetery	Town	Cemetery Commission	0.25	town	R-1	at River and Hollis Streets	none	cemetery	perpetuity
Rideout Cemetery	Town	Cemetery Commission	0.25	town	R-1	at Fletcher St.	none	cemetery	perpetuity
Swallow Cemetery	Town	Cemetery Commission	0.25	town	R-1	at Brook St.	none	cemetery	perpetuity
Nashua Valley Railroad Trail	State	Dept. of Environmental Management	24; 11.3 miles from Ayer to state line	DEM	R-1	at River St. (2 points)	DEM plans to develop access to whole trail	hiking, jogging, bicycling, fishing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing	Article 97
Kirkpatrick Land	State	Division of Fisheries and Wildlife	15	DFW	R-1	at Hollis St.	yes, with Railroad Trail	hiking, jogging, bicycling, fishing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, boating	Article 97
Hawk Swamp	State	Division of Fisheries and Wildlife	55	DFW	R-1	on Depot St.	none	hiking, x-c skiing, nature study, hunting	Article 97
Lahue Parcels	State	Division of Fisheries and Wildlife	13	DFW	R-1	through Farnsworth Refuge	none	hiking, nature study, hunting	Article 97

## PRIVATE LANDS Available to the Public

Site	Ownership	Management	Acres	Funds Used	Zoning	Public Access	Handicapped Access	Activities and Use	Degree of Protection
Sky Meadow Golf Course	Private	CR held by Cons. Com.	60	gift	R-1	through golf course in Nashua	none	hiking, golf	perpetuity
Staples Conservation Restriction #1	Paul Staples (private)	CR held by Conservation Commission	5	gift	R-1	special permission	none	hiking	perpetuity
Staples Conservation Restriction #2	Paul Staples (private)	CR held by Dunstable Rural Lands Trust	10	gift	R-1	special permission	none	hiking	perpetuity
Old Winslow Schoolhouse	Tyngsborough-Historical Society	Dunstable	6	private	R-1	open to public		historic museum	unknown
Lowell YMCA Camp	YMCA		24.3		R-1a	limited to members	yes	nonmotor boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, nature study, archery	none

### Summary of Conservation / Recreation Lands

#### Public and Nonprofit Conservation Lands: 971.66 acres

Town Conservation Commission --- 627.3 acres in 24 parcels, acquired as follows:

312.3 acres in 9 parcels acquired by gifts

249 acres in 12 parcels acquired by town funds

27 acres in 1 parcel acquired by town funds and gifts

39 acres in 2 parcels acquired by tax title

Dunstable Rural Land Trust --- 261.36 acres in 8 parcels (78.36 acres in 6 parcels acquired by gifts)

Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife --- 83 acres in 3 parcels

#### Private Permanently Conserved Lands: 75 acres in 3 parcels

Public Recreation Lands: 71.55 acres

Town Recreation --- 47.55 acres                      DEM Nashua Valley Railroad Trail --- 24 acres

Private Recreation Lands: 24.3 acres Lowell YMCA Camp

**PRIVATE LANDS: Agriculture : Chapter 61A & APR**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Assessor No.</b>	<b>Degree of Protection</b>
Baines 61A	Dana & Mary Jane Barnes	6.55	Single family resid.(R-1)	12-88/89	temporary
Bentley 61A	H.R. & Emma Bentley	8.9	R-1	17-8	temporary
Bertrand 61A	Christopher & Joyce Bertrand	7	R-1	23-36	temporary
Bridge 61A	William Bridge & Mary Heffernan	12.4	R-1	15-26	temporary
Chaney 61A	Alan & Eugene Chaney	16	R-1 & R-2	17-51	temporary
Davis 61A	Archer & Bertha Davis	36	R-1	11-46/49	temporary
Dumont 61A	Estate of Bernice Dumont	45.2	R-1	16-11/12/13/40	temporary
" "	Leo Jr., Stephen, & Kevin Dumont	45.52	R-1	17-6/6-1	temporary
" "	Leo Jr., Stephen, & Kevin Dumont	9	R-1	17-13/15	temporary
" "	Leo Dumont, Sr.	56.68	R-1	22-15	temporary
" "	Kevin Dumont	5.2	R-1	22-12	temporary
Flowers 61A	Carl Flowers, Jr. Trust	27	R-1	9-17/18/20/21	temporary
Ferrari 61A	Joan Ferrari	159	R-1	11-50/51/81	temporary
Frye 61A	Robert Frye & Susan Lentz	15	R-1	12-83/87	temporary
Holmes 61A	Arthur & Muriel Holmes	20.12	R-1	18-35/41	temporary
Hunter 61A	Earl Hunter & Blanche Clark	14	Exp.Commercial (B-3)	22-52	temporary
Kennedy APR	Robert Kennedy	83	R-1	16/36/37	perpetuity
Larter 61A	Margaret Larter	125	R-1	23-3	temporary
Larter APR	Margaret Larter	130	R-1		perpetuity
Lowder/Roy 61A	Ruth Lowder & Rachel Roy	19	R-1	16-46	temporary
McGovern 61A	George and Susan McGovern	13	R-1	17-137	temporary
" "	George M. McGovern	6	R-1	17-124	temporary
" "	George McGovern, Jr.	6	R-1	17-123	temporary
" "	McGovern Farm, Inc.	29	R-1	17-138	temporary
" "	Hugh McGovern	47	R-1	9-10/13	temporary
" "	Hugh & Roberta McGovern	32	R-1	9-22	temporary

**PRIVATE LANDS: Agriculture: Chapter 61A**

<u>Site</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Assessor No.</u>	<u>Degree of Protection</u>
McGovern 61A	George Jr. & Hugh McGovern	7	Single family resid.(R-1)	9-11	temporary
"	GRM Realty	20	Exp.Commercial (B-3)	21-3	temporary
"	H & G Realty Trust	295.71	R-1	1-2/3, 9-1, 6-3, 12-17/19	temporary
"	HEM Realty	85	R-1	9-9/12	temporary
McLoon 61A	Alan P. McLoon	18	B-3	21-1/7	temporary
"	Olive McLoon	98	R-1	21-21/29	temporary
Munroe 61A	George and Carol Munroe	62	R-1	8-45	temporary
Palumbo 61A	Michael & Danice Palumbo	29.08	R-1	9-44/48	temporary
Pelletier 61A	George and Ann Pelletier	37	R-1	1-7	temporary
Peterson 61A	Robert & Cheryl Peterson	37.15	R-1	8-36/37	temporary
Staples 61A	Paul Staples	6.93	R-1	18-40	temporary
Sweet 61A	Ernest Sweet & Ernest Sweet, Jr.	28	R-1	12-40	temporary
Trask 61A	Gardner & Faye Trask	17.76	R-1	23-13	temporary

TOTALS: Number of Ownerships: 37      Number of Acres: 1,715.2      Land protected in perpetuity: 213 acres

**PRIVATE LANDS: Recreation: Chapter 61B**

<u>Site</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Assessor No.</u>	<u>Degree of Protection</u>
Carter 61B	Freda Carter	45	R-1	23-1/4	temporary
George 61B	Dorothy George	7.5	R-1	8-4	temporary
Gregg 61B	Catherine Gregg	60	R-1	5-12	temporary
	Hugh Gregg	6	R-1	5-13	temporary
Myette 61B	Peter Myette & Altetpom Ayutaya	9.5	R-1	14-31	temporary
Nelson	Joan Nelson	6	R-1	16-4	temporary

TOTALS: Number of Ownerships 6      Number of Acres 134

**PRIVATE LANDS: Forest: Chapter 61**

<u>Site</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Assessor No.</u>	<u>Degree of Protection</u>
Casella 61	Casella Brothers	7	R-1	9-39	temporary
Chaney 61	Alan Chaney	87	R-1	18-7/8/9, 23-38	temporary
Cover 61	Cover Realty Trust	57	R-1 & B-3	21-4/11	temporary
	Frank Cover	18	B-3	21-2	temporary
Desilets 61	Hilda Desilets	80	R-1	15-39/42	temporary
Dineen 61	Paul & Ann Dineen	19.87	R-1	20-9/25	temporary
Emery 61	Thomas & Patricia Emery	36	R-1	17-120	temporary
George 61	Dorothy George	18.5	R-1	8-4	temporary
Goss 61	Goss Family Land Trust	102	R-1	8-39/43	temporary
Greene 61	Wesley & Judi Goss	56.95	R-1	7-3	temporary
	James & Doris Greene	21.3	R-1	19-1	temporary
	Doris Greene	43	R-1	19-2	temporary
Henry 61	Kathleen Henry	38.65	R-1	15-9	temporary
Kennedy 61	Robert & Claire Kennedy	53.29	R-1	15-2/3	temporary
	Robert Kennedy	22	R-1 & B-3	22-50	temporary
Lahue 61	Naomi Lahue	25	R-1	14-2	temporary
Mason 61	Edward & Jean Mason	17	R-1	9-15	temporary
Sartelle 61	James, Nicholas, & Althea Sartelle	1	R-1	3-3	temporary
Staples 61	Paul Staples	87	R-1	18-38/40	temporary
S.J.L.Trust 61	Dorothy LaCerte	43.6	B-3	22-49	temporary
Treinis 61	Andrew & Julie Treinis	119.1	R-1	6-22	temporary
Tully 61	George E. Tully, Jr.	20	R-1	5-7	temporary

**TOTALS:** Number of Ownerships 22    Number of Acres 973.26

**Appendix 4-2**  
**"Open Space Pays" Analysis**  
(1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan)

Land conservation saves taxpayers money. It is less costly for Dunstable than residential growth. The following hypothetical example gives proof using figures from Dunstable's fiscal year 1996. If a 100-acre parcel were purchased by the town instead of being developed into 40 house lots, the average homeowner would save nearly \$75 on their annual tax bill. This is the difference between the cost of acquiring the land (\$36.53 increase to the average tax bill) and the cost of servicing 40 more houses (\$111.44 increase to the average tax bill).

This conclusion is based on the calculations presented in Open Space Pays, by Darryl Caputo, a publication of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Here is how the calculations apply to Dunstable for fiscal year 1996, using figures from the Board of Assessors and the Annual Town Report:

**Dunstable Facts and Figures**

1995 population:	2,518
1995-96 children in public schools:	597
School children per unit of development:	1.5
FY96 Total Valuation of Property:	\$179,734,485
FY96 Total Budget Appropriation:	\$2,703,207
School portion of this Appropriation:	\$2,122,692
Non-school portion of this Appropriation:	\$580,515
School Property Tax Levy per Student:	\$3,556
Non-school Property Tax Levy per Person	\$230.55
FY96 Tax Rate	\$15.04 per \$ 1,000 valuation
School portion of this Tax Rate	\$11.81
Non-school service portion of this Tax Rate	\$3.23

\* This is North Middlesex Regional Council's estimate for the average 4-bedroom single-family house (typical for Dunstable's new developments). Open Space Pays cites figures from 1.29 to 1.86 school children per house.

**The Tax Cost of a 40-home Development**

Example: The 100-acre parcel could be developed into 40 units (assuming 20% of acreage is wetland or used for subdivision roads) whose value would be \$212,200 each (median FY96 assessment for new homes). How would this development impact the tax rate?

**Annual school cost for development: \$213,360**

$$1.5 \times 40 = 60 \text{ students in development } 60 \times \$3,556 = \$213,360$$

**Impact on school tax rate: \$12.41 - 11.81 = 0.60 increase**

$$\frac{\$213,360 + \$2,122,692}{\$179,734,485 + (40 \times \$212,200)} = \frac{\$2,336,052}{\$188,222,485} = \$12.41$$

$$\frac{(\text{new school cost with development})}{(\text{new total valuation with development})} = \text{new tax rate}$$

**Annual school revenue generated by development: \$105,336**

$$\$8,488,000 \text{ (total value of development)} \times 12.41/1,000 = \$105,336$$

**Net Annual school cost/benefit of development: \$108,024 cost**

$$\$213,360 - \$105,336 = \$108,024 \text{ cost}$$

(continued)

(Appendix 4-2 Continued)

**Non-school service cost of development: \$29,510**  
40 x 3.2 (average household size) = 128 people in development  
128 x \$230.55 = \$29,510

**Impact on Non-school service tax rate: \$3.24 - 3.23 = 0.01 increase**

$$\frac{\$29,510 + \$580,515}{\$179,734,485 + \$8,488,000} = \frac{\$610,025}{\$188,222,485} = \$3.24 \text{ new tax rate}$$

(new non-school cost with development) = new non-school tax rate  
(new total valuation with development)

**Non-school revenue generated by development: \$27,501**

$$\$8,488,000 \times \$3.24/1,000 = \$27,501$$

**Net Annual Non-school cost/benefit of development: \$2,009 cost**

$$\$29,510 - \$27,501 = \$2,009 \text{ cost}$$

**Tax Rate Impact of Development: 0.60 + 0.01 = 0.61**

**Total New Tax Rate: 15.04 + 0.61 = \$15.65**

**Increase in Taxes of Average Homeowner due to this development: \$111.44**

$$\$182,681 \text{ (average home valuation)} \times 0.61/1,000 = \$111.44$$

**Value of a break-even house: \$387,970**

(Valuation equals costs of school and non-school services.) Although some of Dunstable's homes may equal or exceed this value, it is unlikely that developers would fill their subdivisions with homes so far above the market in price.

1.5 school children x \$3,556 = \$5,334 Annual School cost per house

\$29,510 divide by 40 = \$737.75 Non-school service cost per house

$$\frac{\$5,334 + \$737.75}{\$15.65/1,000} = \frac{\$6,071.75}{0.01565} = \$387,970$$

**The Tax Cost of Preserving Open Space Through Town Acquisition**

This same 100-acre parcel is assessed at \$270,000 (\$80,000 for the first 5 acres and \$2,000 per acre for every acre over 5). But because it is classified in Chapter 61, its taxable value is reduced to 5% of its assessment, or \$13,500. (Land in Chapter 61 must have a 10-year forest management plan, and the owners must pay an 8% stumpage value tax at the time of cutting.) The impact on the tax rate is figured both ways, under Chapter 61 assessment (\$13,500) and under full assessment (\$270,000), to give the scope of possibilities. A developer has offered \$300,000 for the parcel. This value is proven out by an appraisal, and is what the town must pay if it chooses to exercise its 120-day option.

(continued)

(Appendix 4-2 Continued)

**Impact of lost revenue on the tax rate:** 0.001 increase (Chapter 61)  
0.02 increase (full assessment)

$\$179,734,485 - \$13,500 = \$179,720,985$   
total town property valuation without 100-acre parcel (Chapter 61)

$\frac{\$2,703,207}{\$179,720,985} = \$15.041$  new tax rate without parcel  
Tax Cost: 0.001 (Chapter 61)

$\$179,734,485 - \$270,000 = \$179,464,485$   
total town property valuation without 100-acre parcel (full assessment)

$\frac{\$2,703,207}{\$179,464,485} = \$15.06$  new tax rate without parcel  
Tax Cost: .02 (full assessment)

**Impact of acquisition cost on tax rate:** 0.16 increase (Chapter 61)  
0.18 increase (full assessment)

Annual payment for 20 years (\$300,000 raised by a 20 year bond at 7% interest): **\$27,911**

New budget appropriation including land payment: \$2,731,118  
 $\$27,911 + \$2,703,207 = \$2,731,118$

$\frac{\$2,731,118}{\$179,720,985} = \$15.196$        $\$15.196 - \$15.04 = 0.156$  increase (Chapter 61)

$\frac{\$2,731,118}{\$179,464,485} = \$15.22$        $\$15.22 - \$15.04 = 0.18$  increase (full assessment)

**Tax Rate Impact of acquisition (Ch.61):**  $0.001 + 0.156 = 0.157$

**Total New Tax Rate:**  $15.04 + 0.16 = \$15.20$  (Chapter 61)

**Tax Rate Impact of acquisition (full assessment):**  $0.02 + 0.18 = 0.20$

**Total New Tax Rate:**  $15.04 + 0.20 = \$15.24$  (full assessment)

**Increase in Taxes of Average Homeowner due to acquisition:** **\$29.23** (Chapter 61),  
**\$36.53** (full assessment)

$\$182,681$  (avg. home valuation)  $\times 0.16/1,000 = \$29.23$

$\$182,681$  (avg. home valuation)  $\times 0.20/1,000 = \$36.53$

**Difference in Tax Costs between Development and Town Acquisition:** **\$82.21** (Chapter 61)  
**\$74.90** (full assessment)

Tax Increase of Average Homeowner due to Development: \$111.44  
 $\$111.44 - \$29.23 = \$82.21$  (Chapter 61)  
 $\$111.44 - \$36.53 = \$74.90$  (full assessment)

**Annual Tax Savings to Average Homeowner from acquisition:** **\$82.21** (Chapter 61)  
**\$74.90** (full assessment)

# **Section 5: HISTORIC, CULTURAL & SCENIC RESOURCES**

## Section 5: HISTORIC, CULTURAL, & SCENIC RESOURCES

### Introduction

Dunstable has a wealth of historic and cultural sites, landscapes and scenic roadways. Although highly valued by its citizens, many of these resources are, in fact, not well protected against future private redevelopment efforts or state government construction projects. For example, there are no local historic districts in Dunstable to provide protection to a valued area of town. Route 113, a numbered state highway and Dunstable's most scenic byway, is unprotected from future state roadway expansion or improvement projects. Though a number of properties, buildings, and areas are listed on the Massachusetts Historic Register of cultural and historic resources, they are not protected against redevelopment or subject to review unless such redevelopment projects are proposed by the Commonwealth itself. These Massachusetts Historic Register sites in Dunstable include places of former mills, homesteads, schools, taverns, stores, quarries, and an Indian battle site on Hound Meadow Hill, as well as the Congregational Church, cemeteries, and other still intact facilities.

Fortunately, Dunstable has an active Historical Commission which is now using state grant and Town monies to thoroughly research and document its many historic resources and potential districts so that some of them can be eventually nominated to and entered on the Federal Register of Historic Places as well as the State Historic Register. Additionally, the Dunstable Historical Commission has been active in preserving Dunstable's historic Town Hall.

(See Appendix 5-2 which includes a current list of historic and cultural resources compiled by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Other sites will soon be added once ongoing survey work is completed.)

### 5.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING HISTORIC, CULTURAL, & SCENIC RESOURCES

#### Existing and Potential Historic and Cultural Resources

Dunstable enjoys a rich inventory of historic and cultural sites as well as the potential for historically protected districts. Some of the key sites or potential historic areas include:

Town Hall (Sarah Iris Roby Memorial Hall) (1907). The Dunstable Town Hall is a handsome and historic structure in need of repair and attention and is not compliant with accessibility codes and regulations. The Dunstable Historical Commission, through a Preservation Projects Fund grant it has recently received from the Massachusetts Historic Commission as well as local monies appropriated at Town Meeting, will soon initiate a feasibility and preservation study of how to renovate and reorganize the interior spaces of Town Hall, provide accessibility to the disabled, and preserve the building's historic features. Eventually perhaps, Town Hall may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. (In addition in 1998 a warrant article was approved at spring Town Meeting to authorize the execution of a preservation restriction on Town Hall for a period up to five years, as authorized under Section 31 of Chapter 184 of the General Laws. )

Union School (1895). Union School, adjoining the newer Swallow Elementary School in the Town Center, is a landmark and historic structure. Together with the adjacent Congregational Church, Common and Town Hall across the street, it forms the historic core of the center.

Congregational Church (1912-1913)

Old Winslow School House: Tyngsboro-Dunstable Historic Society Building (1790). The Historic Society Building on Main Street is located in the Old Winslow Schoolhouse that was donated by Margaret O. Larter and relocated from Tyngsborough to its present site at the eastern end of town.

Tyngsboro-Dunstable Historic Museum. The Historic Society has its history museum at the Sarah Winslow Library in Tyngsboro.

### Stone Arched Bridges Over Rail Bed

In addition to these acknowledged resources, the Town can potentially designate entire areas or districts of the Town as historically protected areas. Several potential districts that have been mentioned include:

**Potential Historic District: Center of Village.** This district is the heart of the village center in the vicinity of the Main Street/Pleasant Street intersection and dates from the early 1700s. The area is an unspoiled New England rural village center with a town common, Central Cemetery, the Congregational Church, the Union School, and the Town Hall.

**Potential Historic District: Meetinghouse Hill.** Located along Route 113 in the vicinity of the Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery, this residential district dates from the early 1700s. The cemetery, dating from 1700, includes the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers.

**Potential Historic District: West Dunstable/River Road.** This district, dating from the 1700s, runs along Fletcher Street and River Road. It is representative of Dunstable's early farming country and community. It includes cellar holes of old houses, the Blood Cemetery, the Rideout Family Cemetery, and the Swallow Cemetery.

**Potential Historic District: Center of Pond and Pleasant Street.** This district south of the Town Center and located at the intersection of Pleasant Street and Pond Street near the Mill Pond dates from the 1730-1830 period. The district includes attractive homes.

(See Appendix 5-3, Protecting Historic Resources - Establishing Historic Districts)

### **Scenic Resources - Landscapes & Townscapes**

Dunstable enjoys a wealth of natural and man-made scenic resources that embody the very character of the town. As plentiful as these scenic resources are, many more - such as the Nashua River - remain largely invisible since they are inaccessible by road or vehicle. As eloquently stated in the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan, "The Town of Dunstable seeks to preserve its rural character and bring forth into the future as much as possible of its New England agrarian landscape. Dunstable's timeless tapestry of farm fields, forested hills, ponds, streams, and wild wetland, fine old houses and barns, and winding stone-walled tree-lined roads form the very fabric of the town's nature....". Confirming this point of view, the Rural Landscape Preservation Survey conducted in 1990 indicated overwhelming support for the encouragement of

continued active agricultural land uses throughout the town. Although the town's population slowly grows, Dunstable has, to date, resisted wholesale suburbanization. Dunstable's citizens have long shared a concern about the vulnerability of the town's scenic and rural character to poorly designed land development and growth. After all, the characteristics of the agrarian landscape described above are the very attributes that attract and retain Dunstable's citizens. If Dunstable were to metamorphosize into a more typical bedroom suburban community, it would no longer be the community those who live here value.

Nevertheless, growth and suburbanization have continued. Although the vast majority of town is zoned single-family residential with 2-acre lots – which are necessary to protect Dunstable's aquifers and allow on-site wells and septic systems to properly function - many have pointed out that this zoning pattern is a prescription for large lot suburbanization, not preservation of the rural landscape. Approval Not Required (ANR) lots account for approximately three-quarters of all new homebuilding. ANR lots must be automatically approved by the Planning Board if they have the required 2 acre lots and 200 feet of frontage on an existing road. This gives the Town little control over the appearance or impacts of new development. Therefore, other growth control and preservation mechanisms may be required if Dunstable's existing character is to be preserved.

### **Scenic Roads/Scenic Vistas from the Road**

The narrow winding nature of Dunstable's roads is an integral part of the town's rural character. In fact, the view from the road is how most visitors and townspeople alike experience Dunstable's scenic attributes. This has been recognized by the town's designation of all of Dunstable's roads (except Route 113, a State Highway) as scenic roads according to local By-Law as enabled by State law (Ch.40, Sec. 15c). Because of the many valued vistas, rural landscapes, farms, and old stone walls that adjoin Route 113, which is, in fact a "gateway" to Dunstable from Route 3 on the east, many have suggested that Route 113 must be better protected.

### **Visual Character Elements: The Landscape**

(As drawn from the 1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan)

**Openness and Enclosure.** The major scenic characteristics are those which convey a sense of openness (fields, marshes, water bodies), and provide a sense of enclosure (woodlands, stone walls, and hills). Additionally, the built-up areas of the town can provide a sense of distinguishing character, or conversely, may lack that desired characteristic.

**Open Landscapes.** The open areas may be most visually fragile because any development which occurs is clearly visible. Farm lands are particularly susceptible since those soils most suitable for farming are often those most suitable for septic system effluent disposal, and therefore most appealing for residential development.

Open marsh and wetlands can be effectively protected for the most part. However, contiguous uplands do not have the same protections and are more vulnerable to development. Also, the shores of rivers and open water bodies at the edges of these open spaces remain susceptible to development, though the passage of the 1997 Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act has provided greatly needed additional protections to these resources.

**Areas of Enclosure.** Areas of enclosure such as woodlands and forests that adjoin roads are threatened by roadside development that remove substantial woodland areas and portions of roadside stone walls. Since development along existing roads is not subject to subdivision regulation, other means of preserving the visual integrity of existing roads and roadside woodlands may need to be found. The designation of Dunstable's roads as scenic provides a

certain degree of protection, but such designation may not be sufficient to provide the protections desired by most of Dunstable's citizens.

**Hilltops.** Dunstable's many hilltops - Blanchard, Drake, Forest, Horse, Nuttings, Spectacle - provide scenic backdrops and points of orientation in the landscape. Views of the hills are as important as views from the hilltops. These hills are recognized as important resources to protect. Because of their high visibility from near and distant surroundings, development of hilltops has the potential to be very detrimental to the visual integrity and beauty of the visual landscape. They remain vulnerable to development, however, because most are not so steep as to preclude accessibility.

**Access to Scenic Areas.** Many areas of Dunstable with scenic value presently have little functional public access or even visual accessibility. This is certainly true of the largely invisible Nashua River Corridor and has become increasingly true of places such as Massapoag Pond whose banks are almost exclusively held in private ownership with few, if any, opportunities for public access. Increased functional and visual access would significantly contribute to an appreciation of Dunstable's scenic resources.

**Distinctive Landscapes.** One part of Dunstable is mapped in the Massachusetts Landscape Inventory as a distinctive Landscape - the Nashua River Corridor from East Pepperell to the New Hampshire border. This segment of the Nashua River has also been named for potential designation under the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Ironically, much of this corridor is largely invisible from view to most people since no roads adjoin it and access to it is difficult.

### **Visual Character Elements: The Built Environment - The Village Center Townscape**

The Town Center typifies a rural town's communal heart - the seat of its government, the heart of its commerce, its communal gathering Common, its school, its library, its church, and until recently, its Post Office. The integrity of the center should be preserved and enhanced. Unfortunately, the recent relocation of the Post Office from the center will somewhat weaken community ties. Fortunately, however, the new Library remains very near the center and will preserve the notion of civic focus.

Though many other Town Centers are the focus of retail activity as well as civic/community focus, the citizens of Dunstable are not particularly supportive of increased retail services in the center, or anywhere in the town for that matter, as documented in the Rural Landscape Preservation Survey of 1990. Nevertheless, the Rural Landscape and Design Study of 1990 prepared by IEP, Inc. suggested guidelines for the accommodation of retail uses in the center without destroying the rural character of the village center.

First, the IEP study recommended that Dunstable restrict retail uses to the traditional village center at the center of town to prevent the spread or sprawl of scattered retail uses throughout the town in order to maintain rural character. For this strategy to be effective, however, the center should be allowed to accommodate an increased, if modest amount of retail services. Otherwise, increased demand for such services will eventually require the opening up of new commercial areas. The IEP, Inc. Study also recommended guidelines to permit only two retail establishments per building structure and no more than one structure per lot to discourage the construction of "mini-malls".

The recommendations of this study may now prove timely as the town considers the future of the center and the reuse of the old Post Office building in the center now that the new Post Office has

relocated outside the village center area. While it has been determined that the Town Center, itself, may not have the capacity to provide for additional retail needs in the future, additional retail development outside of the Town Center should be limited to a single location in the vicinity of the new Post Office.

### **Visual Character Elements: The Built Environment - Residential Subdivisions**

As new subdivisions are constructed throughout the town, some are concerned that they are being designed in a manner not consistent with Dunstable's rural character - the roads are too wide, the houses are spaced too closely together, and hillsides are becoming developed. The 1990 Rural Landscape and Design Study recommended a number of subdivision controls to address these and other issues. For example, the requirement to provide a 28 foot paved width for all streets with a new subdivision was judged "far in excess of most existing town roads and far beyond that needed ..." The need for sidewalks in subdivisions was also questioned insofar as "sidewalks give a neighborhood a very suburban character". These specific requirements have not been changed since the 1990 study.

## **5.2 HISTORIC, CULTURAL, & SCENIC RESOURCES GOALS**

Based on the survey of historic, scenic, and cultural resources and landscapes described above, together with goals established during the preparation of the "1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan" as well as goals recommended in discussions with public officials and goals recommended at public meetings held during the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan, the following summary of goals reflects the Town's deep commitment to preserving its historic setting and past as a proud agricultural community:

- 1) Survey, document, and nominate qualified historic sites to the Federal Register of Historic Places to provide increased protections.
- 2) Eventually consider establishment of Local Historic Districts to provide the greatest degree of protection.
- 3) Consider creation of a local Route 113 Historic District to protect this scenic "gateway" road.
- 4) Protect scenic vistas and seek to protect and gain public access to valued scenic landscapes.
- 5) Conduct a Town Center study to clarify the future of the center.
- 6) Consider revision to subdivision regulations to establish a more rural character.
- 7) Preserve historic integrity of Town Hall.

## **5.3 HISTORIC, CULTURAL & SCENIC RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Conduct Survey and Document All Historic Sites, Cultural Sites, and Potential Historic Districts.**

Support the Dunstable Historical Commission in their effort to fund, document and complete a thorough survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources in the town. This survey and inventory is a necessary first step to provide the required documentation to nominate eligible sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

## **2. Nominate Eligible Sites and Districts to the National Register of Historic Places.**

Based on the survey and documentation of historic sites and districts, select those eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the potential districts

described earlier, the Town may wish to consider nominating the entire Route 113/Main Street corridor from the Tyngsborough Town Line on the east to the Town Center as a National Register District. If accepted to the National Register, the selected sites and districts will be subject to protections when federal funds are used or sought to alter or renovate these sites. Subsequently, support efforts to nominate certain eligible documented sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

## **3. Consider the Establishment of Local Historic District(s) for Increased Protections**

Consider the establishment of Local Historic Districts to provide additional protections for properties within these districts when they are proposed to be altered or renovated by private entities and funds. A number of potential districts were described earlier. A primary candidate area to consider for establishment of a local district is the Village Center itself in the vicinity of the Town Hall, Congregational Church, and the Union School.

## **4. Consider the Establishment of a Local Route 113/Main Street Historic District to Protect this Scenic Corridor.**

Establish the entire Main Street/Route 113 corridor from the Dunstable/ Tyngsborough Town Line on the east to the Village Center as a local historic district to provide protections to this valued historic and scenic corridor. Since Route 113 is a numbered State Highway, it is not protected from future State roadway expansion or improvement projects under the State Scenic Roads Law (40 S 15C).

## **5. Protect Scenic Vistas and Provide Better Public Access to Scenic Sites and Landscapes.**

*Protect scenic vistas, particularly those visible from public roads. Consider purchasing “view corridors” or “scenic easements” from certain public viewing places to scenic sites if such scenic corridors are threatened by development.*

Also consider restriction on development of hilltops, which can mar the scenic rural environment and which can be seen from long distances. As a corollary, Dunstable may be faced in the future with ever more frequent applications from communications companies to site tall cellular communications towers on “high grounds” sites where such towers could mar the scenic rural landscape. Such requests are given considerable standing in court under protections of freedom of public communications. Dunstable should preempt these intrusions onto valued sites by designating sites where cell towers may be acceptable prior to the application of communications companies.

Additionally, Dunstable should seek to obtain public access to valued scenic resources and landscapes that are now largely hidden or unavailable to public view. For example, Dunstable should support DEM’s acquisition of land, as part of its Nashua River Valley Railroad Trail Project, for public access to the Nashua River corridor. Dunstable should also seek means to provide public access to Lower Massapoag Pond by either purchase of land or the attainment of easements of passage from public rights-of-way to the shoreline of these water bodies.

**6. Protect the Historic Integrity and Functional Vitality of the Village Center/Conduct a Study of the Center's Future.**

The Village Center is the historic, civic and retail center of Dunstable. It should be protected, strengthened and its civic focus reinforced. Recently, there has been a trend to disperse some of the Center's traditional commercial and civic functions. For example, the Post Office recently relocated from the center; the new Library has moved west on Main Street; and now there is discussion of relocating the police and fire departments from the Center. This trend toward dispersal should be reexamined with the goal of retaining Dunstable's traditional civic and retail functions in the Center.

IEP's 1990 Rural Landscape and Design Study should be reviewed once again in regard to its recommendations about avoiding the dispersal of functions from the Center and a new Study of the Center should be conducted, together with the option of creating a relocated secondary center near the new Post Office site, before any actions are taken on relocating the Police Department, Fire Department, and retail establishments from the traditional center of town.

**7. Consider Revisions To Subdivision Regulations to Establish a Less Developed and Suburbanized Environment.**

Current subdivision regulations encourage wide roads, the construction of sidewalks, and other provisions that create a suburbanized character rather than a rural environment within new subdivisions. The 1990 "Rural Landscape and Design Study" recommended a number of subdivision controls to address these and other issues. The Town should reexamine the recommendations of the 1990 Study and amend subdivision regulations to narrow width of subdivision roads and eliminate requirements for sidewalks to provide a less suburbanized physical environment.

**8. Preserve Historic Integrity of Town Hall.**

Support the Dunstable Historic Commission's and Town's efforts to study the reuse, reorganization, accessibility and renovation of Town Hall while simultaneously retaining the building's historic features intact.

**Appendix 5-1**  
**A Brief History of Dunstable**

(Adapted from the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan )

Founded in 1673, Dunstable had historically been a self-sufficient farming community. For most of Dunstable's history, farming has been the town's historic economic base along with related economic activities such as timbering and wood milling. In the past five decades, farming activity has declined and the town has become more closely tied to the economies of nearby urban areas such as Nashua, NH and Lowell, MA. Much of Dunstable's economic growth during these recent decades has likely resulted from these ties and regional job growth.

The first inhabitants of Dunstable - the native Americans - lived almost exclusively off the land through hunting, fishing and cultivating corns, beans and squash. When European settlers arrived, they brought with them technologies which enabled them to use and cultivate the land more intensively.

One of Dunstable's early economic activities was the bleeding of pine trees for pitch and turpentine, which was one of Dunstable's first exports and sources of revenue. Bog iron was also extracted from swamps and sent for processing in Chelmsford. Peat and clay were extracted for the production of brick.

For the most part, however, farming and agriculture remained Dunstable's primary economic activity and principal export product. Agricultural and farming products ranged from corn and oats to vegetables, fruits, and dairy products. Grains were processed into flour in the town's grist mills. The town's sawmills processed logs, stave mills manufactured barrels, and blacksmith and wheelwright shops provided the means of transportation to bring produce to market. By 1893 there were 90 farms in Dunstable.

Dunstable has a number of cultural sites and landmarks as well. One of these landmarks is the birthplace of Ellen Swallow, one of America's first environmental activists. Her scientific efforts led to the development of three environmental sciences: ecology, limnology and euthenics. She opened the first Sanitary Science Laboratory of its kind at MIT in 1884 and was that university's first woman faculty member.

As Dunstable entered the latter half of the twentieth century, its farming economic base declined. Today, Dunstable has 30 farms remaining. Increasingly, Dunstable's economy has become more closely linked with the growing employment base in surrounding urban areas such as Lowell and Nashua. Dunstable itself offers very few opportunities for employment except for municipal service jobs, school-related employment, some farming opportunities, and home-based self employment. As a result, the vast majority of Dunstable's working population commutes out of town for work.

**Appendix 5-2**  
**List of Historic and Cultural Resources**  
**and**  
**Map of Historic Sites**

The following list of historic and cultural resources in Dunstable was prepared by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. This list includes a cover letter from Judith McDonough of the Massachusetts Historical Commission and a Users Guide to MACRIS Computerized Street Index. The map is taken from the 1998 Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Report.



## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

June 26, 1996

Peggy Church  
Chairperson  
Dunstable Historic Commission  
Town Hall, 511 Main Street  
Dunstable, Massachusetts 01827

Dear Ms. Church:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is in the process of computerizing the Commonwealth's inventory of cultural and historical resources currently on file in our office. The Town of Dunstable has recently been entered into the MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) database.

Enclosed please find a computerized street index of the cultural and historical resources in your community. An explanation of the street index is also enclosed for your reference.

In addition to the street index, other reports such as a *Maker Index*, listing architects and builders, and a *Town Profile* (a statistical summary of properties by age, style, material and other categories) are also included. A current list of properties included on the State Register of Historic Places has also been included. Other specialized reports are also available upon request. You may wish to share this information with other appropriate local agencies or groups such as the Planning Office, Community Development Office, Historic District Commission or others that may benefit from this information.

Please note that the MHC receives inventory forms from a variety of sources besides local historical commissions. If you would like copies of inventory forms included on the enclosed MACRIS street index that are not in your local files, please contact us. We recommend that local commissions regularly check our inventory files for any additions that may have been made in order to keep your local files up-to-date.

We encourage you to examine the enclosed street index for accuracy and notify this office of any discrepancies or changes, such as demolition or the moving of the resource. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Peter Petrisko, MACRIS Coordinator, at (617) 727-8470.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith B. McDonough".

Judith B. McDonough  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

## Users Guide to MACRIS Computerized Street Index

Street Name - alphabetically arranged.

Street Number - numerically arranged.

MHC Number - the three letter code for your community and the inventory number for the specific property on the street index. This is how we access the computerized information for that particular property.

Local Number - the number assigned to inventoried properties by the person or persons in the field recording the specific properties. Because MACRIS works on a sequential numbering system, we are unable to use Assessors' Map and Block numbers or other numbering systems that may be incompatible to data entry. Therefore, these properties are assigned a "real" number (1, 2, 3,...) and the original numbers, recorded in the field, are entered as Local Numbers.

Historic Name - the name of the property as recorded on the inventory form or as listed in the Massachusetts State Register.

Area Code - indicates if a specific property is located within a named or designated area of the community. Areas are generally taken from inventory forms submitted on area inventory forms by the person or persons recording this information in the field (Inventory Form A) or are designated districts as listed in the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places.

Places - similar to Area Codes but do not have rigidly defined boundaries. For example, Downtown Boston would be considered a place, whereas the Theater District or the Business District would be an area.

Type - describes the type of resource. B - Building; A - Area; BG - Burial Ground; S - Structure and O - Object.

NF or No Form Column - indicates that there is no written form for this particular property and that the information for this property came from a different source than an inventory form.

Street Name.....	St No...	MHCN.....	Loc Nbr...	Historic Name.....	Ar Code	Places.....	Type	NF
		DUN.A		Pond and Pleasant Streets Area			A	
		DUN.B		Meetinghouse Hill			A	
		DUN.C		Dunstable Center			A	
		DUN.D		West Dunstable - River Road Area			A	
Depot Rd	121	DUN.46	65	Swallow, Florence House and Chicken Farm			B	
Fletcher St	15	DUN.38	57		D		B	
Fletcher St		DUN.801	804	Rideout Family Cemetery	D		BG	
Hall St		DUN.26	45	Udot, Alexander House			B	
Hall St		DUN.27	46	Hall, Ira House			B	
Hollis St	301	DUN.35	54	Tulley, Henry House			B	
Hollis St	401	DUN.37	56	Drake House	D		B	
Lowell St		DUN.28	47				B	
Lowell St		DUN.29	48	Fairview Farm			B	
Main St	383	DUN.44	63	Dickenson, Charles House	B		B	
Main St	493	DUN.47	66	Proctor House and Chicken Farm	C		B	
Main St	504	DUN.49	68	Hall House and Turkey Farm	C		B	
Main St	529	DUN.40	59	Cummings, Jephtha House	C		B	
Main St	546	DUN.39	58	First Evangelical Church Parsonage	C		B	
Main St	553	DUN.41	60		C		B	
Main St	601	DUN.45	64	Starr, Dr. Ebenezer House	C		B	
Main St	993	DUN.42	61	Fletcher House			B	
Main St		DUN.11	8	Proctor, Ebenezer House	C		B	
			24					
Main St		DUN.12	9	Roby Memorial Town Hall - Dunstable Public Library	C		B	
			25					
Main St		DUN.13	10	Dunstable Congregational Church	C		B	
			26					
Main St		DUN.14	27	Kendall, Ebenezer House			B	
Main St		DUN.15	16	Nevins, John House	B		B	
			32					
Main St		DUN.16	14	Butterfield, Asa House	B		B	
			A					
			30					
Main St		DUN.17	33	Butterfield, Capt. Leonard House	B		B	
Main St		DUN.18	34	Cummings, Capt. Josiah House	B		B	
			44					
Main St		DUN.21	12	Proctor House	C		B	
			40					
Main St		DUN.22	41	Winslow School			B	
			19					
Main St		DUN.3	6	Fletcher, Dea. Joseph House	D		B	
			14					
Main St		DUN.30	49	Page, Dudley L. House	B		B	
Main St		DUN.802	826	Dunstable Central Burial	C		BQ	

Dunstable

Maker.....	Town Name.....	Hist Name or Address.....	Type	MHCN.....	Use Type.....
Butterfield, Capt. Leonard	Dunstable	Butterfield, Capt. Leonard House	B	DUN.17	Single Family Dwelling Hous Agricultural
Kendall, Ebenezer	Dunstable	Kendall, Ebenezer House	B	DUN.14	Single Family Dwelling Hous Tavern Military Other Other Governmental or Civic
Page, Edmund	Dunstable	Cummings, Jephtha House	B	DUN.40	Single Family Dwelling Hous Multiple Family Dwelling ?
Whiting, Ziba	Dunstable	Winslow School	B	DUN.22	Public School Abandoned or Vacant Meeting Hall Other Governmental or Civic Warehouse

[405] 4 items listed out of 59 items.

Types of Resources

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
Areas	4	6.8	Buildings	49	83.1
Buildings	49	83.1	Areas	4	6.8
Burial Grounds	4	6.8	Burial Grounds	4	6.8
Structures	2	3.4	Structures	2	3.4
	59	100.0		59	100.0

Oldest Property: 1700    Newest Property: 1925

No entries for: Object Types  
 Structure Types

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
Bridge	1	50.0	Bridge	1	50.0
Pound	1	50.0	Pound	1	50.0
	2	100.0		2	100.0

No entries for: Places  
 Designation Types

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
(Blank/Null)	2	100.0	(Blank/Null)	2	100.0
	2	100.0		2	100.0

Materials by Resource Type (BW=Wall, BR=Roof, BF=Foundation)

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
BF-Ashlar Random Laid	1	0.6	BW-Wood	48	29.8
BF-Asphalt Shingle	1	0.6	BR-Asphalt Shingle	38	23.6
BF-Brick	1	0.6	BF-Granite	20	12.4
BF-Concrete Cinderblock	1	0.6	BF-Stone, Cut	20	12.4
BF-Concrete Unspecified	1	0.6	BR-Wood Shingle	5	3.1
BF-Granite	20	12.4	BF-Stone, Uncut	5	3.1
BF-Rubble	1	0.6	BR-Slate	4	2.5
BF-Stone, Cut	20	12.4	BW-Wood Clapboard	4	2.5
BF-Stone, Uncut	5	3.1	BW-Brick	2	1.2
BR-	1	0.6	BW-Stone, Cut	2	1.2
BR-Asphalt Shingle	38	23.6	BF-Concrete Cinderblock	1	0.6
BR-Slate	4	2.5	BW-Wood Shingle	1	0.6

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
Agriculture	30	22.4	Architecture	53	39.6
Archaeology, Historic	6	4.5	Agriculture	30	22.4
Architecture	53	39.6	Community Planning	12	9.0
Commerce	3	2.2	Religion	8	6.0
Community Planning	12	9.0	Industry	8	6.0
Education	3	2.2	Archaeology, Historic	6	4.5
Engineering	1	0.7	Politics Government	4	3.0
Exploration Settlement	3	2.2	Exploration Settlement	3	2.2
Industry	8	6.0	Education	3	2.2
Politics Government	4	3.0	Commerce	3	2.2
Recreation	1	0.7	Transportation	2	1.5
Religion	8	6.0	Engineering	1	0.7
Transportation	2	1.5	Recreation	1	0.7
	134	100.0		134	100.0

Type of Use

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
Abandoned or Vacant	5	4.1	Single Family Dwelling Ho	43	35.0
Agricultural	29	23.6	Agricultural	29	23.6
Barber Shop Or Hair Salon	1	0.8	Other Governmental or Civ	5	4.1
Boarding House	1	0.8	Abandoned or Vacant	5	4.1
Burial Ground	4	3.3	Dairy	4	3.3
Business Office	1	0.8	Burial Ground	4	3.3
Camp	1	0.8	Multiple Family Dwelling	3	2.4
Church	1	0.8	Other Residential	3	2.4
Cobbler	1	0.8	Other Industrial	3	2.4
Cooper	2	1.6	Cooper	2	1.6
Dairy	4	3.3	Public School	2	1.6
Library	1	0.8	Residential District	1	0.8
Meeting Hall	1	0.8	Camp	1	0.8
Military Other	1	0.8	Other Religious	1	0.8
Multiple Family Dwelling	3	2.4	Barber Shop Or Hair Salon	1	0.8
Other Commercial	1	0.8	Meeting Hall	1	0.8
Other Governmental or Civ	5	4.1	Warehouse	1	0.8
Other Industrial	3	2.4	Other Rail Related	1	0.8
Other Institutional	1	0.8	Library	1	0.8
Other Rail Related	1	0.8	Church	1	0.8
Other Religious	1	0.8	Other Commercial	1	0.8
Other Residential	3	2.4	Parsonage	1	0.8
Other Transportation	1	0.8	Cobbler	1	0.8
Out Building	1	0.8	Boarding House	1	0.8
Parsonage	1	0.8	Out Building	1	0.8
Public School	2	1.6	Business Office	1	0.8
Residential District	1	0.8	Tavern	1	0.8
Single Family Dwelling Ho	43	35.0	Other Institutional	1	0.8
Tavern	1	0.8	Town Hall	1	0.8
Town Hall	1	0.8	Military Other	1	0.8
Warehouse	1	0.8	Other Transportation	1	0.8
	123	100.0		123	100.0

Type of Owner

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
NP	5	9.4	PR	44	83.0
PR	44	83.0	NP	5	9.4
PU	4	7.5	PU	4	7.5
	53	100.0		53	100.0

Architectural Style

Item - alphabetical	Count	Percent	Item - ranked by count	Count	Percent
Altered beyond recognitio	1	2.0	No style	15	30.6
Colonial	10	20.4	Federal	11	22.4
Colonial Revival	2	4.1	Colonial	10	20.4
Craftsman	1	2.0	Georgian	3	6.1
Federal	11	22.4	Italianate	2	4.1
Georgian	3	6.1	Victorian Eclectic	2	4.1
Greek Revival	2	4.1	Colonial Revival	2	4.1
Italianate	2	4.1	Greek Revival	2	4.1
No style	15	30.6	Craftsman	1	2.0
Victorian Eclectic	2	4.1	Altered beyond recognitio	1	2.0
	49	100.0		49	100.0





### **Appendix 5-3** **Protecting Historic Resources - Establishing Historic Districts**

Although Dunstable possesses a wealth of historic places and resources, it has not designated any places as an historic district. In Dunstable, the protection of historic and cultural resources has traditionally been accomplished by private historic preservation societies, non-profit conservation land trusts, and by private deed restrictions or easements. In the past, Dunstable has considered the establishment of historic districts; however, sufficient support was not mustered to implement them. The nature of historic districts and the process for establishing them are described below. Historic Districts may be established at the federal, state or local levels. Each provides varying degrees of protection. Local Historic Districts can provide the greatest protection to historic properties. National Register properties and State Register properties provide more limited protections. Privately deeded restrictions or easements can provide the greatest protection, but must be either privately donated or directly purchased.

#### **Local Historic Preservation Programs & Districts**

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. The MHC includes the offices of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. The MHC works closely with local preservation groups and, if one has been established, the Local Historic Commission (LHC), which must be established by vote of the town.

As the State Historic Preservation Office, the MHC acts as liaison to federal, state, and local development agencies. The MHC is authorized by state and federal law, through its environmental review processes, to review and comment on certain state and federally licensed or funded projects that have an impact on historic properties.

#### **Local Historical Commission (LHC)**

Once established, the LHC is the municipal agency responsible for ensuring that preservation concerns are considered in community planning and development decisions. They serve as local preservation advocates and as an important resource of information about their communities cultural resources and preservation activities. Dunstable currently has a Historic Commission (DHC).

#### **Local Historic Districts (LHD)**

A LHD is established and administered by a community to protect the distinctive characteristics of important areas and to encourage new construction that is compatible with the historic setting. A District Study Committee is appointed to conduct a survey of the area and to prepare a preliminary report for state and local review. A final report is then submitted to the local governing body for approval of the local ordinance. Once the LHD is established, a Local Historic District Commission (LHDC) is appointed to review all applications for exterior changes to buildings within the district.

This design review process assures that proposed changes to properties will not destroy the district's character. Review criteria, which may be either quite restrictive or quite flexible, are determined locally by each town and city and vary considerably for each local district. Therefore, it remains the decision of the town as to the degree of discretion given to the LHDC to review proposed exterior property changes.

#### **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) documents and record the nation's significant buildings, sites, and objects as well as districts worthy of protection. Based on local and state surveys, nominations to the NRHP are generally initiated by the Local Historical Commission, which works with MHC staff to prepare the nomination form. Nominations are then reviewed by the MHC State Review Board at a public meeting and forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register for approval.

Listing on the NRHP provides a basis for making informed planning and development decisions. NRHP status places no constraints on what owners may do with their properties when using private funds. While the NRHP is not a design review program, it does provide limited protection from state and federal actions, as well as eligibility for matching state and federal restoration and research grants and certain federal tax benefits for certified rehabilitation projects.

**State Register of Historic Places**

The State Register of Historic Places (SRHP) was created to serve as a master list of designated historic properties in Massachusetts and to provide an added measure of protection to these properties. Properties are included on this Register if they are: listed or determined to be determined eligible for listing in the NRHP; local historic districts; local, state and national landmarks, state archaeological landmarks; or properties with preservation restrictions. The State Register serves as a guide for project developers to determine whether a state funded or licensed project will affect any historic properties. The State Register review process is modeled closely after the federal review process and ensures that State Registered properties will not inadvertently be harmed by activities supported by State agencies.

**Preservation Restrictions**

Preservation Restrictions protect historic properties from changes that may be inappropriate. A preservation restriction (easement) on a property restricts present and future owners from altering a specified portion of a building, structure or site. A restriction can run for several years or in perpetuity and may be included as part of a property deed. Preservation restrictions can be donated or purchased by a government body, or private preservation organization and are enforced by the holder of the restriction. Charitable donations of easements on historical buildings or archaeological sites may qualify for federal income tax deductions.

# **Section 6: PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

## Section 6: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### Introduction

Historically, as a small rural town, Dunstable has not needed to provide extensive municipal services. In fact, many of its various municipal Departments and Boards continue to rely on small staffs and part-time hours of operation with extensive use of volunteers. Its Police and Fire Departments, for example, have continued to rely on a largely volunteer force to protect Dunstable's citizens and properties. Other important services - such as public education - are provided by sharing resources with the adjoining town of Groton. As a result, many of Dunstable's municipal buildings and facilities are designed to accommodate small-sized program operations and part-time staffs. In keeping with this philosophy of minimal municipal services, Dunstable's buildings, equipment and facilities have, for the most part, not been modernized, updated or expanded in recent years to meet increased space or service demands. In fact, facilities such as the Town Hall do not meet many federal and state code and accessibility requirements for the disabled; and the Highway/DPW garage does not provide the most basic of amenities for its employees.

Also historically, Dunstable's population has remained relatively small over the years and land use development (overwhelmingly residential) has remained at low densities. Therefore, Dunstable has largely been able to rely on municipal and private wells for water supply from its several underground aquifers and septic fields for wastewater and sewage disposal.

Today, however, demand and expectations for municipal services are rising while the facilities that house the departments which provide them are increasingly obsolete. In recognition of these rising demands and obsolescent conditions, for example, the Town has recently constructed a new Public Library to replace the small library at Town Hall. Other facilities, such as the Town Hall, Fire House, Highway Garage, and, of course, schools will demand attention in the future. Just recently, the Town has decided to acquire a 28 acre parcel of land for public purposes, and possibly for new town facilities. Just how that parcel will be developed is a key issue to be addressed.

Therefore, it is the purpose of this Public Facilities and Services section to review and summarize the current status and suitability of Dunstable's municipal facilities and services, identify needs for the future, establish improvement goals, and suggest recommendations for construction.

### 6.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS/PROJECTED NEEDS

#### General Public Municipal Facilities

An inventory of existing public facilities was undertaken, with a review of their current conditions, adequacy to serve their various purposes, and current expansion and improvement plans. The following overview documents this review. Figure 6-1 shows the location of all public facilities.

#### Town Hall (Sarah Iris Roby Memorial Hall )

*511 Main Street*

Constructed in 1907, the Town Hall is a stone and masonry structure that houses the town's administrative offices and boards, public meeting room (Grange Hall), Police Department, and, until recently, the Public Library. The first floor includes the Town Offices (Selectmen), the

Town Clerk, the Police Department and the former Library room. The Basement hosts the Planning Board, Assessor's Office, Conservation Commission, Grange Hall (public meeting room), kitchen and storage. The upper level or attic is primarily used for record storage. Though the building includes a stair-mounted chair lift that travels between the ground floor side-door entrance and the basement level that functionally provides access to the disabled, the building does not include accessible entries or restrooms, and is not compliant with either federal or state accessibility requirements.

In terms of space needs, all offices are overcrowded and have insufficient storage space. In addition, the Town Hall lacks a municipal records storage vault that is compliant with current State Code fire-protection and climate control requirements.

To address the architectural space needs and accessibility treatments at Town Hall within the context of preserving the building's historic features during future renovations, the Town appropriated monies to conduct an architectural and preservation feasibility Study. The Town and the Dunstable Historical Commission also applied for and subsequently received matching monies from the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Preservation Projects Fund, which it will use to conduct the Study. That Study will soon get underway. Eventually, the Town Hall may be nominated for and judged eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. At the Spring, 1998 Town Meeting, a warrant article was approved to authorize the execution of a preservation restriction on Town Hall for a period up to five years, as authorized under Section 31 of Chapter 184 of the General Laws.

**Former Public Library Space at Town Hall.** The Public Library was until recently also located on the first floor of Town Hall in the old meeting room. A new Public Library, which opened in 1998, has been constructed further west on Main Street to replace the old library at Town Hall.

With the new Library now opened, the old library space at Town Hall may be put to new uses. It may either be restored to its original use as a public meeting room and election polling place or converted to much needed office space. Presumably, accessibility improvements will be constructed at the Town Hall to provide accessible entries and restrooms if this space is to be returned to use as a public meeting room (see Appendix 6-1 on Federal and State accessibility requirements for the disabled).

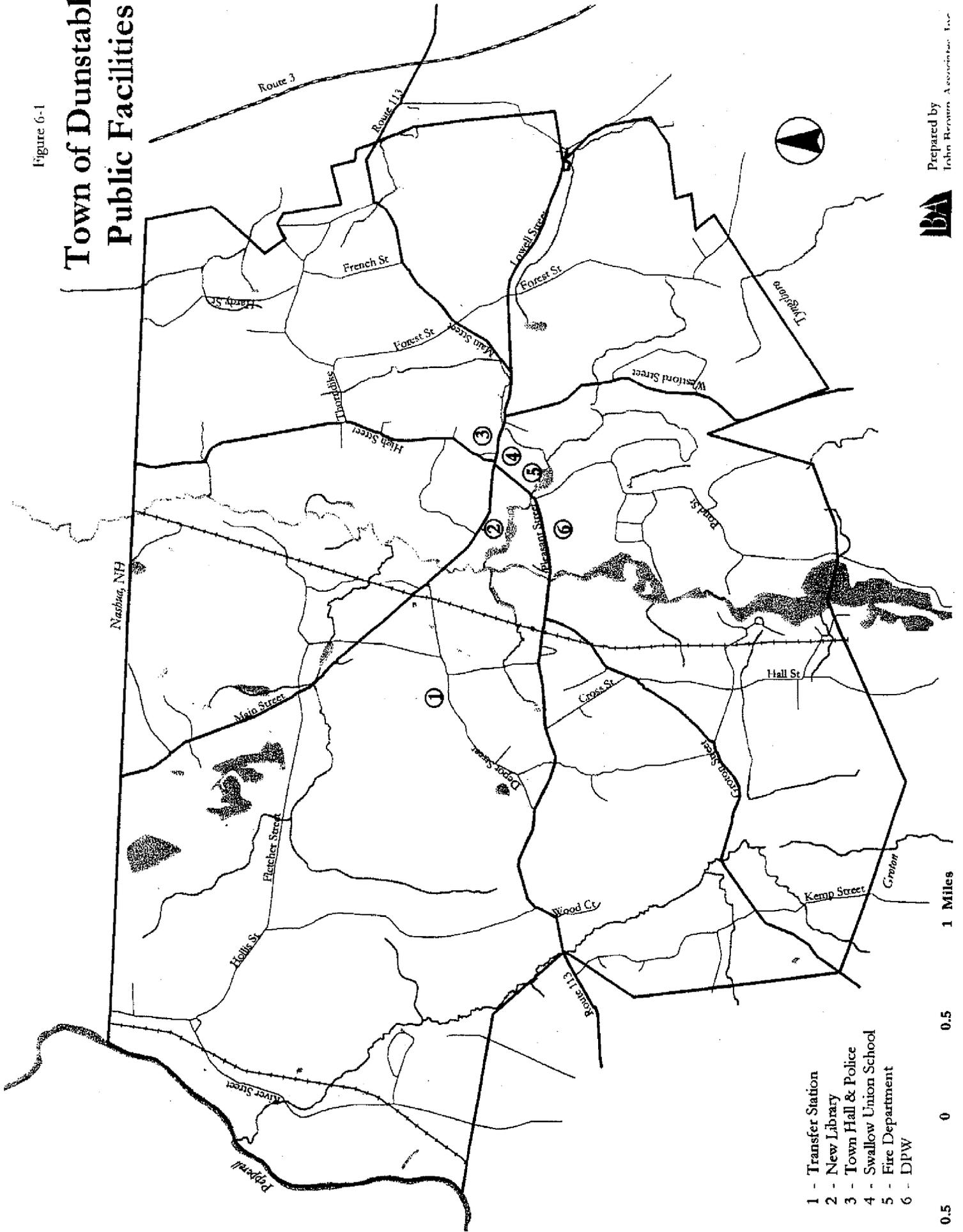
### **Police Station (at Town Hall)**

#### *511 Main Street*

The Police Department operates from a former cloak closet on the first floor at Town Hall in totally inadequate and overcrowded facilities. (Prior to the 1980s, the Police Department was a part-time operation and offices for the Police were at the Chief's home). The Police Department space serves as an office and dispatch room. The lock-up or holding cells are located in Groton. Police Department records are stored in the basement and attic of Town Hall. Currently, the Police Department consists of the Chief, a Sergeant of Police, and two patrolmen. The Department also has Reserve Officers on call. The Department operates two patrol cars. The Police Department's severe space shortage has been recognized for a considerable length of time. As a result, several space needs studies have been conducted in the past that have examined alternatives to remedy the shortage. To date, however, no action has been taken.

Figure 6-1

# Town of Dunstable Public Facilities



## **Fire House**

*Pleasant Street, Route 113*

The Fire Department's Fire House is located on Route 113 south of Main Street in Dunstable Center. The facility is a one-story masonry structure with three apparatus bays. The Fire House also includes a large room for staff that can be used as a lounge, meeting/training room, dining area, or an office. Because the Dunstable Fire Department is a volunteer force, as is the trained EMT staff, the Fire House is an un-staffed facility. If Dunstable were to go toward a staffed facility in the future, operational policy may dictate the addition of a dormitory or bunk room.

The Fire House is well located in the center of town to serve the entire town with reasonable response times. However, since the Fire Department is a volunteer force, response times are more dependent upon the speed at which volunteer firefighters can report than the location of the Fire House itself.

In regards to engine equipment, the Fire Department's vehicles are old and growing increasingly obsolete.

## **New Dunstable Free Public Library**

*Main Street*

A new 9,000 square foot Public Library has been constructed on Main Street immediately west of the Town Center on the former Perry property along Black Brook. It is located sufficiently near to the Swallow-Union Elementary School so that students can walk to the new Library and avail themselves of its resources. The Library is a member of the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium which links patrons, via a public access terminal, to the catalogs of all libraries within the consortium. Circulation in 1996 was 25,769 volumes.

The new Library includes a large meeting room for public meetings, hearings, and community group meetings. The new building is fully compliant with federal and State accessibility requirements. The Library was constructed, in part, with a \$694,000 Library Construction Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## **Highway/DPW Garage**

*Route 113*

The Highway Garage and equipment yard is located on Route 113 south of the Town Center. It is housed in an old two room wood frame former school house. The building is not sufficiently large to garage most of the DPW's equipment and vehicles which must remain outside and unprotected in inclement weather. Over the years, there have been proposals to construct a new Highway Garage to provide a more functional facility. One suggested alternative location is the Highway Department Salt Shed site at Groton and Hall Street. No action has been taken on advancing these proposals however.

## **Dog Pound**

*Main Street*

The Dog Pound is located next to the Historical Society Building on Main Street.

## **Cemeteries**

The town's several cemeteries are a combination of traditionally Town-owned cemeteries (i.e. Central Cemetery) and a number of small former family cemeteries that have been accepted by the Town and are now Town-owned. The Town's cemeteries include: Central Cemetery, Blood

Cemetery, Meeting House Hill Cemetery, Swallow Cemetery, and Rideout Cemetery. Only the Central Cemetery remains an active burial ground with between 12 and 15 burials per year. The Central cemetery has several acres of available lots remaining and in 1996, an additional 2½ acres of adjoining land was purchased to increase the size of the facility. Therefore, the Central Cemetery has sufficient capacity to accommodate Dunstable's burial needs for the foreseeable future.

**Public Schools**

Dunstable is a member of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. The District's regional High School and Middle School are located in Groton as are the Florence Roche, Boutwell (including the Early Childhood Center), Prescott and Tarbell Elementary Schools. The Swallow-Union Elementary School is located in Dunstable in the Town Center on the south side of Main Street. The facilities of the School District are now severely overcrowded due in large part to rapid population growth in Groton. Enrollment at all grade levels has dramatically increased. In 1998 there were 2,250 students in the system. Of the 2,250 students in the school system, 1,742 (77.4%) are Groton residents and 508 (22.6%) are Dunstable residents.

By the year 2006, school enrollment is projected to be 3,210. The High School was designed for a capacity of 550 students and the Middle School's capacity is placed at 450 students. Clearly, the Middle School's capacity has already been exceeded and the High School's design capacity will be exceeded by the year 2000.

**Table 6-1**  
**Current School Enrollments & Growth Projections**

	FY 98 Enrollment	2001 Enrollment	2006 Enrollment
Elementary & ECC	1,255	1,474	1,565
Middle School	570	728	867
High School	<u>425</u>	<u>623</u>	<u>778</u>
Total	2,250	2,825	3,210

Source: Groton-Dunstable School District, 1997/8

To temporarily alleviate this rapid growth, module classrooms were added at the Middle School; and, by the year 2000, some schools will be required to hold double sessions. Therefore, to seek permanent solutions to this issue, the School District had proposed a major reorganization plan and potentially the construction of a new school in Dunstable.

**Proposed School Reorganization and Facility Construction Plan**

As a short term solution for the 1998-1999 school year, the School District proposed adding modular classrooms and sending classes from the Middle School to the High School and from the Florence Roche Elementary School in Groton to the Swallow-Union Elementary School in Dunstable. For the 1999-2000 school year, additional classes would move from the Middle School and Florence Roche School to the High School and Swallow-Union School respectively.

By the 2000-2001 school year, if no new facilities are built, additional module classrooms would be required and the Middle School would conduct two shifts a day.

In the intermediate to long run, the School District has proposed a phased school facility construction program to accommodate the projected increase in enrollments. It is anticipated that the Commonwealth would reimburse the Groton-Dunstable School District for 67% of capital construction costs. In Phase one, a new High School would be constructed in 2000-2001. In Phase Two, a new Elementary School would be added in the year 2001-2002. In the Third Phase, the current High School would be converted to a second Middle School in 2002-2003 for grades 6 through 8.

To accomplish this plan, a site for the new elementary school may have to be found in Dunstable. (Since the school reorganization plan was initially proposed in 1998, the site in Groton initially selected for the construction of a new High School may not prove feasible. Therefore, the search for sites suitable to construct a High School may have to be reopened.) Several candidate sites in Dunstable are under consideration. A primary site under consideration is a portion of the Dunstable Town Forest on Groton Street. The Dunstable Town Forest land could only be made available for a school after the State Legislature approves a change in allowed land use from Article 97 recreational and open space land to school lands. Such State approval may not occur in time to implement the new school reorganization plan however. Additionally, there are some doubts that there is sufficient water capacity at this site to accommodate a new school.

If this proposed school facilities expansion program is approved by the Towns of Groton and Dunstable, the facilities of the School District would near capacity again by the year 2006 except for additional capacity available at the Middle School level of 6 to 10 classrooms. By the 2006-2007 school year, enrollments at each existing and new school are projected to be as follows: High School, 778; Middle School #1, 435; Middle School #2, 435; New Elementary School, 511; Boutwell, 6 classes of Pre K; Florence Roche, 450; Prescott (or replacement), 280; and Swallow-Union, 385. Since capacity is projected to be reached again within seven to ten years, all new facilities should be sited on land sufficiently large to permit yet further expansions and additions in the future. Therefore, sites sufficiently large to accommodate future expansion should be identified and purchased now.

### **Swallow-Union Elementary School (in Dunstable)**

The Swallow-Union Elementary School consists of the historic two-story wood-framed Union School (built in 1895), and the much newer Swallow School adjacent to it. The Swallow-Union School enrolls approximately 330 students in grades K through 5. The Swallow-Union also recently added a special needs Pre-School Program.

### **Active Recreational Playfields, Trails, and Sites**

Dunstable is host to a number of active recreation play fields and sites. Some properties are Town-owned while others are owned by the State or private owners.

### **Town Fields And Common**

These existing playing fields next to the Swallow Union School include tennis and basketball courts. The playfields are inadequate to fully meet local demands, however. Sufficient parking now exists. However, much of this parking is on private property and is only available in accordance with the owner's willingness to allow it.

### **Larter Memorial Field**

A master plan for the recreational and athletic field use of the new Larter Memorial Field is now being completed. The property is to be loomed and seeded in 1998 or 1999. This piece of property on Groton Street was recently donated to the Town by Margaret Larter. When completed, the fields will include 2 soccer fields, 2 baseball fields, a basketball court, hiking areas, horseback riding areas, and a sledding area. Together with the Town Fields, they should satisfy the demand for additional athletic fields in the town for the intermediate term future.

### **Horse Hill (Hall Street)**

This 6.5 acre parcel of land at Hall Street was deeded to the Town as a part of a subdivision approval. The deed requires that this land be used for public recreational use such as a playground or play field.

### **Swallow Union School Gymnasium**

A new gymnasium was recently constructed at the Swallow Union School. In addition to use by students, the gymnasium is also used by the community.

### **YMCA Camp (Private)**

This 24.3 acre property on Massapoag Pond is used for boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, nature study and archery.

### **Massapoag Pond Swimming Area**

Massapoag Pond offers excellent swimming opportunities for the Town of Dunstable. Most of the shoreline is privately held, however. The Town presently has no public access to the Pond for swimming. The most promising strategy for the Town to gain some public access for swimming may be to approach the YMCA to lease a portion of their Y Beach for Dunstable citizens' use during off hours when the beach is less needed by the camp.

### **Nashua Valley Railroad Trail (Massachusetts DEM)**

This State-owned trail, 11.3 miles in length from Ayer to the New Hampshire State line, is now open only in segments. DEM plans to develop and access the whole trail. DEM has completed permitting for the project and construction may begin this year. The trail will be used for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.

## **Municipal Services: Water, Sewage and Solid Waste Disposal**

Dunstable has a very limited public water supply system and no public sewer system. Almost all of Dunstable's properties rely on private wells as their water source. All wastewater treatment is done through on-site septic systems. Therefore, water quality maintenance and the protection of aquifers is of great importance in Dunstable. As Dunstable faces continued residential growth in the future, the capacity of land parcels (soils types, hydrology, topography, etc.) to supply water and accommodate septic systems will become even more critical to Dunstable's future.

### **Public Water System**

The majority of Dunstable's approximately 900 households and businesses depend upon their own wells. Only 5% of Dunstable's population near the town's center is served by the municipal water supply. The source is a town well in the Salmon Brook aquifer north of Main Street which

is then fed by a water line to the Town Center. The Town's Pumping Station located adjacent to Salmon Brook, and piping extends from Salmon Brook to Lowell Street and along Pleasant Street from Salmon Brook to the Town Center. Hillcrest and Highland Streets are also served. Ninety-one meters are installed to serve the Town Hall, Swallow-Union School, fire house, church, 2 farms, 3 businesses, and 82 residences. This Town well pumps 25,000 gallons per day.

The aquifer is judged to have adequate capacity by the Board of Health for any foreseeable needs; but the well itself is adequate for only a limited number of customers. Furthermore, storage is limited and the system is inadequate to serve firefighting supply except to take water from the hydrants up to the limit of the well pump, which is rated at 250 gallons per minute. \$180,000 was appropriated at the 1996 Town Meeting to construct a back-up well which will double capacity. Studies have also been prepared to extend the mains northwest along Main Street and westward along Depot Street together with new tanks and standpipes.

### **Wastewater Treatment**

Dunstable has no public sewers. All wastewater is accommodated on lots by on-site septic systems. Each lot provides its own water supply as well. Therefore, careful siting, installation and maintenance of septic systems is essential to protect water quality. The town's two acre lot size requirements have proved critical in maintaining proper well and septic system layout to protect water quality.

### **Solid Waste Disposal**

The Town's Transfer Station, under the jurisdiction of the Board of Health, is located on Depot Street at the site of the former landfill, which is now capped and closed. The Health Department also operates an extensive recycling program at this site. Many recycled waste products are then sold at a profit to recycling companies. The old landfill was closed.

### **Street Lights**

The Town of Dunstable has very few street lights. There are several in the Town Center near Town Hall. The lack of street lights preserves Dunstable's rural character and allows the night sky to be dark and visible. However, some are concerned about the safety of roads without lights.

## **6.2 PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES GOALS**

Based on the analyses of existing conditions and public comments gathered at public meetings during the preparation of this Plan, the following Goals will guide the Plan's Recommendations and Implementation Strategies.

- 1) Conduct Town Hall Architectural Feasibility Study/renovate and reorganize Town Hall space.
- 2) Expand space for the Police Department.
- 3) Expand and upgrade Fire Department and EMS facilities.
- 4) Provide a new Highway Garage.
- 5) Identify a new school site to alleviate severe overcrowding.
- 6) Monitor the need for future active recreational venues and playfields.

- 7) Seek to acquire public access to a recreational swimming beach and small boat ramp at Massapoag Pond.
- 8) Improve management and coordination of recreational properties.
- 9) Limit expansion of Town water supply capacity and the water distribution system to the Town Center area as a growth control mechanism. Do not provide a new sewer system.
- 10) Add to cemetery lands if and when the opportunities arise.
- 11) Explore the need for limited package water treatment systems where applicable.

### **6.3 PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS**

The examination as to how to meet Dunstable's municipal space needs is now at a critical time. The relocation of the Library to new facilities on Main Street west of the Town Center has freed up significant space at Town Hall. Additionally, there is now discussion of relocating certain public functions, such as the Police Department, Fire Department, and EMS Services to a new Municipal Services Center on a 28 acre site behind the new Post Office which the Town has recently voted to acquire. This same 28 acre site is also being discussed as one of two possible sites for a new public school which will likely be needed in Dunstable. This site may also be quite suitable for a new DPW/Highway Garage. Therefore, all of these various individual decisions to provide expanded, improved, or new public facilities and schools should not be made in isolation from one another, but viewed comprehensively. Listed below are opportunities and options for how Dunstable can provide for its future municipal facilities needs.

#### **1. Renovate and Reorganize Town Hall Space.**

The recent relocation of the Library from Town Hall to new facilities elsewhere now provides the opportune time to examine space needs and expansion options. Therefore, the space needs and expansion opportunities at Town Hall should now be studied comprehensively before any actions are taken to permanently relocate departments or construct new facilities. Once this Architectural Feasibility Space Needs Study is completed, it will then guide the renovation and reorganization plan at Town Hall to alleviate overcrowded conditions, provide a Public Meeting Hall, and provide accessibility to the disabled. All renovations should be undertaken in accordance with historic preservation principals and guidelines.

#### **2. Expand Space for the Police Department.**

Provide expanded modernized space and new communications systems for the Police Department which is now severely overcrowded at Town Hall.

At least two options are available. In the first option, the Police Department can be relocated, at least temporarily, into the larger Grange Hall basement space at Town Hall since the old Library space, which has now been vacated, can be converted to a large public meeting room, thereby freeing the Grange Hall for conversion to the Police Department until new Police facilities can be funded and built. A second and permanent solution is to construct space for a new Police Department at a proposed Municipal Services Center (which would also include the Fire Department and EMS Services) behind the new Post Office.

In all instances, a staffing plan should first be prepared and a direction established as to whether the Police Department will evolve in the future into a full time staffed professional department or continue to operate with volunteer police officers. Other facility programming issues such as whether a jail/lock-up should be provided in the new Dunstable facility should also be addressed. Such decisions are critical in that they will determine the space needs, staffing needs, and operational characteristics of the new facility.

### **3. Expand and Upgrade Fire Department and EMS Facilities.**

The Fire House is currently well located in the center of town to provide adequate response times to emergency calls in all parts of Dunstable. Response times are limited more by the time needed for volunteers to report to the Fire House than by the location of the Fire House itself. However, the current on-call Fire House is inadequate to accommodate much needed modernized fire apparatus and equipment. Therefore, the Town should provide expanded space for the Fire Department and EMS and provide modernized fire fighting apparatus and engine companies. An expansion can occur at the present Fire House site, or the Fire Department could relocate to the proposed Municipal Services Center on the 28 acre site behind the new Post Office.

If Dunstable's population does not significantly grow and if industrial development on the eastern edge of Dunstable remains modest, then the Dunstable Fire Department can probably remain a volunteer fire force. However, in the future, Dunstable may wish to move from a volunteer force to a staffed department. Then, a new or expanded Fire House may require space for a bunk room or dormitory. Whatever locational choice the Town now makes to expand or reconstruct its Fire Department facility, the site should be sufficiently large to accommodate a staffed department in the future.

### **4. Provide a New Highway Garage.**

Construct an improved Highway Garage with adequate space to house and protect road equipment indoors and with suitable space with proper amenities for DPW employees. One possible site for such a new facility is the 28 acre site behind the new Post Office.

### **5. Identify A New School Site to Alleviate Severe School Overcrowding.**

Identify and possibly acquire a site for a new school in Dunstable if the reorganization and expansion needs of the Groton Dunstable School District require a site in town. The identified site should be sufficiently large to accommodate long-term future expansion as well as currently projected needs since the current expansion plans are only anticipated to accommodate school population growth for the next 7 to 10 years. The site must be large enough to accommodate the school itself, outdoor playgrounds or play fields, and space for still additional expansion in the future, and be able to provide a sufficient water supply and an adequate waste water/ sewage disposal system.

**6. Monitor the Need for Future Active Recreational Venues and Playfields.**

With the planned construction and completion of the new Larter Memorial Athletic Fields, sufficient active recreational play fields will be available to meet recreational needs for teens and adults for the next decade or two. However, if the Town constructs a new Elementary School or High School, the grounds for such a facility should include space for a new playground or athletic fields, as appropriate.

**7. Seek to Acquire Public Access to a Recreational Swimming Beach and Small Boat Ramp at Massapoag Pond.**

Acquire easement or rights to publicly accessible beach at Massapoag Pond. Establish use limitations and usage rules to preserve tranquility and cleanliness of the Pond for residential abutters and the public at large.

**8. Improve Management and Coordination of Recreational Properties.**

Encourage coordination or possible merger of Recreation Commission (oversees recreation programs) and Parks Commission (maintains properties).

**9. Limit Expansion of Town Water Supply Capacity and the Water Distribution System to the Town Center Area. Do Not Provide a Sewer System.**

Increase town well capacity but limit expansion of the water distribution system to serve only the existing Town Center area where existing development densities are higher than elsewhere in the town and where municipal facilities are now concentrated. As a growth control mechanism, do not extend the water distribution network or provide a sewer system that would allow for increased development density or capacity.

**10. Add to Cemetery Lands If and When the Opportunities Arise.**

Dunstable's current cemetery capacity is sufficient to meet the town's probable burial needs into the foreseeable future. In the long-run, however, as Dunstable's population continues to increase, demand for burial lots may also increase. Therefore, the Town should continue to add and acquire land to its cemetery properties if and when adjoining land becomes available for sale. Even if the uses of these additionally acquired parcels are not eventually required to meet cemetery needs, they can always be maintained simply as town open space.

## Appendix 6-1 Summary of Federal ADA and State Accessibility Regulations, Requirements and Guidelines

Accessibility improvements must be made to public facilities in accordance with the guidelines and regulations of both federal and state law. A summary of several key requirements are described below:

### **American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990: Title II -State & Local Government**

(42 USC Chap. 1210, et seq)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 provides a comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, state and municipal government activities, and telecommunications.

The ADA is comprised of five major sections or Titles, as follows:

Title I : ADA Employment Section

Title II : ADA State and Local Government (& Public Service and Public Transportation)

Title III: ADA Public Accommodation and Services

Title IV: ADA Telecommunications

Title V : ADA Miscellaneous Provisions

Title I and II concern the public sector. The remaining Titles concern the private sector only.

Title II of the ADA, effective January 26, 1992, requires that state, local and municipal governments must provide equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in programs, activities, services, and employment practices. Effective communications must be ensured with persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or who have cognitive disabilities through provision of auxiliary aids and services. Remedying actions may require the provision of sign language interpreters, the distribution of materials in large print, braille, or audio tape, holding meetings or hearings in accessible locations, and ending discriminatory hiring practices. Under a concept called "programmable access", every part of every facility need not necessarily be accessible. Instead, the program activities and services, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities.

The ADA is enforced by the Civil Rights Division of the US Justice Department when individuals bring complaints or lawsuits under the civil rights acts in Federal District Court. It is not mandatory that a grievance be filed using the Town's adopted grievance procedure. The ADA is not a building code law or regulation.

### **Federal Voting for the Elderly & Handicapped Act**

(42 USC Chap. 1973ee, et seq.)

This law requires that in each state, the political subdivision responsible for conducting elections assure that all polling places for federal elections be accessible to disabled and elderly voters. All municipalities are responsible for following these regulations. The position of the Massachusetts Attorney General is that state and municipal elections must also be accessible to persons with disabilities. This law is enforced by the Election Division urging voluntary compliance. If voluntary compliance is not achieved, the matter will be referred to the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office.

### **Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB)**

(MGL c.22, sec. 13A; 521 CMR, revised September 1, 1996)

The Architectural Access Board (AAB) is a regulatory agency whose mandate is to develop and enforce regulations designed to make public buildings accessible to persons with disabilities. The AAB writes regulations, decides variance requests, issues advisory opinions, and makes decisions on complaints. Local building inspectors are responsible for enforcing the regulations which are a specialized section of the Building Code. The Authority of the AAB is triggered by the construction or renovation or alteration of a building that is open to the public.

If the work performed on an existing building amounts to less than 30% of the full and fair cash value of the building and costs less than \$100,000, then, only the work being performed is required to comply. If the work costs \$100,000 or more, then the work being done must comply; and, an accessible public entrance, an accessible toilet room, telephone, and drinking fountain shall also be provided in compliance.

If the work done on an existing building amounts to 30% or more of the full and fair cash value of the building, the entire building is required to comply. Where the cost of constructing an addition to a building costs more than 30% of the full and fair cash value of the existing building, both the addition and the existing building must be fully accessible.

When the work performed on a building is divided into separate phases or projects, the total cost of such work in any 36 month period shall be added together in applying the investment thresholds for compliance described above.

### **Massachusetts Disability Commissions**

(MGL c.40, Chap. 8j )

A Town which accepts the provisions of this Section is authorized to establish a Disability Commission. Commissions work with the Massachusetts Office on Disability to carry out programs and activities designed to integrate people with disabilities into the community. The specific activities of the Commission depend upon the needs of the disabled community in a particular town. Commissions consist of no less than five, nor more than nine members, appointed by the Mayor or city manager in cities, or by the Selectmen or town manager in towns. The majority of members must be disabled. One member must be an elected or appointed official of the town. Members are initially appointed in staggered terms of one to three years. A Commission must have at least six meetings a year, keep records of its meetings and actions, and file an annual report.

# **Section 7: TRANSPORTATION**

## Section 7: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation and land use are inextricably related. Land use activities affect the demand on transportation facilities, and transportation services are a major determinant in siting development projects and cumulatively shaping the form of a community. The basic concept underlying the relationship between land use and transportation is *accessibility*.

*Accessibility is a measure of the value of a parcel of land given its proximity to all other relevant activities and is measured by the existence, availability and feasibility of the access modes (auto, transit, other) that would serve the property in the before and after situations.<sup>2</sup>*

A well-conceived community master plan will outline the steps needed to ensure that residents of a community are afforded reasonable *accessibility*, and that land use locations and intensities - existing and projected - do not overwhelm the transportation system. It offers the opportunity to identify specific circulation or congestion locations and to propose physical improvements that hold promise for correcting those problems. The master plan also provides the basis for establishing policies that later can be used to guide development and resolve community traffic problems.

This section begins with a general description of the transportation conditions that currently exist in Dunstable. An assessment is then made of the “balance” that presently exists between the transportation facilities and services that are available in the community and the demands placed upon those facilities by the existing pattern and intensity of development. This assessment answers three basic questions:

Do the current densities and intensities of development in Dunstable overwhelm the ability of the available and planned transportation services to provide an acceptable level of service?

Are the design and designation of streets in the community adequate for existing traffic levels, compatible with the abutting land uses, and/or consistent with the desired character of the community? and,

Has there been adequate planning for all transportation modes, including the street circulation system, public transportation, pedestrians and bicyclists?

Based on the assessment of current conditions, and the input of local residents and officials, a number of transportation-related goals and policies are next identified to ensure that a reasonable “balance” between land use and transportation will be maintained in the future. Finally, specific recommendations for modifying existing land use/zoning and improving the transportation infrastructure are made for Town consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> J.D. Eaton, *Real Estate Value in Litigation*, Appraisal Institute: Chicago, IL, 1994.

## 7.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

### Travel Characteristics of Dunstable Residents

As described earlier in Section 2, a very high percentage of Dunstable residents are in the workforce and are employed in communities that are either (a) immediately adjacent to Dunstable, or (b) enjoy ready access from Route 3, the only major arterial roadway that exists to serve north-south travel in the region. The primary workplace locations of Dunstable residents, as well as the town of residence of those employed in Dunstable, are summarized in Table 7-1 below.

**Table 7-1  
Workplace Destinations of Dunstable Residents and Origins of Dunstable Workforce**

<u>Workplace/Town of Residence</u>	<u>Workplace Destination of Dunstable Residents</u>		<u>Town of Residence of Employees in Dunstable</u>	
	<u># Persons</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u># Persons</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Lowell	159	13.7	8	6.0
Nashua, NH	142	12.3	6	4.5
Dunstable	89	7.7	89	66.4
Chelmsford	69	6.0	-	-
Billerica	57	4.9	-	-
Bedford	48	4.1	-	-
Tyngsborough	42	3.6	10	7.5
Groton	36	3.1	15	11.2
Westford	32	2.8	-	-
Burlington	28	2.4	-	-
Hollis, NH	-	-	6	4.5
Other cities and towns	<u>895</u>	<u>51.7</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,158</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

With only 7.7 percent of the Dunstable workforce employed locally, Dunstable residents must rely heavily on their automobiles - there are approximately 2.4 vehicles available in every household<sup>3</sup> - and the regional street system to reach their workplace destinations in nearby communities. Table 7-2 identifies the travel or access modes that were available and used (a) by Dunstable residents traveling to their workplaces, and (b) by those who reside elsewhere but work in Dunstable. In 1990, almost 98% of all employed persons who did not work at home in Dunstable drove in an auto to their workplace. That reliance on the automobile remains today.

<sup>3</sup> According to 1990 U. S. Census, the number of vehicles available per household in Dunstable was as follows:

	<u># Vehicles</u>					
	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5+</u>
# Households	6	100	314	172	61	39

**Table 7-2  
Journey-to-Work Travel Modes in Dunstable**

Travel Mode	Residents in Dunstable		Employees in Dunstable		
	# Persons*	% of Total	# Persons*	% of Total	
<b>AUTO</b>	Auto: Drive alone	1,052	90.9	104	85.3
	Carpool: 2-person	72	6.2	4	3.2
	3+ person	9	0.8	-	-
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<b>NON-AUTO</b>	Bus	3	0.3	1	0.8
	Commuter Rail	7	0.6	13	10.7
	Walked	13	1.2	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,158</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Total includes all employed persons 16+ years old who do not work at home.

Source: 1990 Census and transportation data produced by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Studies.

Prepared by the Data Center of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

### The Regional Highway System

The rural character of the Town of Dunstable is defined in part by its location relative to the regional highway network. The nearest major highway in the region is Route 3 which passes north-south along the eastern edge of Dunstable through Tyngsborough and travels from the New Hampshire border to Route 128 in Burlington. Route 3 is the only limited access highway serving the transportation needs of the entire Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) region. Dunstable residents can access Route 3: (a) by traveling west on Route 113 (Main Street and Pleasant Street) to its interchange with Route 3 in Tyngsborough (Exit 35 in MA); (b) by traveling south on Lowell Street to Westford Road and its interchange with Route 3, also in Tyngsborough (Exit 34 in MA); or (c) by traveling north on High Street and then west on Ridge Road to Spit Brook Road and its interchange with Route 3 in Nashua, NH (Exit 1 on F.E. Everett Turnpike in NH).

As one of the most congested travel corridors in eastern Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) has targeted Route 3 for major improvements.<sup>4</sup> Current MHD plans call for the addition of a single travel lane and breakdown lane in each direction along Route 3 for its entire 21 mile length - a project that is scheduled to begin in the year 2000 and take approximately 4-5 years to complete. The additional capacity provided by this project may contribute to a reduction in traffic on the Dunstable street system.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See *Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Northern Middlesex Region*, September 1993, prepared by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments for the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization. Also, *Environmental Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Report* for the Route 3 North Transportation Improvements Project.

<sup>5</sup> It is not clear to what extent, if any, non-resident motorists presently travel through the Town of Dunstable to avoid congested conditions on Route 3. The section of Route 3 in the vicinity of Exit 35 is not heavily congested during peak travel periods. Moreover, there are no reasonable parallel streets in the Town of Dunstable which if traveled would provide meaningful travel time savings over the use of Route 3. It is believed that the majority of non-Dunstable residents who travel High Street to Route 113, for

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is also undertaking a number of infrastructure improvement projects between Exits 1 and 7 on the F.E. Everett Turnpike (Route 3) in Nashua, NH which could have an impact on travel through Dunstable. The F.E. Everett Turnpike Improvement Plan currently calls for the installation of three (3) new toll booths on Route 3 at the following locations: (1) on the Route 3 mainline southbound between (new) Exit 2 and existing Exit 1 at the NH border; (2) on the ramp from Spit Brook Road to Route 3 southbound; and (3) on a new ramp being constructed to the Route 3 mainline southbound from new Exit 2. Although no schedule has been established for the construction of the toll booths, the proposed ramp configuration and toll booth locations would allow southbound travelers on the F.E. Everett Turnpike/Route 3 to exit onto Spit Brook Road in order to avoid paying a toll at the booth proposed on the Route 3 mainline southbound near Exit 1. The presence of this new toll booth may encourage some motorists to reach their destinations by traveling on Dunstable streets.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Existing Street System in Dunstable**

Just as the rural character of Dunstable is affected by its connections with the regional highway system, so too is it influenced heavily by the configuration of the local street system and the narrow, winding nature of Dunstable roads. The existing street system in Dunstable has its origins in the system of paths and unpaved roads developed many years ago. A comparison of the roadway network in Dunstable today with the street system in 1875 indicates that few new road segments have been constructed over the past 120 years. As indicated in Table 7-3, there are presently a total of 37.6 miles of roadway in the Town of Dunstable, consuming approximately 202.6 acres of land.<sup>7</sup> What makes the Town of Dunstable rather unique is that it is traversed by only one major street - Route 113 (Main and Pleasant Streets) - running east-to-west through the center of the Town for a distance of 4.8 miles from the Tyngsborough town line to the Pepperell town line. The overwhelming majority of streets in the town are local or residential streets designed with the primary intent of providing access to individual residential parcels or neighborhood subdivisions.

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example, do so because it represents the most convenient and direct route to destinations south and west of Dunstable Center - not because they are seeking to avoid delays on Route 3. Nevertheless, to the extent that some motorists may travel on the Dunstable street system to avoid periodic peak period congestion on Route 3, the additional capacity associated with the proposed expansion project will improve travel times sufficiently to attract those drivers back onto Route 3 and off Dunstable streets.

<sup>6</sup> The majority of non-Dunstable residents who would travel High Street to Route 113, for example, after toll booth construction would do so because it represents the most convenient and direct route to destinations south and west of Dunstable Center, not because they would want to avoid paying the toll. Given the configuration of the new ramps and toll booth locations, motorists determined to avoid the new toll booths are much more likely to leave Route 3 southbound at new Exit 2, travel south on Daniel Webster Highway, and then return to Route 3 south at Exit 36 in Massachusetts.

<sup>7</sup> Based on 5.81 miles of road @ 60' R.O.W.; 2.65 miles @ 55' R.O.W.; 2.78 miles @ 50' R.O.W.; 24.9 miles @ 40' R.O.W.; 1.27 miles @ 30' R.O.W.; and 0.20 miles @ 20' R.O.W. Right-of-way (R.O.W.) refers to all publicly-owned land and includes the actual roadway, sidewalks, grassy areas, street trees, and public utilities.

An inventory of conditions on Dunstable streets was obtained from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD).<sup>8</sup> This Road File Inventory identifies the administrative bodies with jurisdiction over each street, the functional use of each street, as well as a host of other physical and operating characteristics. A copy of the MHD Road Inventory File for the Town of Dunstable is provided under a separate cover. Unfortunately, the contents of this road file were found to be incomplete. Consequently, a limited field survey was performed to update the street inventory and conditions provided by MHD. The results of the inventory and field survey are summarized below.

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<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Highway Department, Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development, *Road Inventory File*. The Road Inventory File is maintained by MHD/BTP&D as an important transportation planning tool. It contains information on roadway mileage, conditions, and numerous other characteristics (a total of 57 identifying characteristics are available for each roadway segment).

**Table 7-3  
Summary of Street Characteristics in Dunstable**

<b>Functional Class</b>	<b>Street Name</b>	<b>Street Length (mi)</b>	<b># Lanes</b>	<b>Pavement Width (ft)</b>	<b>R.O.W. Width (ft)</b>
<b>Minor Arterial</b>	Main Street	4.66	2	19 - 24	60
	Pleasant Street	<u>2.80</u>	2	22	40
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>7.46</i>			
<b>Major Collector</b>	Groton Street	2.78	2	20 - 24	50
	Lowell Street	1.15	2	24	60
	Westford Street	<u>1.57</u>	1 - 2	14 - 16	40
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>5.50</i>			
<b>Local</b>	Adams Street*	N/A	2	24	55
	Blodgett Street	0.27	1	14	40
	Brook Street	0.47	2	16	40
	Century Way*	0.55	2	32	55
	Cross Street	0.41	1	14	40
	Depot Street	1.40	1 - 2	12 - 16	40
	Dogwood Lane*	0.15	2	22	55
	Fletcher Street	1.27	1	12	30
	Forest Street	2.12	1	14	40
	French Court	0.20	1	9	40
	Hall Street	1.24	1 - 2	14 - 16	40
	Hardy Street	0.87	1	12	40
	High Street	1.99	1 - 2	14 - 18	40
	Highland Street*	0.35	2	23	55
	Hillcrest Street	0.14	2	19	40
	Hollis Street	2.51	1 - 2	12 - 16	40
	Horse Hill Estates*	0.12	2	26	55
	Kemp Street	1.15	1	10 - 14	40
	Lake Street	0.45	1 - 2	14 - 24	40
	Maple Street	0.23	1	8	40
	Meadow View Hills*	0.38	2	24	55
	Mill Street	0.51	1	12	40
	Oak Street	0.44	1	14	40
	Parkhurst Road*	0.60	2	22	55
	Pine Street	0.32	1	14	40
	Pond Street	1.93	1 - 2	14 - 16	40
	River Street	1.76	1	13	40
	Robbin's Farm*	0.15	2	22	55
	School Street	0.31	1	15	40
	Swallow Lane*	0.25	2	24	55
	Thorndike Street	1.53	1	12	40
	Upton Street*	0.10	2	24	55
	Valley Road	0.28	2	16	40
Woods Court	<u>0.20</u>	1	8	20	
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>24.65</i>			
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37.61 miles</b>			

**Source:** Massachusetts Highway Department, Bureau of Transportation Planning & Development, Road Inventory Files (See Appendix A).

\* Indicates that street characteristics based on field survey, not MHD Road Inventory Files.

### Jurisdictional Classification of Dunstable Streets

The jurisdictional and functional classification of streets in the Town of Dunstable are important to understanding how streets relate to one another, who uses them, and who exercises control over changes that might be necessary on them. Within the geographical boundaries of Dunstable, there is one state numbered road - Route 113 - but it does **not** fall under the jurisdiction and control of the Massachusetts Highway Department. All streets and roads within the Town borders - a total of 37.6 miles - are classified as town roads. This means that the Town of Dunstable assumes primary responsibility for their ongoing maintenance and safe operation. This jurisdictional control implies that any roadway expansion projects, including those that might involve Route 113, would have to be initiated and financially supported by the Town of Dunstable.<sup>9</sup>

### Functional Classification of Dunstable Streets

All streets in Dunstable are also classified on the basis of their functional use. The functional classification of a street is essentially a determination of the degree to which access functions are to be emphasized at the cost of the efficiency of movement, or discouraged to improve the movement function. As explanation, a street can serve two basic functions: it can provide *access* to individual parcels of land, or it can facilitate *movements* between various origins and destinations. A high level of access implies the existence of multiple driveways connecting the street with private property and making available part of the street for parking and loading. In contrast, a street that facilitates movement provides the capacity to move large quantities of vehicles and to do so at a reasonably high speed. These functions make competing demands on the street and thereby require that tradeoffs be made as to their relative importance.

Streets in Dunstable fall into one of three functional classifications or categories: minor arterial streets, major collector streets, or local streets. The tradeoff between access and movement that is associated with each of these categories is defined below in Table 7-4, while the functional classification of each street in Dunstable is indicated in the previous Table 7-3. As suggested by the definitions in Table 7-4, streets are generally designated as collectors or major streets because of the amount and kind of traffic that they are carrying, or because they provide direct connections between major traffic-generating nodes or trip generators and other major streets and freeways.

**Table 7-4**  
**Functional Street Classification System**

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<b>Principal Arterial:</b>	A principal arterial - such as Route 3 <sup>Ⓢ</sup> is intended to provide a high degree of mobility and a low degree of land access. High capacity is obtained by providing wide cross-sections and/or by eliminating intersections by grade separation. In contrast with minor arterials, principal arterials serve longer trips and, therefore, should provide for higher speeds and levels of service. Principal arterials will typically interconnect major residential communities and other large activity centers within the urbanized area.
<b>Minor Arterial:</b>	Minor arterials are streets and roadways that also provide high levels of mobility and the low degrees of land access. However, most minor arterials will be at-grade and may intersect with

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<sup>9</sup> According to MHD District 3 Office staff, it is extremely unlikely that MHD would direct its attention and limited financial resources to expand Route 113 (a *town* road) when there are so many *state*-owned and maintained road facilities in need of repair or upgrade.

a number of other public streets. The minor arterial system interconnects with and augments the major arterial system. It accommodates trips of somewhat shorter length and at lower operating speeds.

**Major Collector:** Major collectors are streets that penetrate neighborhoods, collecting traffic from local streets in the neighborhoods, and channeling it into the arterial systems. A fair amount of through traffic and/or local bus routes may be carried on a major collector street.

**Minor Collector:** Minor collectors are similar to major collectors but they are more neighborhood penetrating and have lesser amounts of through traffic. In most cases, bus routes on minor collectors will be limited to school buses.

**Local Streets:** Local Streets are streets that primarily provide direct access to abutting land and access to the higher systems. They offer a low level of mobility and usually carry no bus routes. Service to through traffic is deliberately discouraged.

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Route 113 (section of Main Street from Tyngsborough town line to Town Center and Pleasant Street to Pepperell town line) is the only minor arterial traversing Dunstable. By its location and design, it facilitates movements between Route 3 on the east and destinations in the Towns of Dunstable, Pepperell and Groton to the west. Because they collect local traffic and are also used by through travelers (although to a lesser extent than Route 113),<sup>10</sup> Groton Street, Lowell Street, Westford Street, High Street, and Main Street between Town Center and the New Hampshire border, function as major collector roads directing travelers south towards Groton/Westford and Tyngsborough/Lowell. As major collectors, these streets not only intersect with and carry traffic from local streets to the arterials, but are also used by through travelers. All other roads in Dunstable function as local or residential streets intended to provide access to abutting parcels only. In terms of mileage, there are approximately 7.5 miles of minor arterial streets in Dunstable - i.e., Route 113 and the segment of Main Street between the Town Center and NH border. Major collector streets represent only 5.5 miles of roadway in the town; there are no minor collectors. The remaining 26.7 miles are local streets.

In order to protect their scenic and historic qualities, all roads in Dunstable - except Route 113 - enjoy the status of being designated “scenic roads” under the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 15C. By virtue of this designation, any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving along local roads which involves the cutting or removal of trees, or the destruction of any portion of a stone wall, requires town approval.

It is important that a community have a street system that includes a hierarchy of street types designed to accommodate through traffic, yet is connected to residential areas and neighborhoods by a coordinated system of collector and local streets. Local streets should connect with collector streets which, in turn, should carry traffic to arterials. When local or residential streets are properly linked to the larger traffic-carrying streets (collectors and minor arterials), local safety is enhanced and the chances of a street’s use by through traffic as a short-cut is minimized.

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<sup>10</sup> Local traffic is generated by land uses located within the community. Through traffic represents trips which have no origin or destination in the community -- i.e., trips that travel completely “through” the town in order to reach their destinations. Through trips, rather than local trips made by residents of the area or workers and customers of local activity centers, are the primary causes of congestion in many communities.

While the basic configuration of the Dunstable street system was sound when it was developed over 100 years ago, streets like Westford Street, Lowell Street, Groton and High Streets that historically provided access to abutting properties now provide connections between major traffic generators in adjacent communities and the region. As a result, they now function more like collector streets and must now carry heavier traffic loads than the residential streets suited to light local traffic for which they were originally designed. Unfortunately, there are no feasible alternative streets in the Dunstable circulation system with adequate carrying-capacity that are better suited from both a circulation and land use perspective to carry the through traffic presently traveling on these streets. Consequently, as growth in the areas served by these roads occurs, it may become desirable for the regional planning agency to evaluate new street segments onto which through traffic could be re-routed. Alternatively, consideration might be given to making changes in the physical design of the affected streets to better accommodate the expected loads of through traffic.

### Layout and Design of Dunstable Streets

In addition to functional class, the Road Inventory File for Dunstable also describes the basic geometry of each street or street segment in the town in terms of such items as: (a) the width of the right-of-way (R.O.W.)<sup>11</sup>; (b) the number of travel lanes; (c) pavement and shoulder width and type; (d) the structural condition of the road; and (e) the existence of sidewalks. Consistent with its rural character, there are no more than two travel lanes of varying widths on every street in the town. Due to the limited pavement that exists, parking is discouraged on all major and minor streets within the town.

Street design standards are an effective and important tool available to communities to control the type and speed of vehicles on their street system and to promote a desired “character.”<sup>12</sup> When designing streets, it is important to remember that wide and straight stretches of paved streets say to motorists, “This is your turf.” Streets that use landscaping and narrowed lanes have a relaxed, pedestrian feel that says to the driver, “Beware, this is shared space.”<sup>13</sup> Table 7-5 summarizes and compares: (a) the street geometry that actually exists on different types of streets in the town (from previous Table 7-3), with (b) the right-of-way width and street design standards presently required under the Town of Dunstable's subdivision regulations, and (c) street design standards that have been adopted in other communities.

As shown by the comparisons in Table 7-5, the different functional classes of streets in Dunstable are all relatively narrow given their functional purpose - a condition that not only reflects their historical origin but also promotes the slowest possible travel speeds for the volume of vehicles being moved. In addition, paved shoulders are non-existent on most streets, with vegetation, trees, stone walls, and utility poles situated very close to the edge of pavement. These conditions contribute in a very meaningful way to the maintenance of the town's rural character and preserve

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<sup>11</sup> Right-of-way refers to all publicly-owned land and thereby incorporates the roadway, sidewalk, grassy area, street trees, and/or public utilities.

<sup>12</sup> See Homburger, W. S., et al, *Residential Street Design and Traffic Control*, ITE: Prentice Hall, 1989, Chapter 2, “Design of Local Streets and Traffic Characteristics,” p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia L. Hoyle, *Traffic Calming*, American Planning Association, Planning Advisory Service Report Number 456, July 1995, p. 16.

the scenic landscapes that the street system provides access to. On streets with narrow cross-sections, truck movements are discouraged and motorists have no choice but to travel at slower speeds.

**Table 7-5  
Comparison of Street Conditions in Dunstable with Street Design Standards**

Pavement	Street Classification	Right-of-Way	
		Width	Width
Typical Design Standard <sup>1</sup>	Local	50-60'	22-36'
	Collector	70'	36-40'
	Arterial	-	-
Existing Streets in Dunstable <sup>2</sup>	Local	40'-55'	12'-24'
	Collector	40'-60'	16'-24'
	Arterial (minor)	40'-60'	19'-24'
Dunstable Subdivision Regulations <sup>3</sup>	All streets	55'	28' min.

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Transportation Engineers, *Recommended Guidelines for Subdivision Streets*, Washington, D.C., 1984.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A, Road Inventory File, and Table 3. Figures are representative of majority of streets in the functional class.

<sup>3</sup> Dunstable Planning Board, *Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land in Dunstable, Massachusetts* as most recently revised in January 1997, Section IV. Design Standards. Pavement width shown includes 2 - 10' travel lanes and 1 - 8' lane for parking.

While the majority of streets in Dunstable are characterized by narrow pavement and travel lane widths, it is important to note that many of the new subdivision streets in Dunstable are significantly wider and straighter than the older streets - conditions encouraged by the Town's existing subdivision regulations for street design. New subdivision streets such as Adams Street, Upton Street, and Meadow View Hills are all 24 feet wide; Century Way is an unexplainable 32 feet wide along its entire length. Although generally consistent with the town's subdivision regulations and sound street design practice, the wide rights-of-way, long sight distances, and large radii curves that exist on these new subdivision streets facilitate driving at speeds that is not always compatible with the pedestrian-oriented, "rural" atmosphere that is desirable in Dunstable. Excessively wide streets also present a formidable barrier for pedestrians to cross, especially by the elderly and children. The Town of Dunstable may want to consider revising its existing subdivision regulations so as to (a) distinguish between different types of roads, and (b) reduce the width of the required street cross section for local streets.

**Traffic Congestion and Safety on Dunstable Streets**

Average daily traffic counts available from the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), coupled with the observations of local officials, confirm the existence of low traffic volumes and minimal congestion on virtually all streets in the Town, except Route 113. As indicated in Table 7-6, available traffic counts taken on the local and collector streets in Dunstable range indicated daily volumes ranging from roughly 200 vehicles per day up to 2,600 vehicles daily. There is more than ample capacity on these types of streets to efficiently move this traffic during peak as well as off-peak periods.

In contrast, nearly 13,000 vehicles traveled daily on Route 113 in 1994. This represented a 25 percent increase over the volumes of traffic experienced in 1991 on Route 113 in the vicinity of Town Center. Given this volume of daily traffic, peak hourly traffic volumes on Route 113 during the AM and PM peak periods of commuter activity is estimated to be approximately 1,400 vehicles per hour - a substantial volume of 2-way traffic for a 2-lane arterial street. Although this volume of traffic does not approach the capacity of Route 113<sup>14</sup>, the heavy and steady flow of traffic along Route 113 during peak hours makes turning movements at many of the intersecting roadways difficult and pedestrian movements along and across Route 113 potentially very hazardous.

**Table 7-6  
Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Volumes at Selected Locations - Dunstable, MA**

<u>Class of Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>ADT</u>	<u>Year</u>
<b>Local</b>	River Road at Pepperell Town Line	200	1994
	High Street at NH State Line	400	1994
	High Street btwn Main and Thorndike	700	1994
	Hollis Street at NH State Line	200	1994
	Pond Street at Route 113	500	1992
<b>Collector</b>	Groton Street at Groton Town Line	1,600	1994
	Groton Street north of Dogwood Lane	2,600	1996
	Lowell Street at Route 113	2,300	1992
	Westford Street at Tyngsborough Town Line	600	1994
<b>Arterial</b>	Main Street at NH State Line	1,400	1994
	Route 113 at Pepperell Town Line	6,300	1993
	Route 113 NE of Pond Street	12,300	1994
	Route 113 btwn Westford and Hillcrest	11,200	1994
	Route 113 at Tyngsborough Town Line	12,600	1994

Source: NMCOG, Regional Traffic Counts from 1987 to 1997.

Although a complete review of local accident data has not been made, Dunstable residents consider the greatest potential for accidents - i.e., locations at which vehicle/vehicle and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts or “near misses” occur regularly - to be highest at Town Center where Main Street and Pleasant Street intersect. The close proximity to this intersection of the Swallow-Union Elementary School, Town office building, the town common area and church, a small commercial area, and the new Dunstable Free Public Library, creates an environment in which there are numerous pedestrian and vehicle movements and conflicts. The unsafe movement of patrons onto Pleasant Street from angle parking spaces allowed in front of commercial establishments adjacent to the intersection also contributes to hazardous conditions in this area.

**Transit Services in Dunstable**

<sup>14</sup> The capacity of a street is a measure of its ability to accommodate a moving stream of vehicles. Roadway capacity represents the upper limit of the number of vehicles that can pass a given point in a specified time period under prevailing traffic and environmental conditions (e.g., number of travel lanes, lane widths, grades, conflicts, traffic composition). When the capacity of a roadway is exceeded, traffic will no longer flow freely. On the contrary, queues will form, the frequency of stop-and-go conditions will increase, slower travel times will result, and increase accident exposure will exist.

As suggested by previous Table 7-2, public transit services are not available or readily accessible to Dunstable residents. There are no local fixed route bus services presently operating in the Town of Dunstable. The nearest commuter rail station with MBTA service to North Station in Boston is located at Gallagher Terminal in Lowell.

Despite the absence of fixed route bus or rail service, the Town of Dunstable voted recently to join the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA)<sup>15</sup> to avail itself of Road Runner bus services.<sup>16</sup> This “Road Runner” bus service will consist of dial-a-ride and pre-scheduled paratransit services and will be available to Dunstable residents who are elderly (60+ years of age) or handicapped for all types of trip purposes. Neither the population density nor concentration of employment in Dunstable is sufficient to support even a minimum level of local bus service.<sup>17</sup> These conditions are not expected to change in the future upon build-out within the town.

### **Pedestrian Access in Dunstable**

While the capacity of the street circulation system, and the availability of alternative modes of transport are important components of a master plan, so too are the special needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, and even equestrians. According to the Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan,<sup>18</sup> there is only one exclusive path or trail in Dunstable currently targeted for use by town residents for walking, bicycling, and horse travel.

Residents from Dunstable and neighboring towns are currently involved in planning for the Nashua Valley Rail Trail bicycle path that would be developed on the old Ayer to Hollis Depot railroad line currently belonging to the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). Running a total of 11.3 miles from Ayer to the New Hampshire border, 2 miles of this rail trail lies along the western border of Dunstable. It is planned to be handicapped accessible and available for non-motorized recreation only, i.e., for bicycle, horse, and foot travel, but not for ATV or snowmobile use. Trails also exist within the old Red Line railroad right-of-way that runs north to Nashua along the west side of Salmon Brook and borders the Spaulding Proctor Reservation. However, because most of the land within this old R.O.W. is now privately owned, a continuous formal trail does not exist.

The absence of sidewalks and street lighting on major streets, as well as on the majority of local streets, also discourages pedestrian movements and the benefits of recreation associated with a

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<sup>15</sup> The Lowell Regional Transit Authority service area currently includes the cities/towns of Lowell, Tewksbury, Dracut, Billerica, Chelmsford, Acton, Westford, Tyngsborough, Groton, Pepperell and Townsend.

<sup>16</sup> At Annual Town Meeting held on May 11, 1998, the Town of Dunstable voted unanimously to join the LRTA and to authorized the expenditure of up to \$15,000 for LRTA Road Runner bus service (see Article 7 of Town Warrant). Road runner paratransit services are currently offered by LRTA for the elderly and handicapped in ten other communities within its service area.

<sup>17</sup> A minimum level of local bus service (20 daily bus trips in each direction) or one bus per hour is often provided in residential area averaging 4-5 dwelling units per acre. Typically, these residential densities correspond to gross population densities of 3,000 - 4,000 people per square mile.

<sup>18</sup> *Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan*, prepared by Liz Fletcher, Planner, for the Dunstable Conservation Commission, January 1998.

formal trail system. Without segregated and safe pedestrian or bike trails, children and adults alike are now forced to share very limited street space if walking or bicycling and, by so doing, expose themselves to undesirable safety risks.

In recognition of this deficiency, the Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan has recommended among its many goals and activities that the Town of Dunstable:

- (1) acquire scenic easements along Route 113 from the Tyngsborough town line to Town Center (the “gateway to Dunstable”) with the intent of establishing a Greenway at least 100 feet wide on each side of the road. These easements would not only preserve the beautiful vistas, woods, farms and fields along this road, but might also contain bicycle paths, bridle paths and/or pedestrian walking paths for safety and recreational use.
- (2) seek trail connections on the old Red Line railway along Salmon Brook;
- (3) continue to support the development of a bicycle path on the DEM Nashua Valley Rail Trail;
- (4) explore with the Massachusetts Highway Department the feasibility of marking a bicycle lane along the edge of the widened pavement on Route 113 between the Pepperell line and the Town Center; and,
- (5) adopt design controls with the Town’s subdivision regulations that would require cluster development open space to preserve trails that might otherwise be lost and to provide necessary connections to existing trails.

In pursuit of these goals, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Dunstable submitted an application on May 1, 1998 to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Transportation and Construction for ISTEA - Transportation Enhancement Program funds which would be used to plan and design the “Dunstable Greenway (Route 113/Main Street) Bike Path.” As proposed, this bike path would run from the Tyngsborough town-line to Town Center and then continue along Main Street to the Nashua, NH town line. The bike path would also travel along Fletcher and Hollis Streets where it would connect with the northern terminus of the Nashua Valley Rail Trail.

## **7.2 ASSESSMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Dunstable residents rely almost exclusively on their automobiles and the local/regional street system to meet their transportation needs. Despite that fact that very few new roads have been built in Dunstable over the past 100 years, residents presently enjoy relatively high levels of

accessibility both within the town and the region. With few exceptions, the transportation system available to Dunstable residents provides adequate access to most user groups and satisfies the majority of community needs. More specifically:

- Dunstable residents enjoys ready access to a major regional highway (Route 3) at three interchange locations - at Westford Street in Tyngsborough (Exit 34), at Route 113 also in Tyngsborough (Exit 35); and from Spit Brook Road in Nashua, NH (Exit 1, NH). Although no fixed route bus services are available, commuter rail service to Boston is located in nearby Lowell. The town is fortunate to have ready access to these alternative modes without the attendant traffic congestion and other problems (security, etc.) that would arise from their physical presence within the town.
- The existing street and circulation system in the Town of Dunstable is generally well designed. With some exceptions, local or residential streets are all linked to the larger traffic-carrying streets (collectors and minor arterials) in a way that facilitates good access to other parts of the community and region. The hierarchy of street types that exists has arterials connecting with collectors, which in turn intersect with local streets. As a result, “unwanted traffic” on residential streets - i.e., traffic using the streets as shortcuts, detours, or overflow from a nearby congested arterial - is generally not a concern.
- With the exception of heavy peak period traffic flows on Route 113, Dunstable does not experience consistent periods of traffic congestion on its local streets. The traffic generated by the current pattern and intensity of development in Dunstable is highly compatible with the size, configuration, and location of the existing street system. The overwhelming residential character of the community - in combination with the extremely small size of its business areas - generates minimal volumes of traffic and congestion on the local street network. With more than ample capacity on the local street system, traffic moves efficiently and safely without the need for excessive traffic controls. There are no traffic signals within the entire town of Dunstable. In the absence of any significant congestion or consistent “bottleneck” locations, no major street improvement (i.e., street widening or new street segments) or intersection signalization projects are warranted or planned.
- Traffic traveling “through” Dunstable, not local traffic, is the primary source of limited street congestion that does exist in the Town. There is ample capacity on the local street system to safely and efficiently accommodate local trips made by Dunstable residents. However, trips made by those traveling through the town - especially during the morning and evening peak commuter periods - create undesirable congestion on Route 113 and the main feeder road that intersect with it. The most congested and potentially hazardous location in Dunstable is Town Center where Main and Pleasant Streets and there is a concentration of pedestrian-oriented businesses and other uses. The angle of the intersection of Main Street and Pleasant Street also makes movements from Main Street eastbound difficult. Despite warning signs and markings, pedestrian movements are discouraged by the many conflict points that arise from the convergence of so many streets and vehicles.
- The geometry of existing streets in the town reflects an historical predisposition toward the construction of individual streets with very narrow pavement widths and travel lanes, regardless of their functional classification and use. In fact, the relatively narrow width of roads in Dunstable has an important “traffic calming” effect on travel through Dunstable. Subdivision street design requirements adopted by the town reinforce this narrow street

design - although new subdivision streets appear to be considerably wider and straighter than older streets. These street design requirements contribute in a very meaningful way to the rural character that is so important to Dunstable residents and must be dutifully applied to all future street construction.

- While auto accessibility is relatively high in the Town of Dunstable, the needs of pedestrians (walkers, joggers) and bicyclists (also roller bladers) are not currently being met. Most major streets lack sidewalks. And although there are a series of bridle and walking areas on town owned conservation areas scattered across the town, there are no continuous designated paths or trails that provide safe connections between major destinations in town. As a result, children and adults alike are now forced to share limited street space if walking or bicycling and, in so doing, expose themselves to undesirable safety risks. To address this deficiency, efforts are underway to develop a Greenway bike and pedestrian path along Route 113 and Main Street from the Tyngsborough Town Line to the New Hampshire border, with connections to the old Red Line railway corridor along Salmon Brook and the proposed Nashua River Rail Trail along the western border of Dunstable.

Overall, the existing transportation system in Dunstable is in reasonable “balance” with its land use plan. However, the future development and occupancy of currently vacant or underutilized land in the town will generate new vehicle trips on the town street system, *may* increase vehicle congestion, and *may* create additional points of vehicle/pedestrian conflict. However, by controlling the location, type and intensity of land uses in the town - through the Town zoning bylaws - it becomes possible to exert some control over the traffic volumes that could contribute to future problem areas.

### **7.3 TRANSPORTATION GOALS**

As future development in the Town of Dunstable occurs, the following basic transportation goals should be considered. These goals emerged from the community survey and public forums:

- 9) Control and manage the traffic generated by commuters traveling through Dunstable by improving operations at congested and unsafe intersections (e.g., Town Center).
- 10) Keep unnecessary traffic off local, residential streets.
- 11) Improve the safety of pedestrian pathways and vehicular crossings in Town Center.
- 12) Create multiple-use paths between residential areas and popular destinations in Dunstable.
- 13) Promote the use of public transportation by residents and employees, when possible.
- 14) Preserve the rural character of Dunstable by ensuring that new development does not affect the ability of the existing transportation system to provide a reasonable level of service.
- 15) Promote safety in residential areas by separating vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle movements

whenever possible.

- 16) Utilize former railroad rights-of-way to develop pedestrian and bicycle trails.

## **7.4 TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Develop Design Plan for Town Center**

Although Town Center will not be a particularly dense activity center, even with the eventual construction of a municipal services center (Fire, Police, EMS), it is a focal point in the Town that must be supported by improved pedestrian access and sidewalks. The location of the new Dunstable public library on Pleasant Street itself warrants the need for improved pedestrian connections in this area. As the development of Town Center progresses, it will be essential that pedestrian and vehicular access needs be reviewed carefully in the context of an overall design plan that addresses the orientation of the major buildings and parking spaces, building design and facade, and streetscape design. It will also be important that the density of future development in Town Center, and the location of necessary access drives, not necessitate the installation of a traffic signal on Main Street or Pleasant Street.

### **2. Establish Multi-Use Trails Committee**

Roads in Dunstable are too dangerous now for walking, jogging, or bicycling. Concerted efforts need to be made to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety along Dunstable streets by providing a multi-use path or trail system to link important areas of the Town. There is a need for a multi-use path system that can be used by residents and non-residents alike to travel by foot or bicycle between the Town Center and major conservation lands (e.g., existing railroad beds, town forest land). Walkways and multi-use paths (not narrow sidewalks) should also be strategically placed at safe distances along Route 113 (behind existing stone walls, trees, etc.) and other major roads in Town (the “Greenway” concept). A town-wide trail plan is essential to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists while protecting the rural character that is so important to the community.

### **3. Enforce Vehicular Speed Limits**

In the pursuit of improved safety, it is also recommended that consideration be given to: (a) a heightened police presence and more strict police enforcement of speed limits throughout the Town, but especially on Route 113; and (b) a public education program aimed at Dunstable residents and the positive effect they can have on safety by not exceeding the speed limit when they travel on Dunstable roads.

### **4. Expand Non-Traditional Transit Services (as necessary)**

Although Dunstable residents rely heavily on their autos, efforts to provide for the special needs of the elderly and handicapped who do not have ready access to autos must be encouraged. Recent approval by Town Meeting of Road Runner service by the LRTA is to be applauded and service expanded if the need arises.

### **5. Residential Street Location and Design**

Dunstable must continue to utilize its zoning bylaws and site plan approval regulations to control traffic flow and safety to the maximum extent possible. The location of new subdivision streets

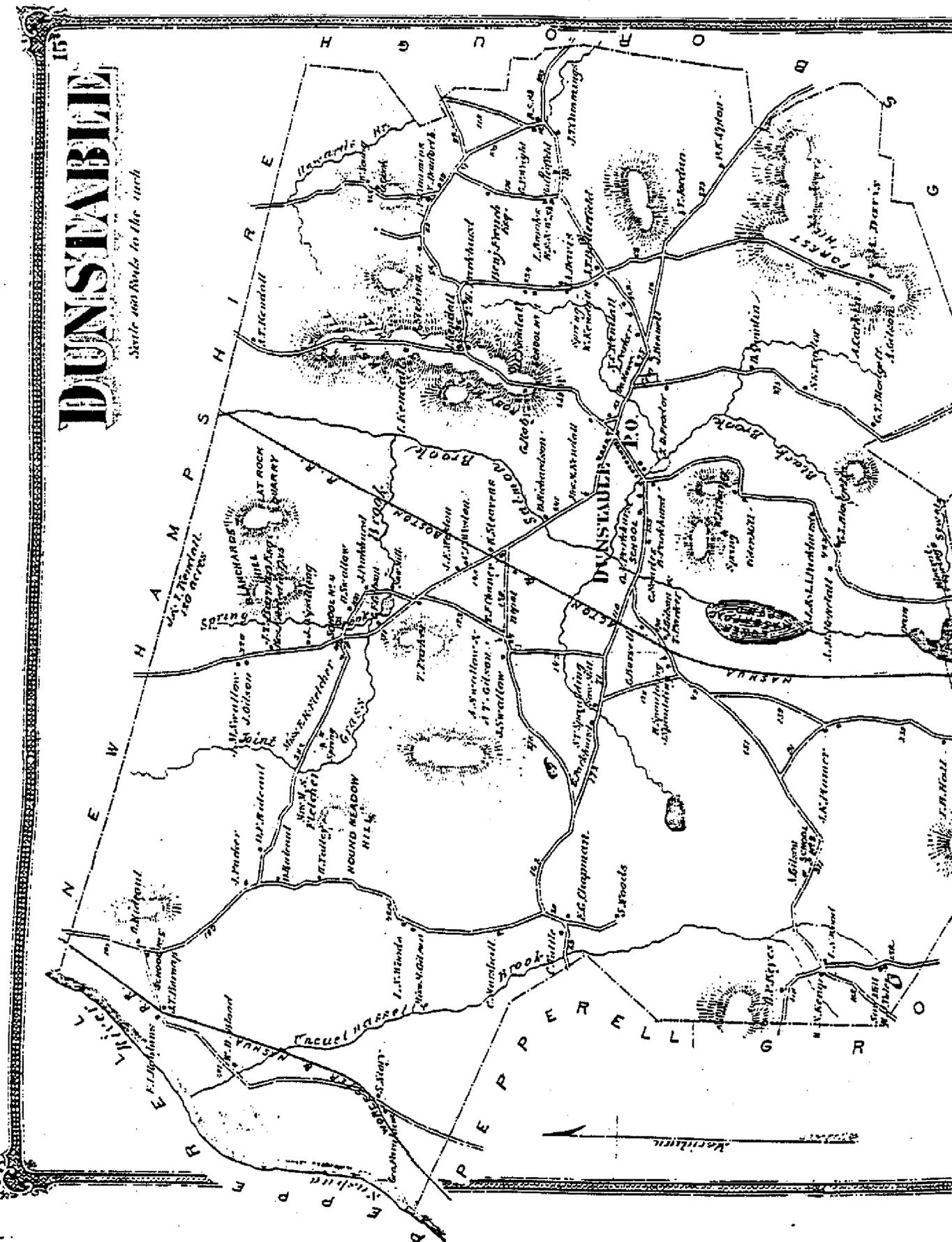
and their design should reinforce community desires to keep non-residents off of local streets, encourage slow speeds, and provide for safe pedestrian/bicycle movements. To accomplish this, there must be consistent application of existing zoning and site plan review regulations regarding, for example, the length of cul-de-sacs and the width of new subdivision roads. Consideration should also be given to requiring developers to incorporate multi-use paths within their subdivision or cluster designs. This linkage can be encouraged by requiring easements or financial contributions to a community sidewalk or path fund as conditions of approval.

## **6. Regional Planning Initiatives**

The Town of Dunstable can discourage through travel and excessive speeds on town roads by resisting any roadway improvements that widen the travel lanes or increase the capacity of its existing roads. Despite these efforts, peak period congestion will continue to occur on Dunstable roads as motorists with origins or destinations in adjacent communities travel “through” Dunstable to reach Route 3 and the commercial district in Nashua, NH. The volume of “through” travelers on Dunstable roads is beyond the control of a local master plan. Nevertheless, the Town can indirectly influence the extent of through travel by actively participating in the regional transportation and land use planning processes of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments.

By promoting the expansion of Route 3, representatives of the Town can do their part to maintain the functional integrity of that regional highway and thereby minimize the likelihood of motorist diversion onto Dunstable roads. Participation in the regional planning process also provides the opportunity to indirectly influence the land use and growth plans of adjacent communities and contribute so much to the volume of through travelers on Route 113.

1875 Map of Dunstable



# DUNSTABLE

State and Wells to the north

15



# DUNSTABLE

State and Wells to the north

15





# **Section 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

## **Section 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

2/26/99

The Implementation Plan outlines short term and long term municipal actions needed to achieve the objectives of the Master Plan. Included are scheduled expansions or replacements of public facilities, traffic improvements and the anticipated costs associated with accomplishment of such activities. The Implementation Plan also specifies the process by which the community's regulatory structure should be amended so as to be consistent with the Master Plan.

The Implementation Plan translates generalized goals and objectives of the Master Plan into specific actions within a suggested time frame. It is based on a strategy of priorities matched to the realities of Dunstable's ability to move along this course. A plan of this kind gives the, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and other Town bodies and officials an overview of what needs to be done and a timeline for completion. It is not a rigid directive but a set of guidelines for the possible, under the best of circumstances. Thus, the time frame is only suggestive and should be reviewed and modified periodically on the basis of actual performance.

### **8.1 REGULATORY ANALYSIS**

The principal regulatory controls related to land use and development are Dunstable's Zoning Bylaw, Zoning Map and Subdivision Rules and Regulations which were evaluated as part of the Master Plan review process. The Zoning Bylaw is well organized, comprehensive and clear. Although we recommend some specific Zoning By-Law changes to improve certain aspects of Master Plan implementation, the basic structure of the Bylaw is sound. In order to implement the Master Plan recommendations, a number of zoning map changes are also recommended.

#### **Review of Dunstable's Zoning Bylaw**

The Town's Zoning Bylaw is authorized under Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws. Any changes to the Zoning By-Law or Zoning Map requires a two-thirds affirmatory vote of Town Meeting after a public hearing by the Planning Board.

The Bylaw is presented in twenty sections, with a Table of Contents at the beginning, as follows:

Section 1	Purposes
Section 2	Zoning Map
Section 3	Establishment of Districts
Section 4	Non-Conforming Uses
Section 5	New Construction & New Uses
Section 6	R-1 Single Family Residence District
Section 7	R-2 General Residence District
Section 8	B-1 Retail Business District
Section 9	B-2 Service Business District
Section 10	B-3 Expanded Commercial District
Section 11	Development Rules & Regulations for all districts
Section 12	Parking and Loading Areas
Section 13	Signs
Section 14	Site Plans
Section 15	General Regulations
Section 16	Administration
Section 17	Board of Appeals
Section 18	Procedural Matters
Section 19	Validity & Conflict of Laws
Section 20	Definitions

Generally speaking, the Dunstable Zoning Bylaw is well-organized and technically sound.

The following improvements to the Zoning Bylaw are recommended:

1. It is recommended that some sections be consolidated as follows:

- Section 1: Purpose**
- Section 2: Zoning Map**
- Section 3: Establishment of Districts**
  - 3.1: New Construction and New Uses (currently Section 5)
- Section 4: Permitted Uses**
  - 4.1: Non-conforming Uses (currently Section 4)
  - 4.2: R-1 Single Family Residence District (currently Section 6)
  - 4.2.1: Open Space Development (currently Subsection 6.6)
  - 4.3: R-1a commercial Recreation (currently Section 6a)
  - 4.4: R-2 General Residence District (currently Section 7)
  - 4.5: B-1 Retail Business District (currently Section 8)
  - 4.6: B-2 Expanded Commercial District (currently Section 9)
  - 4.7: B-3 Expanded Commercial District (currently Section 10)
- Section 5: Intensity Regulations** (currently titled “Development Rules & Regulations for all Districts” – Section 11)
  - 5.1: Table of Dimensional Requirements (currently Subsection 11.1)

<b>Section 6:</b>	<b>Parking and Loading Areas (currently Section 12)</b>
<b>Section 7:</b>	<b>Signs (currently Section 13)</b>
<b>Section 8:</b>	<b>Site Plans (currently Section 14)</b>
<b>Section 9:</b>	<b>General Regulations (currently Section 15)</b>
9.1:	Removal of Earth (currently Subsection 15.1)
9.2:	Floodplain District (currently Subsection 15.2)
9.3:	Uses Accessory to Scientific Endeavor (currently Subsection 15.3)
<b>Section 10:</b>	<b>Administration (currently Section 16)</b>
10.1:	Procedural Matters (currently Section 18)
<b>Section 11:</b>	<b>Board of Appeals (currently Section 17)</b>
<b>Section 12:</b>	<b>Validity and Conflict of Laws (currently Section 19)</b>
<b>Section 13:</b>	<b>Definitions (currently Section 20)</b>

2. The Bylaw could benefit from better use of graphic techniques to make it easier to read.
3. It is recommended that a “Table of Permitted Uses” be inserted as a subsection to the above Section 4.
4. The definitions section (currently Section 20) needs definitions for additional words and phrases. A comprehensive review of the definitions is needed.
5. It is recommended that Open Space Development (Cluster) be required in some areas or that incentives be offered to encourage more cluster development.
6. The Town should consider the option for non-criminal enforcement of the Zoning Bylaw under Chapter 40, Section 21 of the Massachusetts General Laws by the issuance of tickets for violation. This would then be stated as an option of the Town in Section 16.3 (Violations and Penalty) of the Bylaw.
7. The Town should consider adopting a new Public and Semi-Public District to include public and quasi-public uses and protected open space.

### **Subdivision Rules and Regulations**

The Town’s Subdivision Rules and Regulations regulate the manner in which land is subdivided in the town, within the limits authorized by Chapter 40, Section 81, of the Massachusetts General Laws. New or revised subdivision regulations may be adopted by the Planning Board after a public hearing. We have reviewed the Town’s Subdivision Rules and Regulations and find them to be meeting reasonable standards for their purpose.

## **Zoning Map**

It is recommended that the town-wide Zoning Map in the Bylaw be improved to make it more readable. A map showing Zoning Map changes required to implement the proposed Guide Plan For Future Land Use is being submitted under separate cover.

## **8.2 OTHER GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND REGULATORY MECHANISMS**

Implementation strategies focus on zoning by-law modifications, subdivision control revisions, and urban design recommendations. The following strategies outline mechanisms to allow Dunstable to recapture costs associated with providing Town services, and to relate new development approvals to new facilities or infrastructure required to service the development. While we have summarized some of the legal issues associated with these mechanisms, a fuller and more detailed review is required by Dunstable's Town Counsel before detailed solutions can be developed by the Town.

### **Growth Control**

Although there is no current state enabling legislation allowing communities to regulate the rate of private development, in some cases local bylaws limiting rates of growth have been approved by the State Attorney General's office. Usually such bylaws relate directly to a lack of public facilities (such as water and sewer) to support rates of growth exceeding specified maximums. It is recommended that Dunstable consider drafting a growth rate bylaw for consideration by local Town Counsel and the Attorney General's office.

### **User Fees**

Constrained by the limitations of Proposition 2½, voter resistance to increased taxes and reductions in Federal assistance, local governments in Massachusetts are exploring alternative funding sources and mechanisms to pay for the impacts of new development. User fees (fees assessed for goods and services that a governmental body provides such as recreation and refuse collection) have become extensively used by local governments.

User fees are not feasible for all municipal services. Water and sewer fees, however, are examples of user charges that can be established to cover not only direct costs of providing service, but new connections or hook-ups. In general, rates for new water and sewer services can be established on the basis of expected community growth levels and upon a projected costs basis for new capital improvements for water and sewer lines.

Dunstable's Town Counsel should be consulted to ascertain that the Town has the authority to implement/increase user fees. Many fees have limits set by State law. However, State legislation has broadened municipal options by increasing fees limits or allowing local officials to set fees and charges (see The Review Fees Statute, Chapter 593 of the Acts of 1989).

User fees or connection charges are always subject to attack on the theory that they are, in fact, disguised taxes. In general, the Massachusetts courts have deferred to the municipality's characterization of such connection charges as a fee. However, the true nature of such a charge must be determined by its operational effect. Massachusetts Case Law has provided some direction on whether a local charge is a valid user fee or an illegal tax and this should be considered by Dunstable's Town Counsel in reviewing any new or modified user fee being proposed.

## **Impact Fees**

Impact fees are normally established in order to compensate a municipality for the cost of providing specific services, and not to raise general revenue. It is a regulatory mechanism for deriving public benefits from either all as-of-right new development (this is without thresholds), or from development above a specific threshold in connection with the grant of a discretionary special permit where, in effect, some density or use incentive is offered in return for the provision by the developer of an appropriate amenity (a public benefit either “in kind” or payment of fee). The first approach of impact fees for all new development is almost certainly not now authorized under existing Massachusetts law.

The second approach in connection with the granting of a special permit appears to have some authority under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, the Massachusetts Zoning Act, although there are no clear statutory or case law guidelines on which to base a legal defense. A number of municipalities have some form of “in kind” exactions (such as the provision of affordable housing units) in connection with a special permit use. The basis for these exactions were the provisions of Section 9 of Chapter 40A, the Massachusetts Zoning Act, which provides that special permits may authorize increases in density or intensity of use provided that the applicant, as a condition of the grant of the special permit, provides certain amenities, including “housing for persons of lower or moderate income, traffic or pedestrian improvements ... or other amenities.” However, Massachusetts courts have not passed upon, or approved, local ordinances contemplating the payment of fees, rather than provision of actual “amenities” in the context of this language.

Massachusetts has not yet adopted direct statutory authority to create such an impact fee system, although other states such as Florida have widely used impact fees. From the Florida impact fee case standards, the methodology required to establish a legally defensible impact fee system includes the following:

- The municipality should establish a capital budget program to:
  - Justify the need for the specific improvement (i.e., school, road, park, water or sewer extension, etc.).
  - Determine the realistic cost for the improvement.
- Develop a fair and reasonable cost allocation method to share the costs equitably.
- Establish a separate or so-called “enterprise” fund to hold the fees until spent.
- Build the facility or improvement necessitated by the development within a reasonable time (say five years) or return the funds to the developer.

By outlining this approach, we are not necessarily suggesting that Dunstable should immediately adopt an impact fee system based on the foregoing. Several pieces of proposed legislation are now pending before the General Court which would authorize impact fees of various types. At such time as one of these proposals becomes law, the Town would have at its disposal a form of authority to adopt an impact fee system which would legally be defensible.

### **8.3 CAPITAL BUDGETING**

The Town of Dunstable has a capital budgeting program administered by the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, in cooperation with all of the various Town departments. Many of the recommendations of the Master Plan, especially community facilities such as schools, parks, open space and other facilities either are now or will eventually be incorporated into the long range Capital Improvement Program as they gain acceptance of the Departments and the citizens of Dunstable. A review of the Town's bonded indebtedness indicates that the Town will have the capacity to bond the projects recommended by the Master Plan as the existing debt is reduced.

Some towns choose to separate larger projects with substantial fiscal impacts to the Town from smaller projects which may be grouped as "budget items" rather than "capital improvements." Capital improvements have, for example, been defined in some communities as "projects with a cost in excess of (say \$100,000) and a life in excess of (say 10 years)." These could also be termed "long term capital improvements."

### **8.4 OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION**

A number of methods of possible open space preservation are outlined in Section 4, Natural Resources, including direct purchase, easements, conservation trusts, agricultural preservation. The preservation of open space is a key aspect of the Master Plan and has important future implications to the Town's future fiscal health as well as the obvious environmental benefits.

The Town may wish to consider a number of means of financing open space "landbanking" though the imposition of a transfer tax on real estate for the purpose of open space acquisition. Another more modest method of accumulating funds for open space acquisition is through the establishment of an annual appropriation to an "open space acquisition account" by the Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of this approach is to insure that the Town has available funds to act if specific parcels of open space become available, if state or federal funds become available and require matching funds, or if options or appraisals on specific parcels are needed.

Appendix 8-2 includes a list of potential funding sources for open space acquisition.

### **8.5 LOCAL PLANNING CAPACITY**

Dunstable is a well-run community, with dedicated elected officials, town committee members, department employees, and the Board of Selectmen providing overall management. The Town currently does not have a position or department responsible for day-to-day planning activities and is unlikely to be able to fund such a position in the near future, although the Planning Board provides policy guidance in planning matters. The Town may wish to use planning consulting services to undertake specific planning studies on an "as needed" basis.

The implementation of the Master Plan requires a continuing effort by the Town. Many towns consider the implementation of the Plan as the function of the executive body of the Town (i.e. Board of Selectmen) while the planning function is the responsibility of the Planning Board. In Dunstable's case the Planning Board had the assistance of a Master Plan Committee. A "Master Plan Implementation Committee" or "Master Plan Standing Committee" (five to seven members) is sometimes appointed by the Board of Selectmen or Planning Board to oversee the Plan's

implementation. Such a committee should include representation from the Town committees involved with land use, environmental, and facilities functions of the town, including the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, School Committee, Finance Committee, etc.

Such committees usually meet bi-monthly or quarterly to review progress toward Master Plan goals and recommendations and report their findings and recommendations to the Town.

## **8.6 OTHER IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

A number of other recommendations for implementation of various Master Plan elements are included with each of the previous sections discussing each element. Appendix 8-1 which follows summarizes all recommendations by plan elements and describes actions/strategies, Town department responsible, time frame, and estimated cost.

**Appendix 8-1**

**Scheduling of Master Plan Actions**

**1. Land Use**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Cost (1999 dollars)</b>
Zoning Bylaw revisions	To regulate type and scale of physical development	Planning Board/ Town Meeting	2000	-
Zoning Map revisions	To implement Guide Plan for Future Land use	Planning Board/ Town Meeting	Varies	-
Subdivision Rules & Regulations	To regulate the subdivision of land	Planning Board	Ongoing	-
User Fees	To pass on direct costs of development to developers and users	Planning Board/ Selectmen	Ongoing	-
Impact Fees	To pass on indirect costs of development to developers and users	Planning Board/ Selectmen	Await State enabling legislation	-
Open Space Acquisition	To implement the Guide Plan for Future Land Use	Conservation Commission/ Selectmen	Ongoing	To be determined

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**2. Economic Development**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Cost (1999 dollars)</b>
Provide adequate commercial zoning to meet community's future needs and ensure that commercial uses take place only in appropriate area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rezone existing commercial area on Pleasant Street for commercial use.</li> <li>- Remove commercial zoning from area currently in B-1 district.</li> <li>- Identify and rezone additional site for commercial development.</li> </ul>	Planning Board/ Town Meeting	2000	--
Promote agriculture as a viable agricultural activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate communication between agricultural enterprises and promote use of high value crops and farming techniques.</li> <li>- Allow uses incidental to agricultural activity.</li> <li>- Consider zoning provisions to protect agricultural land.</li> </ul>	Planning Board	Ongoing	--

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**3. Housing**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Cost (1999 dollars)</b>
Maintain the rural residential character of the town.	Maintain existing residential densities.	Planning Board	Ongoing	--
Encourage open space (cluster) residential development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review design and density requirements to ensure quality development.</li> <li>- Consider making cluster zoning a requirement in some areas or offering incentives to developers to plan for open space development.</li> </ul>	Planning Board	2000	--
Seek the development of alternative housing for seniors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allow various forms of small unit or special needs housing in the R-2 district.</li> <li>- Identify additional sites for senior housing.</li> </ul>	Planning Board/Housing Committee	2000	--
Form a housing committee to study needs and identify possible locations for future housing.		Board of Selectmen or Town Meeting	2000	--

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**4. Natural Resources**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Costs (1999 dollars)</b>
Protect aquifers, groundwater resources, watersheds and wetland resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strictly enforce State Wetlands Protection and Rivers Protection Acts.</li> <li>- Nominate Salmon Brook Valley as a State Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).</li> </ul>	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	--
Protect farmland properties, agricultural soils, and forests. Prioritize and acquire natural resource areas, and expand conservation areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish "Strategic Acquisition Fund".</li> <li>- Pursue land acquisition grants from State and Federal sources.</li> <li>- Consider passing open space bond issues to provide acquisition funds.</li> <li>- Seek to obtain easements, conservation restrictions (CR) or agricultural preservation restrictions (APR) on privately owned lands.</li> </ul>	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	--
Create Wildlife corridor linkages and hiking trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect existing open space resources</li> <li>- Support construction of regional trails.</li> </ul>	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	--
Protect wildlife habitats and preserve diversity.	Encourage land management practices that preserve hospitable habitats.	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	--
Provide public access to Nashua River Corridor and Massapoag Pond.	Acquire or gain public access to shoreline property. Possibly develop partnership with Cambridge YMCA Camp at Massapoag Pond.	Selectmen	1999	To be determined

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**5. Cultural & Scenic Resources**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Costs (1999 dollars)</b>
Conduct survey and document all historic sites, cultural sites, and potential historic districts.	Fund, document, and complete survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources in town.	Historical Commission	1999	To be determined
Nominate eligible sites and districts to the National Register of Historic Places.	Select and nominate eligible sites.	Historical Commission	2000	--
Consider establishment of Local Historic Districts.	Consider establishing districts in Town Center and along Route 113.	Historical Commission	2000	--
Protect scenic vistas and provide better access to scenic sites and landscapes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider purchasing “view corridors” or “scenic easements” from certain sites</li> <li>- Consider restriction of development on hilltops.</li> <li>- Seek to obtain public access to valued scenic resources and landscapes.</li> </ul>	Selectmen; Planning Board	Ongoing	--
Protect historic integrity and functional vitality of Town Center.	Conduct study of the Center’s future. Avoid dispersal of civic functions and commercial uses away from the Center.	Planning Board	1999	--
Preserve historic integrity of Town Hall.	Study reuse, reorganization, accessibility and renovation of Town Hall.	Historical Commission	1999	--

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**6. Public Facilities & Services**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Costs (1999 dollars)</b>
Expand facilities for Police and Fire Department and EMS services. Consider constructing new Municipal Services Center behind the new Post Office site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determine staffing needs of Police and Fire Dept. based upon whether the Fire Dept. will remain a volunteer department.</li> <li>- Prepare a Space Needs and Design Study</li> <li>- Design &amp; construct new facility.</li> </ul>	Fire Dept. & Police Dept.	1999 2000 2001-2002	\$7,500 Cost determined by Space Needs and Design Study
Renovate Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct an architectural/space needs/and renovation feasibility study</li> <li>- Nominate Town Hall to federal and state Register of Historic Places.</li> <li>- Make accessibility improvements required by State AABB and federal ADA regulations</li> <li>- Conduct renovations in accordance with historic preservation/ renovation guidelines.</li> </ul>	Selectmen	1999 1999 2000-2001 2000-2001	\$2,000k Cost determined by Space Needs & Renovation Study
Identify a new site for DPW garage/Construct a new DPW Garage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify a site/consider site behind new Post Office</li> <li>- Design and Construct New Garage</li> </ul>	DPW/ Highway Dept.	1999 20001-2002	To be determined

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

Continue to develop Larter Memorial Athletic Fields for active recreational uses	Complete Construction of Athletic Fields	Rec./Parks Dept.	1999	
(Public Facilities & Services con'd)  Seek to acquire property on Massapoag Pond for publicly accessible swimming and boating recreational purposes.	Consider negotiations with for YMCA to acquire camp site on Massapoag Pond.	Selectmen	1999	To be determined
Explore need and feasibility for providing package sewage/waste water treatment plants.	Identity areas in town of concentrated development where package treatment plants would protect water resource quality	Water Dept.	2000-2001	To be determined
Acquire additional lands for cemetery purposes when opportunities for acquisition arise	Identify sites and acquire them (or seek donations of land)	Cemetery Board	2005-2010	To be determined

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**6. Circulation**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action/Strategy</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Time Frame (Fiscal Year)</b>	<b>Est. Cost (1999 dollars)</b>
Develop a design plan for Town Center	Provide safe pedestrian and vehicular access to businesses and municipal facilities located around Town Center.	Board of Selectmen	2000	To be determined
Create town-wide trail plan to connect important areas of the town.	Establish a multi-use trail committee.	Conservation Commission/Trail Committee	2000	To be determined
Enforce vehicular speed limits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide heightened police presence and enforcement throughout the town.</li> <li>- Undertake public education program.</li> </ul>	Board of Selectmen/Police Dept.	1999	--
Provide non-traditional transit services.	Expand services such as Road Runner as need arises.	Board of Selectmen	Ongoing	--
Encourage appropriate residential street location and design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply zoning and site plan review regulations consistently.</li> <li>- Consider requiring multi-use paths within subdivisions or cluster developments.</li> </ul>	Planning Board	Ongoing	--
Discourage through travel and excessive speeds on Dunstable roads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resist roadway improvements that widen travel lanes or increase capacity of existing roads.</li> <li>- Participate in regional transportation and land use planning.</li> </ul>	Board of Selectmen	Ongoing	--

## **Appendix 8-2** **Funding Sources For Open Space Acquisition**

The following is a partial list of potential funding sources (and other approaches) for open space land acquisition.

### **1. Open Space Acquisition and Improvement**

#### **Rivers Protection Act**

This recently enacted (1996) State legislation includes \$30,000,000 for acquisition of key properties important to the purposes of the Act.

#### **State Open Space Bond Bill**

Last year the State passed an open space bond authorization in the amount of \$400 million for the purchase of state and local open space, including \$50 million to replenish the Self-Help Program (described below).

#### **Massachusetts Self-Help Program**

MGL Chapter 132A, Section 11 is administered by the Division of Conservation Services. This program offers towns up to 90% reimbursement for the cost of land purchased for conservation or passive outdoor recreation. Resources protected through land and water purchases may include reservoirs, watershed areas, trails, beaches, wetlands, archaeological sites and farmland. Call 617-727-1552.

##### *Massachusetts Urban Self-Help Program*

This program provides up to 90% reimbursement for the cost of purchasing and/or developing land for recreational uses, including ballfields, golf courses, playgrounds, and other facilities. Successful acquisition projects typically provide water based recreation, link protected open space, protect rare or endangered species habitat, or protect cultural or archaeological sites. Cooperation with other governmental and nonprofit agencies is encouraged. Only municipalities with a park, playground, or recreation commission are eligible. Annual filing deadline is June 1. Contact the Division of Conservation Services at 617-727-1552.

##### *Lake and Pond Grant Program*

This program provides grants for comprehensive, integrated approaches to lake management, protection, and restoration. A maximum grant of \$10,000 is available on a 50/50 cost sharing basis. Annual application deadline is in November or December. Contact the DEM, Office of Water Resources, at 617-727-3267.

#### **National Recreational Trails Act Grant Program**

These grants provide funding for trail projects to private organizations and municipalities. Contact the DEM at 617-727-3180.

#### **Forest Stewardship Program**

This program provides incentives for sound forest management on private lands. Landowners, with the assistance of DEM foresters, develop a forest stewardship plan for their property, which

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

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(Appendix 8-2 continued)

makes them eligible for federal cost-sharing dollars to help carry out the plan. Most grants range from \$3,000 to \$5,000. Contact the DEM at 617-727-3180.

### **Urban Forest Planning and Education Grants**

Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to assist communities and non-profit groups in developing forestry programs that involve local residents and educators. Contact the DEM at 617-727-3180.

### **State Revolving Fund**

This fund supports water pollution abatement projects, and especially watershed management projects with substantial water quality and public health benefits. Typical projects include new wastewater treatment facilities as well as nonpoint source pollution abatement efforts. Contact the DEP at 617-292-5749.

### **Massachusetts Highway Department's Bikeways Program**

Grants are available to develop bikeways and to provide bicycle parking facilities.

### **Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund**

This is a federally funded program designed to reimburse cities and towns up to 50% of the total project cost to acquire and develop park and recreation and conservation land. This program is administered through the State Division of Conservation Services.

## **2. Tax Incentives for Donations of Property**

Along with altruism, tax incentives are often a major reason why property owners donate all or part of their property to nonprofit tax-exempt organizations. Federal tax law allows both individuals and corporations to take deductions from their taxable income for gifts of property, including perpetual easements, to certain organizations designated as tax-exempt by the Internal Revenue Service or to a government agency. (The nonprofit organization must be a qualified conservation organization in the case of a gift of an easement). Individuals may deduct the value of the gift up to a certain percentage of their income and can spread a sizeable deduction over several years. If the gift can be divided into sages, it may be possible to spread deductions over many years. Donating a property can also reduce the value of the donor's estate at the time federal estate taxes must be paid, an increasingly significant factor in recruiting donors, since the average age of large property owners is on the rise. Similar savings may be available in state income and estate taxes.

Consultation with experts is usual for anyone considering seeking a charitable contribution deduction or estate tax reduction for a gift of property, as not every donation of property qualifies. Moreover, the federal government has established specific procedures that donors must follow for appraisals.

## **3. Purchase of Easements**

Some communities and states have embraced the idea that purchasing conservation easements is better than purchasing the property, even though buying easements can sometimes be almost as expensive as buying the land outright. This is because it is frequently more cost effective to

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

eliminate development rights than to pay for the roads, schools, and other services required by new residents if the land is subdivided and developed for housing. This is true of most open land  
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(Appendix 8-2 continued)

far from other development, but the reasoning is most often applied in the case of farmland, where purchasing easements not only prevents inappropriate development but also helps to make the regional agricultural economy more secure. Under such a program to purchase easements, the land is protected, but the public bears no cost of maintenance and the land remains on the tax rolls and in productive use.

Purchase of easements is frequently referred to as “purchase of development rights” (PDR), as this phrase is thought by some to be more descriptive of a conservation easement’s public purpose. A more precise term when farmland is involved is “purchase of agricultural conservation easements” or “PACE”. Purchase of agricultural conservation easements is generally undertaken by local and state governments, which can issue bonds or levy taxes to obtain the necessary, usually large, amounts of funding. To date, a number of states and fifty-two counties have conservation easement programs to protect farmland. Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont have active programs; Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island have programs on the books but lack funding.

A drawback to public programs for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements is that, despite large amounts of public funds being devoted to the effort, the desire of farmers to participate far exceeds available funding.

#### **4. Land Banking for Conservation**

In 1984, acting on a new state enabling legislation allowing Nantucket, Massachusetts to purchase open space lands with a dedicated fund raised through transfer fees (a fee paid at the time real estate changes hands), the town (pop. 6,421), created a program called land banking. Such a funding source can yield millions of dollars, even when the fee rate is set as low as 1 or 2 percent of the value of the property transferred, and creates funding out of the very reason such a program is needed; a booming real estate market. A transfer fee may be more popular with the taxpaying public than other kinds of fees or taxes, since individuals feel the bite only when they buy property.

Many public land acquisition programs are operated through capital-budget programming that allows for the purchase of specific properties. These acquisitions are typically financed through general-obligation bonds, which rely on the general income of a jurisdiction to pay back the debt, rather than on a dedicated source like transfer fees. The name “land banking” comes from the idea, introduced in the 1970s, of a jurisdiction’s establishing a revolving fund to buy land on an ongoing basis for timed release into the market for development as industrial or commercial sites. Like this concept, Nantucket’s program is ongoing, but it results in the permanent retirement of open space (unless resale is approved by vote of the state legislature).

In 1995, the program in Nantucket had acquired more than 1,335 acres, or approximately 3.5 percent of the island, as permanent open space, a third of that at prices below market value. In the island’s busy real estate market, property valued at \$193 million changed hands in 1994. Thus, even with the transfer fee pegged at only 2 percent, the Land Bank Commission enjoys a

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

healthy cash flow, which is used in part to acquire property and in part to retire the debt on more than \$17 million in bonds issued to provide up-front financing for land purchases. The

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(Appendix 8-2 continued)

Massachusetts legislature is considering general legislation to allow transfer taxes and is discouraging special local acts for this purpose until the state-wide issues is resolved.

## **5. Installment Sales and Lease-Purchase Agreements**

Outright purchase is not the only way to acquire property; an organization may employ a number of creative techniques and economic incentives that may make acquisition more affordable for the buyer and more attractive to the property owner. For example, an installment sale enables the organization to spread out its expenditure of funds over time and may in some cases enable the seller to distribute any capital gains tax liability over several years. The Laudholm Trust in Maine, for instance, contracted to buy a large parcel in five installments, and the Big Sur Land Trust in California undertook a purchase with annual payments over ten years.

Another approach to acquiring property outright is a lease-purchase agreement, whereby the rent under the terms of the lease is applied toward an agreed-upon purchase price. If the leasing organization does not secure the future funding, it can terminate the agreement. Like an option to purchase, a lease-purchase agreement is useful whenever acting quickly without guaranteed funding is necessary. A lease-purchase agreement may be attractive to an owner who is anxious both to sell and to be relieved immediately of the responsibility for maintaining a property. The Yakima River Greenway Foundation used this technique to gain control of a key parcel for a park.

## **6. Bargain Sale**

A bargain sale, sometimes called a “donative sale,” allows an organization to acquire a property at less than its fair market value (the price a buyer pays a seller on the open market). The seller sets a price below the appraised value and considers the difference to be a gift. The seller may be able to claim a charitable income tax deduction, provided the appraised value of the donation is at least 20 percent of the property’s overall value; taxation on capital gains, if any, will also be lower, because the gain will be lower. The seller’s compensation, therefore, is potentially in both cash and tax savings.

## **7. Donation**

Nonprofit organizations and local governments sometimes receive gifts of property through a donation or bequest. Organizations offered such gifts should make sure they can afford the responsibility of management before they accept the property, or make sure they can sell it under the terms of the gift. Organizations should encourage potential donors to inform them in advance of their plans for bequests in their wills in order to assure that any gift is appropriate, that any restrictions imposed are acceptable and to discuss funding for the property’s maintenance and operation. Sometimes an individual wishing to donate a property wants to continue to use it but also wishes not to delay arrangements for its long-term protection following his or her death or the deaths of specific heirs, nor to leave that protection to the terms of his or her will. The technique to accomplish this is called a “donation with a reserved life estate.” Provided the property is a personal residence or meets other IRS rules, the donor is eligible to deduct the value

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

of the gift, called a “remainder interest,” at the time it is made, although the recipient will not actually take control until the donor or the donor’s heirs die. There are at least two complexities

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(Appendix 8-2 continued)

to this technique. First, appraisal of such a gift must discount the present value of the gift (the value if the property were donated without the reserved life estate) by a calculation of the value of the property to the donor and any specified heirs during their estimated lifetimes.

## 8. Financing Land Acquisition through Program-Related Investments from Foundations

For special projects or programs that will yield an income or even financial returns over costs, it may be possible to persuade a foundation to make a program-related investment (PRI). Most foundations make regular grants out of income earned from investing their principal. Federal rules governing foundations permit the investment of foundation funds, including principal, in projects related to the foundation’s program – hence the name.

In practice, PRIs have evolved from simple loans into the more complicated financial instruments familiar to businesses: lines of credit, loan guarantees, and gap financing (offering coverage when a promised grant or loan from another source will be later than expected and thus establishing a project to go forward on a more timely basis). The rate of interest and other terms may or may not be more favorable than those for commercial loans; the more critical feature of PRIs is that they provide access to capital. Traditional banks are hesitant to lend to unproved applicants, or for complicated or risky projects, or for projects in which the bank’s profit is significantly reduced – for instance, small loans that require considerable time.

Relatively few foundations have taken advantage of PRIs, either because of a lack of familiarity with the concept, out of fear of risk, or because it is often difficult for recipients to identify income-producing activities. The New Hampshire Charitable Fund, however, one of the nation’s older community foundations, has organized nearly \$1 million in permanent revolving loan capital and makes it available to New Hampshire organizations for land protection, historic preservation, and energy conservation, along with loan funds for human services, education, and other purposes.

Many PRIs employed in rural communities involve purchasing land. The Sudbury Foundation, a small private foundation in Sudbury, Massachusetts, provided a line of credit to the Sudbury Valley Trustees to buy land to add to the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The Tennessee River Gorge Trust used a three-year loan from a local foundation to protect Williams Island at the gateway to the gorge in Chattanooga.

## 9. Land Trusts

Land trusts are often established to protect areas of significant natural diversity or to create recreation opportunities, or both. Their work can lead to the protection of wildlife habitat and open space, greenways, rivers, and trail settings; some have engaged in historic preservation or forest or farmland protection as well. The Land Trust Alliance defines land trusts as “local, state, or regional” organizations engaging in “direct land protection” (Land Trust Alliance 1995, p. v). a land trust holds land and other interests in land for the benefit of the public and often undertakes educational, recreational, and scientific activities. As private organizations, land trusts have

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

considerable flexibility in the way they can acquire property, especially in their ability to take risks and to act quickly to buy land before it is sold for development.

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(Appendix 8-2 continued)

## 10. Revolving Funds

Revolving funds are used to purchase threatened properties which are then sold to sympathetic buyers who agree to manage, develop, or restore the properties in accordance with deed restrictions. Resale of the properties, either “as is” or with improvements, replenishes the organization’s funds and allows the money to be “revolved” to new projects. Tax-exempt status from the IRS enables an organization that is operating a revolving fund to sell conservation properties without being liable for capital gains taxation.

A revolving fund may be either a freestanding organization or a portion of another organization’s capital that it uses on a revolving basis. A revolving fund can effectively extend an organization’s financial resources and can give it the capability to act quickly in an emergency. Many funds “revolve downward,” however, since restricting the rights in a property can reduce its market value to below the price paid for it; this may be less true of open land, where subdivision, if it is an option, can increase the property’s value. Revolving funds are most useful when a strong market exists for resale; otherwise, if some properties do not sell quickly, the revolving fund may soon become entirely committed.

## 11. Regulatory Easement

Elsewhere in this list the conservation easements we discuss are generally voluntary ones – usually donated or, less often, purchased from willing sellers through programs to protect agricultural or other open lands. But it is also possible for local governments to require developers to record easements as part of the land development process. Called regulatory easements, these are often used in cluster developments, where significant portions of the property are set aside for ownership in common by homeowners associations. Most states allow communities to require conservation easements as a condition for their approval of such development applications as subdivisions, site plans, special permits, variances, and rezoning of properties.

*Note:*

Some of the material contained in this list was obtained from a book entitled *Saving America’s Countryside – A Guide to Rural Conservation (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)* published by the National Trust For Historical Preservation, which is recommended.

Also enclosed is an article on conservation easements from the Lincoln Institute’s Land Lines, a publication which is recommended.

Also enclosed is an article from GreenSense, a publication of the Trust For Public Lands (which is also recommended).

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

(Appendix 8-1 continued)

**EXHIBIT A**

**DUNSTABLE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**



JOHN  
BROWN  
ASSOCIATES, INC.  
PLANNING / DESIGN / DEVELOPMENT

TO: Dunstable Master Plan Committee

FROM: John A. Brown

SUBJ: DUNSTABLE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

DATE: June 18, 1998

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A community survey was administered to Dunstable residents to identify issues of importance to the community regarding residential and commercial growth, recreation needs, and town character. The results from this survey will help to establish some of the goals and objectives for the Master Plan.

A total of 900 surveys were delivered to residents with the annual town report on the weekend of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998. Of these, 166 were returned, yielding a response rate of 18.4%. The number of responses received is sufficient to draw conclusions from a representative sample of town residents. The tabulations from the survey are shown on the form that follows.

The survey consisted of 20 yes/no or multiple choice questions and one open ended question. Space was also provided for any additional comments. Several multiple choice questions asked for one or more answers, and some also allowed respondents to write in additional answers that were not included. For yes/no questions, blanks were counted as "no".

**Question 1** asked respondents to indicate (from a list of eight choices) what they see as the three most serious problems facing the town in the next five years. Potential growth and change in town character was mentioned by 80% of the respondents, and was ranked as the most important issue by 53%. The future use of vacant, agricultural and forest lands was mentioned by 63% of the respondents, and was ranked as the most important issue by 15%. Traffic was mentioned by 43% of the respondents, and was ranked as the most important issue by 10%. Town services and the availability of housing for diverse groups were mentioned the least among the issues listed.

**Question 2** asked whether respondents find the present rate of growth to be too fast, too slow, or about right. 128 persons, or 77% said the rate of growth is too fast, and 30 respondents, or 18% felt that the rate of growth is about right. Only 2 respondents felt that the rate of growth is too slow, while six responses were blank for question 2.

**Questions 3-5** inquired about the need for further retail and commercial growth in Dunstable. In question 3, 26 respondents indicated that they would like to see more retail stores and services in town, while 140, or 84% indicated that they would not. When asked in question 4 about the specific kinds of retail and services they would like to see, 63 persons, or 38% of the respondents indicated banking/ATM; 17, or 10% indicated drug stores or variety stores, and 16, or 10% indicated food stores. Several respondents who indicated drug/variety stores commented that they were mainly interested in drugs, and not variety stores. Types of services mentioned in the "other" category were a video store and doctor/dentist offices. Many respondents who did not

wish to see any additional retail or services provided in Dunstable commented that all of the shopping they need is available in other nearby towns.

**Question 5** asked whether Dunstable should have other types of commercial or industrial areas. Respondents could answer yes or no to each of five types of commercial or industrial activities listed. Only 42 respondents answered “yes” to any of the types of activities listed. 33 persons, or 20% of respondents answered “yes” to business and professional offices, 17 persons, or 10% answered “yes” to high tech businesses, and 13 persons, or 8% answered “yes” to an industrial park. The survey does not indicate whether the location of commercial or industrial development would influence the attitudes of town residents towards these types of uses.

**Questions 6-7** pertained to recreational facilities in Dunstable. To question 6, 88 persons, or 53% of respondents indicated that the existing recreational facilities are adequate. When asked in question 7 about the kinds of recreational facilities that are needed, 44 persons, or 27% of respondents mentioned hiking trails. Playfields, a swimming facility, and “other” were each mentioned by about 21% of respondents. Bike paths were the most commonly mentioned facility in the “other” category, while some also mentioned an equestrian facility, golf, a track, and a town beach. Several respondents commented that hiking/bike trails are needed because of safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians on the major roads.

**Questions 8-10** related to the provision of housing. In question 8, 39% of respondents supported housing for special purposes, while 61% did not. When asked in question 9 what specific types of housing they would support, many respondents who answered negatively in the previous question indicated that they would support housing for certain specific purposes. Providing a place for seniors needing special housing received 62 mentions, or 37% of responses; while providing a place for older couples (“empty nesters”) received 40 mentions, or 24% of responses. Question 10 asked whether the town should encourage housing with more reasonable costs than is presently available. 34 respondents, or 20% answered “yes” to this question.

**Question 11** asked why the respondents live in Dunstable, choosing from one or more of the five reasons listed. Overwhelmingly, 93% of the respondents mentioned the rural environment of the town, while 29% mentioned the quality of the schools. Additional reasons provided by those who selected “other” included the sense of community and the extent of the town’s conservation and land use controls.

**Questions 12-14** pertained to the preservation of the town’s character. In question 12, 98% agreed that the current rural character of the town is something that should be maintained and protected. Question 13 asked how respondents think this can be accomplished, selecting one or more from a list of six options. The responses to this question are mixed because many respondents answered “a combination of the above”, in addition to some of the other options, while others selected this answer instead of other options. Also, several respondents may not have been familiar with the concepts of development rights or Chapter 61 lands, and thus declined to select this option. Anti-growth regulations and the direct purchase of vacant land by the Town received the highest number of mentions, with 51% and 47% of respondents respectively, although all of the options received substantial support.

To Question 14, 87% of respondents supported the preservation of historic buildings and sites by suitable means.

**Question 15** was an open ended question, inviting the respondents to list natural features, views, buildings, or properties that they think should be retained and protected by the town. The sites

most often mentioned included the Town Center including the Town Hall, the church, the cemetery, and the Swallow Union Schoolhouse; the scenic views and farmland along Route 113, historic houses, Camp Massapoag, farms, and ponds and streams.

**Questions 16-21** were intended to draw a demographic profile of the respondents to determine if the survey response is a valid sample of the population.

The age of the heads of households responding was obtained in question 16. Comparing the age profile of respondents to heads of household reported in the 1990 US Census, the respondents are fairly representative of Dunstable's population. Ten percent of the respondents are from the younger two age groups, while 59% are from the middle two age groups, and 31% are from the older two age groups. The proportion in the middle age groups is about the same as the proportion of heads of households in these age groups in 1990, while the proportion of respondents in the younger age groups is somewhat lower, and the proportion in the older age groups is somewhat higher than in the 1990 Census profile. Demographic projections suggest that the older population in Dunstable is increasing more rapidly than other age groups, thus the sample of respondents may be closer to the actual population in 1998 than the 1990 Census profile suggests.

**Question 17** asked for the occupations of heads of households, allowing the respondents to select one or two choices. The number of respondents in professional or managerial occupations is slightly higher than what is shown in the 1990 census profile, while the number of respondents in manufacturing occupations is somewhat lower. The respondents who are retired or are stay-at-home spouses is also lower than reported in the census. Again, changes in the employment profile in the region since 1990 may account for much of these differences.

**Question 18** sought the income distribution of the respondents. Over 70% of the respondents reported a household income of greater than \$50,000. Compared with the 1990 income distribution profile, there was a smaller proportion of persons earning \$50,000 - \$75,000, and a larger proportion of persons earning \$100,000 or more. The proportion of persons earning \$25,000 - \$34,000 is slightly larger than the percentage of persons in that income group in 1990, while the proportion of persons earning less than \$25,000 is lower. Household incomes in Massachusetts rose by 6.4% from 1989 to 1996.

**Question 19** asked how long the respondents have lived in Dunstable. The results indicate that 44% of the respondents have lived in Dunstable for five years or less; 32% have lived in the town for six to ten years, and 24% have lived in the town for more than 10 years.

**Question 20** asked what kind of housing the respondents live in. The vast majority, 93%, own and live in single-family homes. The remaining 7% own and live on farms or properties with five or more acres. The number of rental units or houses with two or more families in Dunstable is very small, and no survey responses were received from the occupants of these types of homes.

**Question 21** sought the geographic distribution of survey respondents in the town. The town was divided into quadrants, bounded by Route 113, Salmon Brook, and Upper and Lower Massapoag Ponds. The proportion of respondents from each of the quadrants was fairly even, with a higher number from the western half of the town than the eastern half, and slightly more from the northern half than the southern half. The slightly uneven distribution reflects the general pattern of development throughout the town.

In summary, the survey respondents tended to be slightly older and have somewhat higher incomes than average, and they are more likely to work in professional occupations. A sizeable proportion of respondents have lived in Dunstable for a relatively short period of time (44% for 5 years or less). Based upon the profile of the respondents, the survey response is considered to be a representative cross section of the households in Dunstable.

A compilation of the written comments of the respondents is being prepared and will be submitted separately.

cc Dr. Nelson  
Dani Carville

# COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Dunstable, Massachusetts

1. What do you think are the three most serious problems facing the town in the next five years?  
(Select three, in the order of importance)

	All		Most	
	Mentions	%	Important	%
a. Traffic	<u>71</u>	<u>42.8</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10.5</u> a.
b. Potential growth and change in town character	<u>132</u>	<u>79.5</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>52.9</u> b.
c. Future use of vacant, agricultural, & forest lands	<u>104</u>	<u>62.7</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>15.0</u> c.
d. Protecting environmentally sensitive land	<u>54</u>	<u>32.5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3.3</u> d.
e. Town services (such as fire & police protection)	<u>29</u>	<u>17.5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1.3</u> e.
f. Town facilities (such as libraries & schools)	<u>47</u>	<u>28.3</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>14.4</u> f.
g. Availability of housing for diverse groups	<u>11</u>	<u>6.6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1.3</u> g.
h. Other (please be specific)	<u>7</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2.0</u> h.

2. At what speed should Dunstable grow? Is the present rate of growth:

	%
a. Too fast	<u>128</u> <u>77.1</u> a.
b. Too slow	<u>2</u> <u>1.2</u> b.
c. About right	<u>30</u> <u>18.1</u> c.

3. Should Dunstable have more retail shopping facilities?

a. Yes 26 15.7%    b. No 140 84.3%

4. What kinds of retail stores and services are needed that are not presently available?

(Check one or more)

	%		%
a. Banking/ATM	<u>63</u> <u>38.0</u>	f. Household goods	<u>2</u> <u>1.2</u>
b. Food	<u>16</u> <u>9.6</u>	(sheets, dishes, etc.)	
c. Drug/variety stores	<u>17</u> <u>10.2</u>	g. Cards/gifts	<u>6</u> <u>3.6</u>
d. Clothing	<u>3</u> <u>1.8</u>	h. Restaurant	<u>32</u> <u>19.3</u>
e. Hardware	<u>8</u> <u>4.8</u>	i. Other (be specific)	<u>12</u> <u>7.2</u>

5. Should Dunstable have other types of commercial or industrial areas?

	Yes	%	No	%
a. Industrial Park	<u>13</u>	<u>7.8</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>92.2</u> a.
b. Business & Professional Offices	<u>33</u>	<u>19.9</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>80.1</u> b.
c. High Tech (computers, biotech, etc.)	<u>17</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>89.8</u> c.
d. Wholesale/Distribution	<u>5</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>161</u>	<u>97.0</u> d.
e. Automotive	<u>8</u>	<u>4.8</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>95.2</u> e.

6. Are there adequate recreational facilities in town?

a. Yes 88 53.0%    b. No 78 47.0%

7. If not, what kinds of recreational facilities are needed?

(Check one or more)

	%		%
a. playfields (for active sports)	<u>35</u> <u>21.1</u>	d. swimming facility	<u>36</u> <u>21.7</u>
b. playgrounds	<u>33</u> <u>19.9</u>	e. hiking trails	<u>44</u> <u>26.5</u>
c. tennis courts	<u>12</u> <u>7.2</u>	f. other (list)	<u>34</u> <u>20.5</u>

8. Would you support housing to be used for special purposes in Dunstable?

a. Yes 65 39.2% b. No 101 60.8%

9. If you answered "yes" to Question 8 above, what special purposes would you support?

(Check one or more)

		%	
a. Provide a place for young marrieds	<u>8</u>	<u>4.8</u>	a.
b. Provide a place for older couples ("empty nesters")	<u>40</u>	<u>24.1</u>	b.
c. Provide a place for single individuals	<u>7</u>	<u>4.2</u>	c.
d. Provide a place for seniors needing special housing	<u>62</u>	<u>37.3</u>	d.
e. Provide a place for low and moderate income elderly or families	<u>17</u>	<u>10.2</u>	e.
f. Provide net tax income to the Town	<u>3</u>	<u>1.8</u>	f.
g. Reduce the consumption of open space by two acre lot zoning	<u>26</u>	<u>15.7</u>	g.
h. Other (list)	<u>7</u>	<u>4.2</u>	h.

10. Should the Town encourage housing with more reasonable costs than is presently available?

a. Yes 34 20.5% b. No 132 79.5%

11. Why do you live in Dunstable?

(Check one or more)

		%
a. Convenience to job	<u>21</u>	<u>12.7</u>
b. Availability of housing in my price range	<u>12</u>	<u>7.2</u>
c. Schools	<u>48</u>	<u>28.9</u>
d. Rural environment	<u>155</u>	<u>93.4</u>
e. Other reason (list)	<u>29</u>	<u>17.5</u>

12. Do you think the current rural character of the town is something that should be maintained and protected?

a. Yes 163 98.2% b. No 3 1.8%

13. If yes, how do you think this can be accomplished?

(Check one or more)

		%	
a. Direct purchase of vacant land by the Town	<u>78</u>	<u>47.0</u>	a.
b. Increase in lot sizes	<u>77</u>	<u>46.4</u>	b.
c. Anti-growth regulations	<u>84</u>	<u>50.6</u>	c.
d. Long-range plan for acquisition of full or partial development rights and Chapter 61 lands	<u>63</u>	<u>38.0</u>	d.
e. Combination of above	<u>83</u>	<u>50.0</u>	e.
f. Other (list)	<u>18</u>	<u>10.8</u>	f.

14. Do you think that historic buildings and sites in Dunstable should be preserved by suitable means?

a. Yes 144 86.7% b. No 22 13.3%

15. Please list below any natural features, views, buildings, or properties that you think should be retained and protected by the town.

The following information is requested so that we may determine if the survey response is a valid sample of the town population.

16. Your age (average heads of household)

		%
a. 18-24	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
b. 25-34	<u>16</u>	<u>9.9</u>
c. 35-44	<u>66</u>	<u>40.7</u>
d. 45-54	<u>29</u>	<u>17.9</u>
e. 55-64	<u>36</u>	<u>22.2</u>
f. 65 or over	<u>15</u>	<u>9.3</u>

17. Occupations of heads of household

(Check one or two)

		%
a. Professional or Technical	<u>124</u>	<u>56.1</u>
b. Manager or Proprietor	<u>26</u>	<u>11.8</u>
c. Clerical	<u>8</u>	<u>3.6</u>
d. Sales	<u>12</u>	<u>5.4</u>
e. Craftsman or Foreman	<u>9</u>	<u>4.1</u>
f. Skilled or Unskilled Laborer	<u>7</u>	<u>3.2</u>
g. Housewife	<u>20</u>	<u>9.0</u>
h. Other (student, Military, Retired, etc.)	<u>15</u>	<u>6.9</u>

18. Total income of your household (per year, before taxes)

		%
a. Under \$10,000	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
b. \$10,000 - \$24,999	<u>3</u>	<u>4.7</u>
c. \$25,000 - \$49,000	<u>14</u>	<u>21.9</u>
d. \$50,000 - \$99,999	<u>25</u>	<u>39.1</u>
e. \$100,000 or more	<u>22</u>	<u>34.4</u>

19. How long have you lived in Dunstable?

		%
a. Less than 2 years	<u>14</u>	<u>13.3</u>
b. 2 - 5 years	<u>32</u>	<u>30.5</u>
c. 6 - 10 years	<u>34</u>	<u>32.4</u>
d. More than 10 years	<u>25</u>	<u>23.8</u>

20. Type of housing or dwelling you live in?

		%
a. Own and live on a farm of five or more acres.	<u>10</u>	<u>6.2</u>
b. Own and live in a single-family house.	<u>150</u>	<u>92.6</u>
c. Own and live in a two or more family dwelling.	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
d. Rent in a two or more family dwelling.	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
e. Other	<u>1</u>	<u>1.2</u>

21. What area of town do you live in?

		%
a. 1	<u>46</u>	<u>28.9</u>
b. 2	<u>35</u>	<u>22.0</u>
c. 3	<u>33</u>	<u>20.8</u>
d. 4	<u>45</u>	<u>28.3</u>

# Town of Dunstable Survey Quadrants

