

TOWN OF DUNSTABLE



OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN 2026-2036

Adopted by Conservation Commission on _____

Adopted by Planning Board on February 17, 2026

Adopted by Select Board on February 18, 2026

Prepared by Northern Middlesex Council of Governments



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
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Letter From Leah Basbanes, Select Board, Chair



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Dear Dunstable Community Members,

On behalf of the Conservation Commission, we present the newly updated Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025 (OSRP). The OSRP is a working document for the town departments, boards, and committees and community partners to utilize to preserve, manage and enhance the town's natural resources and recreational areas. Along with the Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) this document is a blueprint for the future of Dunstable's land use, water resource conservation, recreational opportunities and culture.

This recent update to the OSRP, prepared by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) in conjunction with the OSRP Committee, is quite different from those of the past. One might notice the crisp brevity of the document, whereas the previous plans had extensive information in almost poetic prose. The Conservation Commission takes pride in detailing so much of the history of the Town and the descriptions of its natural resources and have included this level of detail in the past OSRPs. However, to meet the State's newly revised "Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook" guidelines, the document had to be condensed into a shorter format. This was a difficult task for the Conservation Commission, who strive to honor the Town's history and conservation efforts. Yet, as we continued to work with NMCOG and the OSRP Committee, we came to agreement that this version is a quicker read, more to the point and continues to reflect the town's appreciation for the rural culture, Town history, the lands we have preserved and the recreational opportunities they provide. The focus is on the Ten-Year Action Plan going forward, not the past. It outlines the ways in which we can accomplish goals and provide services while keeping Dunstable the unique gem that it is.

We appreciate the collaboration with NMCOG and the work they have done to help us complete this necessary update. I believe I speak for all involved that we are proud of this document and the path it provides to shape the future of Dunstable. And, for those who wish to indulge in more detail, the previous plan is still available on the town website and additional materials in the OSRP Appendices.

Sincerely,

Leah Basbanes,
Chair, Dunstable Select Board
Member, Dunstable Conservation Commission

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This plan was prepared by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), the regional planning agency serving the Towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Westford, and the City of Lowell. A grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the District Local Technical Assistance Program funded this plan. This plan would not have been possible without the support of the Town of Dunstable. Special thanks to the Town staff, officials, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Working Group, and community members who provided input throughout this planning process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter From Leah Basbanes, Select Board, Chair	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION	3
What is Open Space?	3
2.A: Statement of Purpose	3
2.B: Planning and Public Participation	4
2.C: Enhanced Outreach	5
SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING	6
3.A: Regional Context	6
3.B: Population Characteristics	7
3.C: Growth and Development	7
SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS	11
4.A: Soils and Topography	11
4.B: Water Resources	14
4.C: Vegetation	16
4.D: Fisheries and Wildlife	17
4.E: Scenic Resources and Unique Environments	17
4.F: Climate Change Impacts	20
SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS	
INVENTORY	23
5.A: Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties	25
5.B: Public Properties Providing Conservation & Recreation Amenities	32
5.C: Permanently Protected Private Parcels	35

SECTION 6: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS	43
6.A: Summary of Natural Resource Protection Needs	43
6.B: Summary of Community's Outdoor Recreation Needs	45
6.C: Management Needs	46
SECTION 7: ACTION PLAN	49
Ten-Year Action Plan Summary	50
SECTION 8: PUBLIC COMMENTS	56
SECTION 9: PLAN REFERENCES	57
APPENDICES	58
Appendix A: Glossary of Acronyms	58
Appendix B: Outreach Methods and Data Analysis	59
Appendix C: Public Comments	66
Appendix D: Land Acquisition & Protection Criteria System	73
Appendix E: Fisheries & Wildlife Species Inventory List	77
Appendix F: Vegetation Species Inventory List	79

Map List:

Map: 1 - Regional Context Map	6
Map: 2 - Zoning Districts Map	10
Map: 3 - Soils and Topography Map	13
Map: 4 - Water Resource Map	15
Map: 5 - Scenic Resources and Unique Environments Map	19
Map: 6 - Dunstable Climate Resilience Map	22
Map: 7 - Open Space and Recreation Lands Map	41
Map: 8 - Chapter 61 Parcels Map	42

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Dunstable's 2026 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) sets a ten-year vision for preserving, enhancing, and activating the town's natural, agricultural, and recreational assets. This plan builds upon Dunstable's deep rural heritage and reflects a strong local commitment to environmental stewardship, community well-being, and climate resilience.

Guided by extensive public input, the plan identifies the community's top priorities for open space and recreation. These include improving accessibility, maintaining existing facilities, preserving farmland, protecting water resources, strengthening programming and communication, targeted acquisition of lands, and enhancing climate resilience.

Dunstable is home to a diverse network of forests, wetlands, trails, parks, and working farmland. While these areas provide substantial environmental and recreational value, they face challenges. This plan emphasizes strategic land management and stewardship, targeted land acquisition, and inclusion and access, ensuring that all people can access and enjoy the town's open spaces.

The Action Plan outlines seven goals supported by realistic, high-impact actions. A set of Phase 2 actions is also included for longer-term consideration.

With this plan, Dunstable reaffirms its commitment to balancing conservation, recreation, and community in a way that honors its past and prepares for the future.



Photo Credit 1- Bridgete Pontbriand

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

What is Open Space?

In Dunstable, the term open space refers broadly to lands that are largely undeveloped and contribute to the town's rural character, ecological health, and recreational opportunities. This includes conservation areas, forests, farmland, parkland, and vegetated corridors such as roadside greenways. Open space may be publicly or privately owned, provided it serves or could serve as a conservation or recreation function. In addition to preserved land, this definition extends to vacant parcels or underutilized properties with potential for environmental restoration or community green space. Open space may be protected by a restriction for a short-term or perpetuity. Open space and recreational assets in Dunstable are predominantly zoned Single-Family Residential (R-1).

Open space serves a variety of purposes. It enables aquifer (groundwater) recharge. The entire town relies on public and private wells for its water supply. Wetlands and forests in particular filter and purify surface water; wetlands and floodplains, store and gradually release stormwater, preventing floods and sustain stream. Agricultural land provides locally grown food, while forests provide timber and firewood; both support the local economy. Forests mitigate air, noise and light pollution, while storing carbon from the atmosphere. Open space preserves scenic vistas and the Town's rural character and is where most of our wildlife lives. It also allows for multiple passive recreational opportunities: hiking trails, bridle paths, nature study, fishing, etc. on conservation properties. Other lands are designated for active recreation, which involves facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds, or courts that require more intensive land alteration and maintenance.

Throughout this plan, the term "open space" is used in a broad and inclusive sense. While the idea of open space may seem straightforward, the systems that shape its use, protection, and value, such as development pressures, environmental change, and community needs, are interconnected and dynamic. This plan aims to identify the key factors and outline a path forward to ensure Dunstable's open spaces continue to enhance the town's environmental health, rural identity, and quality of life, including for passive and active recreational opportunities.

2.A: Statement of Purpose

This 2025 update to Dunstable's longstanding Open Space and Recreation Plan is the fourth official update to the Town's original plan, first completed in 1976. Subsequent updates were completed in 1994, 2010, and now in 2025. Over nearly five decades, the OSRP has reflected the community's enduring commitment to land conservation and the preservation of rural character.

Since 1976, the Town of Dunstable has demonstrated a deep and enduring commitment to preserving its rural landscape and agricultural heritage. Through the dedication of volunteers, boards, and residents, the Town has protected a remarkable amount of open space, an achievement that reflects both the strength of its community and its shared belief in the value of land stewardship.

Building on the Town's record of success, Dunstable's next chapter calls for strategic new acquisition and long-term care of the land already conserved. Residents recognize that maintaining trails, improving accessibility, and enhancing recreational opportunities are now essential to ensuring that the Town's open spaces remain vibrant, welcoming, and well-used.

This plan reflects Dunstable's ongoing passion for conservation and its readiness to focus on stewardship, connectivity, and community use. By investing in stewardship, accessible infrastructure, farmland, water resource and forest preservation, Dunstable can continue to protect the character that defines the community while preparing for future challenges related to climate, growth, and changing recreation needs.

Over the next ten years, the Town will build on its proud legacy of conservation by aligning its efforts toward strategic, sustainable management, ensuring that Dunstable's open spaces, farms, and natural landscapes continue to serve as a lasting source of pride and enjoyment for generations to come.

2.B: Planning and Public Participation

This plan was developed through a collaborative, inclusive process led by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) in partnership with the Dunstable OSRP Working Group. The planning process emphasized broad engagement, with special attention to historically underrepresented voices, and was designed to reflect the community's values, experiences, and needs.

OSRP Working Group

The OSRP Working Group met six (6) times throughout the planning process to review findings, shape priorities, and guide outreach efforts. Members included:

- Leah Basbanes, Select Board, Chair, Conservation Commission
- Alan Chaney, Planning Board
- Sue Fayne, Executive Assistant
- Tiffany Naughton, Parks Commission, Recreation Commission
- Carol Rock, Planning Board & Conservation Commission Administrative Coordinator

- Jason Silva, Town Administrator

Public Forums

The public was invited to participate in three forums throughout the planning process:

- Forum 1 (In-Person, Spring 2025) – Held at Town Hall, this kickoff event introduced the project, reviewed past accomplishments, and solicited input on goals and priorities.
- Forum 2 (Virtual, Summer 2025) – This mid-point check-in provided an overview of the planning process, shared initial findings from the needs assessment, presented draft goals, and invited feedback to refine priorities.

Each event offered multiple ways to participate, including facilitated discussions, visual preference surveys, and priority-setting exercises.

Survey and Interviews

A town-wide online survey launched in Winter of 2025 received 133 responses. The survey identified key priorities, including preserving rivers, ponds, streams and wetlands; maintaining existing trails; preserving wildlife habitats; preserving agricultural lands; and providing access to trails and conservation land.

To supplement the survey, NMCOG conducted semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders including the Council on Aging Director, a Planning Board member who is an older adult, two members of the Parks Commission (one who is an older adult), and Town staff with land use responsibilities.

Interviews helped deepen understanding of how residents use public spaces, what barriers they face, and what improvements would be most meaningful. Key themes from the interviews included the need to maintain existing facilities and provide

additional amenities, such as shaded seating and recreation opportunities.

Upon completion of the Plan, the Town Administrator will lead the implementation with the support of the Select Board, Recreation and Conservation Committees.



Photo Credit 2 - Gage Town Forest - Leah Basbanes

2.C: Enhanced Outreach

To ensure broad participation, NMCOG and the Working Group implemented an Enhanced Outreach Plan:

- **Media and Communications:** Press releases, newsletter articles, and regular updates in the Town Administrator’s email newsletter helped raise awareness about the planning process and how to get involved.

- **Flyer Distribution:** Information about the survey and forums was posted at key locations, including the library, general store, senior center, post office, and Town Hall.
- **Accessible Materials:** All outreach materials were designed with accessibility in mind, using clear language, readable fonts, and mobile-friendly formats.

Plan Integration and Timeline

This plan aligns with key local and regional planning efforts, including:

- Dunstable’s Master Plan
- The Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)/ Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Resilience Report
- Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor and Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan
- NMCOG’s Regional Strategic Plan for Greater Lowell

The following timeline outlines key milestones in the planning process:

Date	Milestone
November 2024	OSRP Working Group formed; project kickoff
January 2025	Online survey launched; initial mapping
May 2025	Public Forum 1 (in-person)
June 2025	Public Forum 2 (virtual); analysis and revisions Stakeholder interviews; draft plan development began
June 2025	Analysis and revisions
February 2026	Public Presentations (in-person)

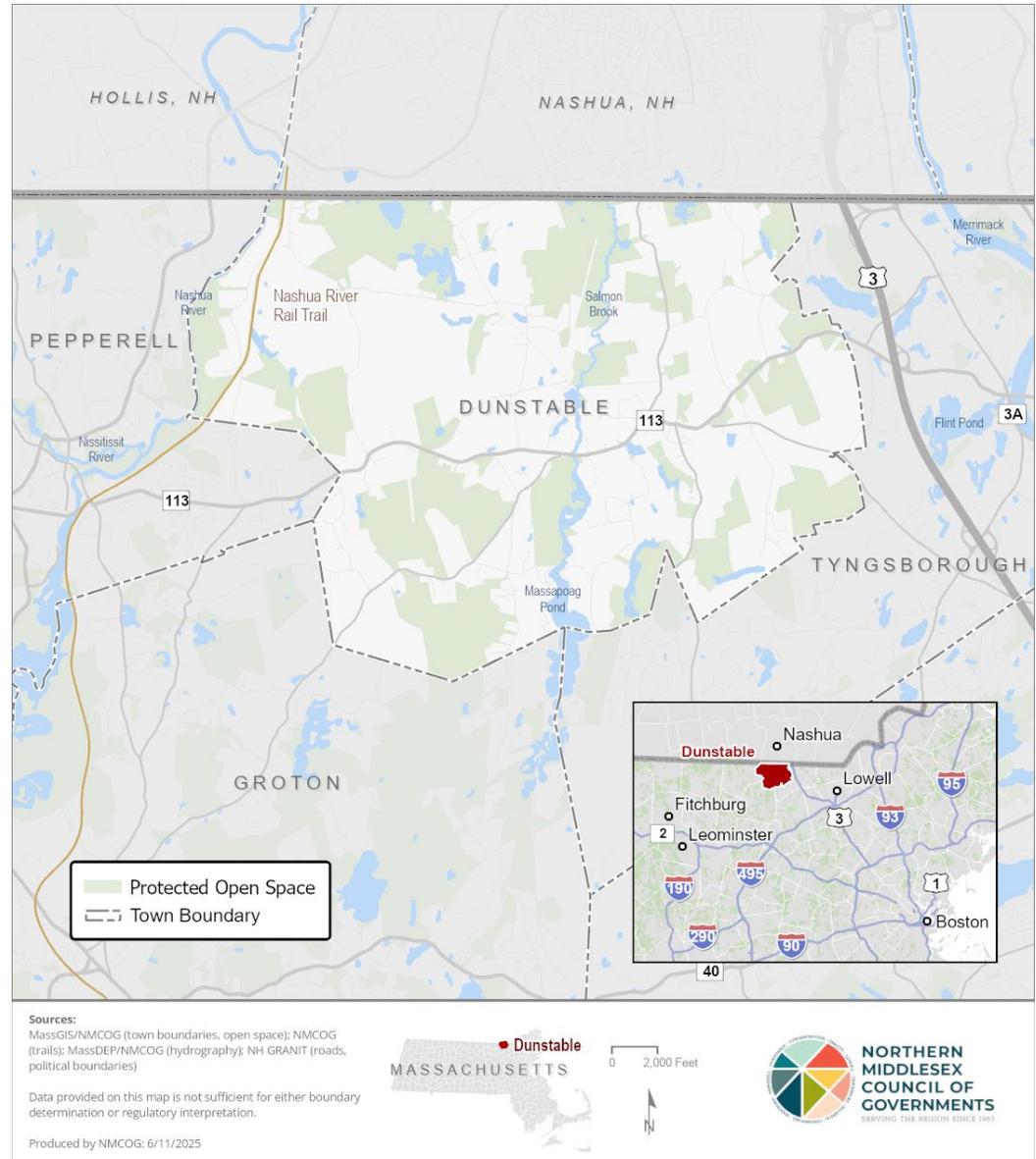
SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

3.A: Regional Context

Dunstable, Massachusetts, is a small, rural town situated in northern Middlesex County, bordering Nashua, New Hampshire. Roughly 35 miles northwest of Boston and within the Greater Lowell region, Dunstable is surrounded by the communities of Tyngsborough, Groton, and Pepperell. Its landscape of forests, wetlands, and farmland offers a stark contrast to the nearby urban centers. While Dunstable remains primarily residential and agrarian in character, it plays an important regional role in ecological conservation and recreational access.

The town lies predominantly within the Merrimack River watershed and includes portions of the Nashua River watershed. These water systems, along with the centrally located Salmon Brook, provide essential ecosystem services such as flood mitigation, water purification, and habitat for native wildlife. Regional conservation efforts—particularly those related to the Nashua River—have restored water quality and enhanced the ecological value of these areas.

Dunstable is part of a growing network of open spaces that support both local and regional recreation. Protected lands such as those held by the Dunstable Rural Land Trust and Town-owned conservation areas form a greenbelt that supports wildlife connectivity, passive recreation, and climate resilience. These spaces also contribute to the region's quality of life and economic vitality by drawing visitors and enhancing the desirability of the area as a place to live and work.



Map: 1 - Regional Context Map

3.B: Population Characteristics

Dunstable's population is 3,358 people, the smallest community size in the Greater Lowell region. Population projections from the UMass Donahue Institute estimate approximately 500 more households by 2050 and show that the number of households with 4 or more people is shrinking. 37% of all Dunstable households are two-person households, representing both new families and empty nesters. The number of people aged 20-35 years in Dunstable is growing, but they are not currently starting new households in Dunstable.

Dunstable's age profile is shifting, with notable growth in both young children and older adults. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of residents aged 0–9 increased by 75%, and those aged 60 and over grew by more than 40%. This dual trend highlights the need for diverse recreational facilities that cater to both families with young children and aging residents seeking accessible, passive recreation opportunities.

While Dunstable remains less racially and ethnically diverse than the region overall, its population is slowly changing. According to the 2020 Census, approximately 13% of residents identified as non-white or Hispanic, up from previous decades.

Roughly 5% of residents live with a disability, and about the same share live below the federal poverty line. Most of these people are between 18 and 65 years old. Although these figures are lower than regional averages, they underscore the importance of designing inclusive recreational spaces that accommodate a wide range of users.

Dunstable households are primarily composed of families, with a high rate of homeownership. More than 90% of housing units are owner-occupied, and the majority are single-family homes.

Housing growth has been slow but steady, mirroring the town's cautious approach to development.

Dunstable stands out economically. The town's median household income is estimated at \$177,803, the highest in the Greater Lowell region. More than half of households earn \$150,000 or more annually, compared to just over a quarter in the region overall. However, the presence of lower-income households, seniors on fixed incomes, and residents with disabilities highlights the need for equitable access to open space and recreation.

While some residents may have the resources to access private recreational amenities or travel outside the region, publicly accessible parks and conservation lands offer critical opportunities for all members of the community to enjoy nature, engage in physical activity, and connect with neighbors. Maintaining and enhancing these free and low-cost resources is essential to fostering an inclusive and healthy community.

3.C: Growth and Development

Originally inhabited by the Nipmuc and Pennacook people, Dunstable's documented human history dates back thousands of years. The area was colonized in the 17th century and officially incorporated in 1673. Initially part of a much larger land grant, Dunstable's current borders reflect centuries of subdivision as surrounding towns were established.

Agriculture has historically dominated the local economy and landscape. Post-World War II suburban expansion introduced new housing developments, particularly along the town's main roadways. However, growth has remained modest compared to neighboring towns, with the community prioritizing conservation and low-density development.

Today, zoning regulations continue to reinforce Dunstable's rural identity. Most of the town is zoned for single-family residential use on large lots, and the absence of public sewer infrastructure limits high-density development. As a result, open space remains a defining feature of Dunstable's built environment.

Open Space Infrastructure

In addition to its local benefits, Dunstable's open space network supports the broader region's environmental health and recreational landscape. Trail systems, wildlife corridors, and protected natural areas extend across town boundaries, forming a shared green infrastructure that enhances climate resilience, biodiversity, and protection of water resources.

These open spaces also bolster the region's economic vitality. They attract visitors, support outdoor recreation industries, and increase nearby property values. As land costs rise and development pressures grow, maintaining this shared resource will require intentional planning and investment.

In summary, Dunstable's rural character, high quality of life, and conservation legacy make it a valuable contributor to the region. Ensuring equitable access to open space and recreation for all people will be critical to sustaining that value in the decades ahead.

Long-term Development Patterns

Dunstable's land use patterns reflect a long-standing emphasis on preserving its rural character. Early development was concentrated around the Town Center and nearby farms, with scattered residences along major roadways. This pattern persisted into the 20th century, reinforced by zoning that required large lots and the lack of a public sewer system *See Map: 2 - Zoning Districts Map*.

Following World War II, automobile reliance and regional highway expansion, especially the construction of U.S. Route 3, spurred limited suburban growth. Most new housing developed along existing roads and in small cul-de-sacs, maintaining the low-density feel. Today, Dunstable's development is characterized by single-family homes on two-acre lots, clustered near the historic center and arterial roads such as Route 113, Pleasant Street, and High Street.

The Town prioritizes conservation through partnerships with landowners, local trusts, and the state. Over 3,000 acres are permanently protected, and nearly as much land is temporarily enrolled in GL Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs. These patterns of incremental, conservation-minded growth and protection have helped Dunstable preserve large tracts of farmland and forest, prevent sprawl, and maintain its unique sense of place.

In recent years, Dunstable has also made meaningful progress toward its housing production and affordability goals. The Housing Production Plan includes a comprehensive needs assessment and sets 15 goals to expand housing choice, improve affordability, and increase community awareness of housing needs. The plan commits to producing at least six new affordable units annually for inclusion on the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), supporting both local needs and the statewide benchmark of having 10 percent of the housing stock on the SHI.

Two current projects reflect this momentum. The 48-unit MCO Cottage Rentals development includes 12 affordable units and once permitted, will add all 48 units to the SHI representing the first units counted toward Dunstable's total. A second proposal, Brattle Farms, is in early permitting and is anticipated to add 156 age-restricted ownership units, including 39 affordable units, which will also count toward the SHI upon completion. Together, these projects position Dunstable to make substantial progress

toward its Housing Production Plan goals while maintaining its commitment to a thoughtful, rural development pattern.

Dunstable contracted with NMCOG using CPA funds to complete a Town Center Community Path Feasibility Study. The goal of this project is to determine whether an off-road, accessible trail loop connecting key civic facilities and neighborhoods is possible in the Town Center. Under this project, NMCOG has also assisted the Town in securing a MassTrails grant for design work for a priority link of the loop.

Additionally, Dunstable contracted with NMCOG under the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program to develop a vision and land use study for the Route 113 corridor between Lowell Street and Groton Street. This work will include recommendations for incorporating Complete Streets amenities to simultaneously create a sense of place in the Town Center, moderate vehicle speeds and driver behavior, and introduce sidewalk and bike lane infrastructure to encourage multimodal transportation.

Section References:

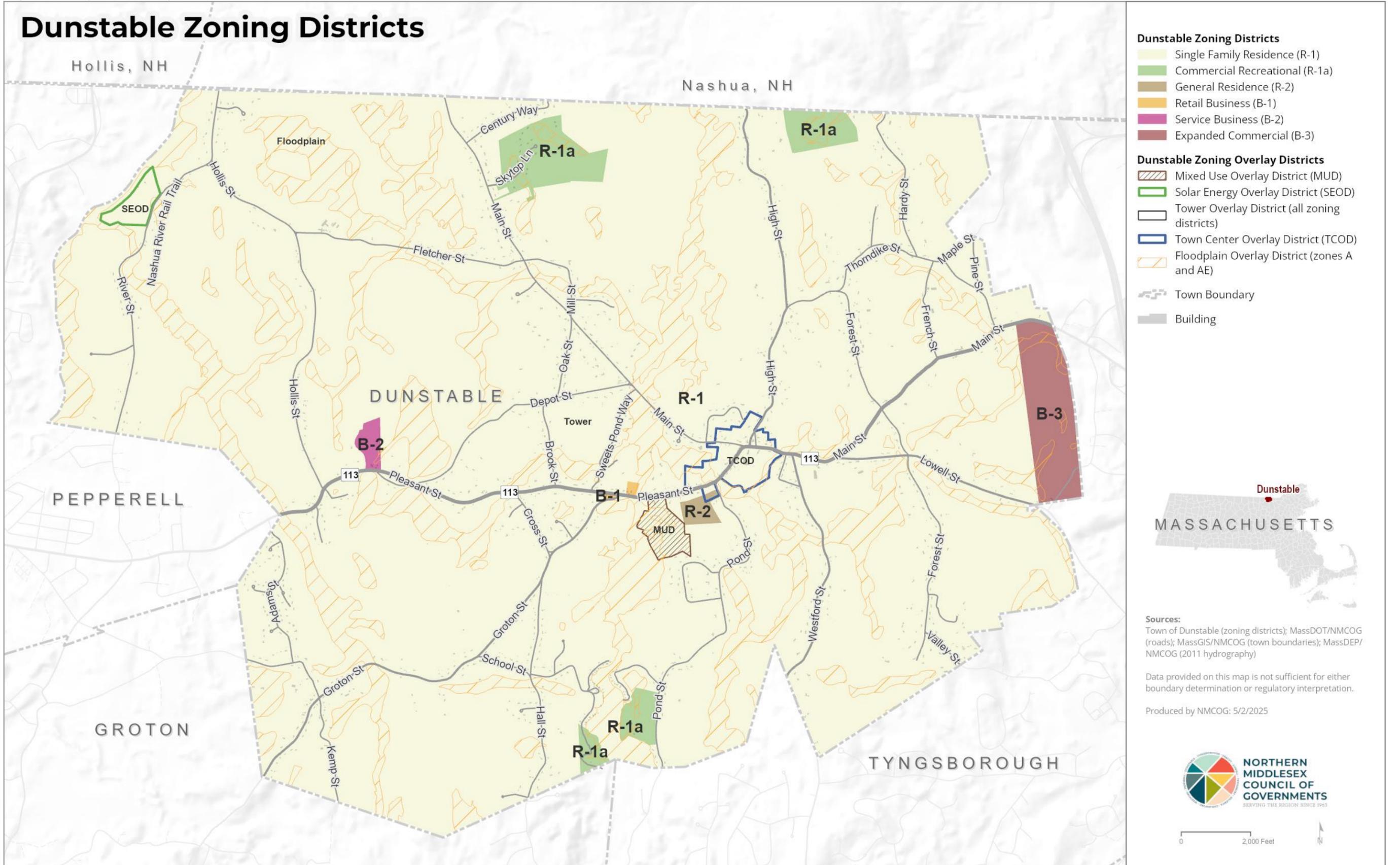
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Map: 2 - Zoning Districts Map



SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Overview

Effective conservation in Dunstable begins with understanding the town's natural systems and their vulnerabilities. Dunstable faces climate change impacts, including hotter summers, extreme weather, and shifts in species ranges. Planning for open space and development must respect these dynamics to sustain water quality, prevent erosion, protect habitat, and preserve the town's rural landscapes.

Resource conservation in Dunstable requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges both the intrinsic ecological value of natural landscapes and their functional role in supporting community resilience. The town's forests, wetlands, agricultural lands, water resources, and greenways not only provide scenic beauty and recreational opportunities but also serve as critical infrastructure for climate adaptation. Recognizing the importance of these resources will enable Dunstable to manage growth, mitigate hazards, and protect the town's unique qualities.

Building on this foundation, the following subsections describe Dunstable's environmental conditions in greater detail, highlighting key assets and challenges.

4.A: Soils and Topography

Soils

Dunstable's soils fall into three major categories: hardpan (till) soils, wet soils, and highly permeable (outwash) soils.

- Hardpan soils dominate eastern Dunstable and present challenges for septic systems due to slow permeability and shallow groundwater. These soils also contribute to surface runoff during heavy rains.

- Wet soils extend along watercourses and wetlands, particularly in western Dunstable, where Glacial Lake Nashua once lay. These soils have high water tables and limited capacity for wastewater disposal, making them crucial to protect from development or disturbance.
- Highly permeable soils in central and western Dunstable allow rapid drainage and support important aquifers but require careful protection against contamination from septic systems and stormwater runoff.

Prime agricultural soils, covering nearly a quarter of the town, contribute significantly to Dunstable's rural landscape. Preserving these soils through Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs) will help maintain local farming. Climate change may alter soil health over time, emphasizing the importance of sustainable soil management practices.

Slope Characteristics

Slopes greater than 10 percent, common in upland areas, present risks of erosion, stormwater runoff, and septic system failure. Eskers and kame terraces along Salmon Brook consist of loose sediment and are particularly sensitive to disturbance. Protecting these slopes will prevent sedimentation in streams and preserve groundwater recharge capacity. *Map: 3 - Soils and Topography* Map highlights areas in Dunstable over 15% slope.

Steep slopes exceeding 30 percent pose significant development challenges. Construction in these areas often requires extensive grading and clearing, which can permanently alter drainage patterns and increase the risk of landslides. Dunstable's planning policies should limit development on steep slopes to maintain slope stability, protect water quality, and preserve the town's rural landscapes.

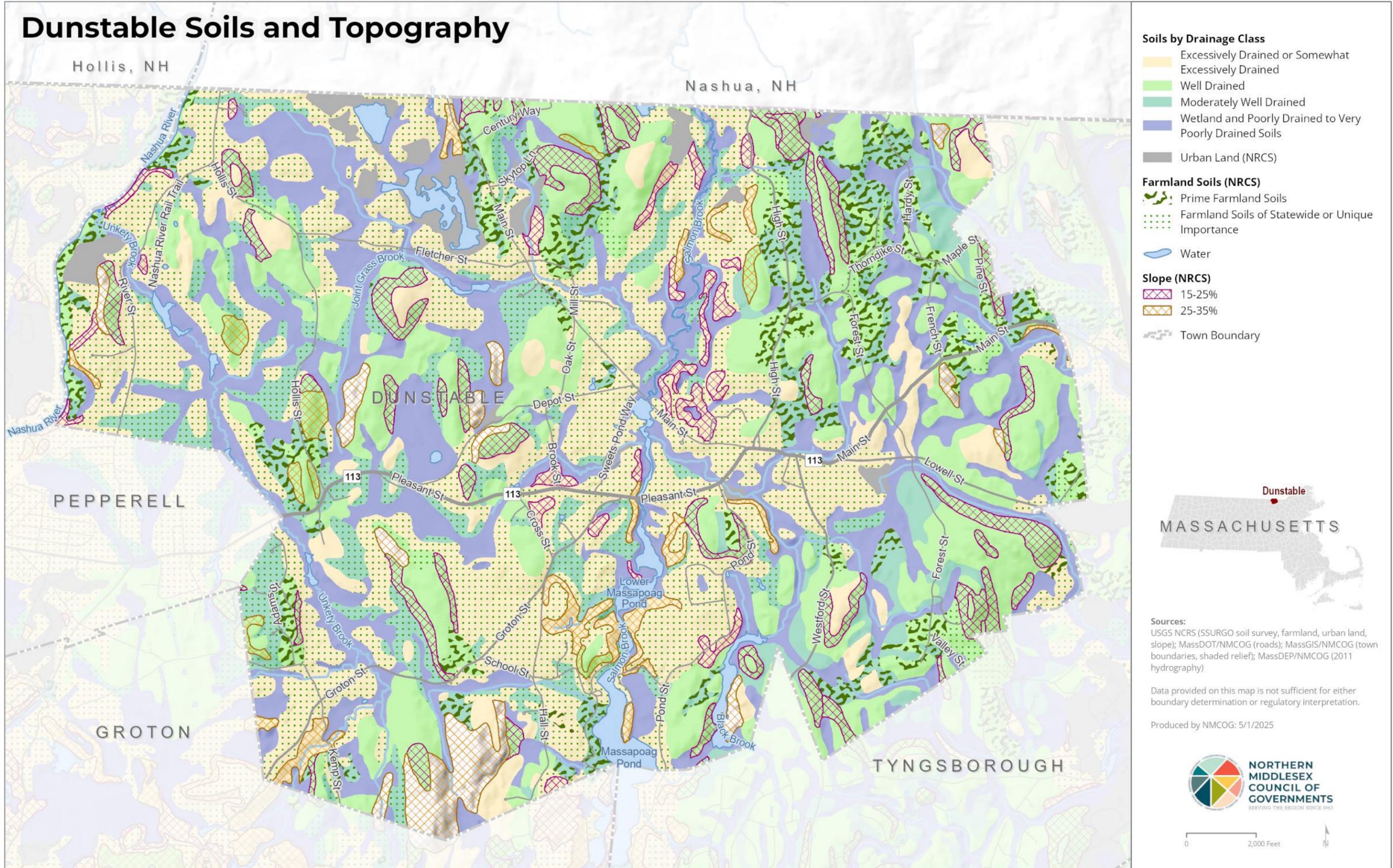
Topography

Dunstable's elevation ranges from 150 feet to 390 feet above sea level and includes Flat Rock Hill, Blanchard Hill, Roby Hill in the north of Town and Horse Hill and Forest Hill in the south. The town's western and central areas feature generally flat landscapes, with wetlands and meandering streams shaped by Glacial Lake Nashua. Drumlins and bedrock hills in the east create more varied terrain.

Low-lying areas near Salmon Brook and Unkety Brook experience seasonal flooding. These floodplains serve as natural buffers, absorbing excess water, reducing downstream impacts, and recharging groundwater. Development controls should prioritize maintaining these flood-prone areas as open space. Higher elevations, including drumlins and hills, contribute to the town's scenic views and require careful consideration to minimize erosion from development.



Photo Credit 3 - Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge - Leah Basbanes



4.B: Water Resources

Watersheds

Dunstable lies within the Merrimack River watershed, with all surface and groundwater ultimately flowing into the Merrimack River via Salmon Brook and the Nashua River, a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. These waterways are vital sources of drinking water for downstream communities, including Lowell. Dunstable's upstream location means that local land use, water management, and conservation practices directly influence regional water quality and aquatic ecosystems.

Surface Water

The town's primary surface water features include Salmon Brook, which runs south to north through the community and ultimately flows into the Merrimack River. Additional brooks such as Black Brook, Unkety Brook, Howard's Brook, Joint Grass Brook, and the Nashua River form an interconnected hydrological network. Massapoag Pond and associated streams and brooks support aquatic habitats and play a critical role in stormwater conveyance and flood mitigation.

Aquifer Recharge Areas

Dunstable overlays a portion of a medium- to high-yield stratified drift aquifer, especially concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of town. These aquifers recharge slowly and are the primary source of drinking water for private wells, which serve nearly all residential properties because the public water supply is limited. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has delineated several Zone II wellhead protection areas, particularly near the town center and eastern border.

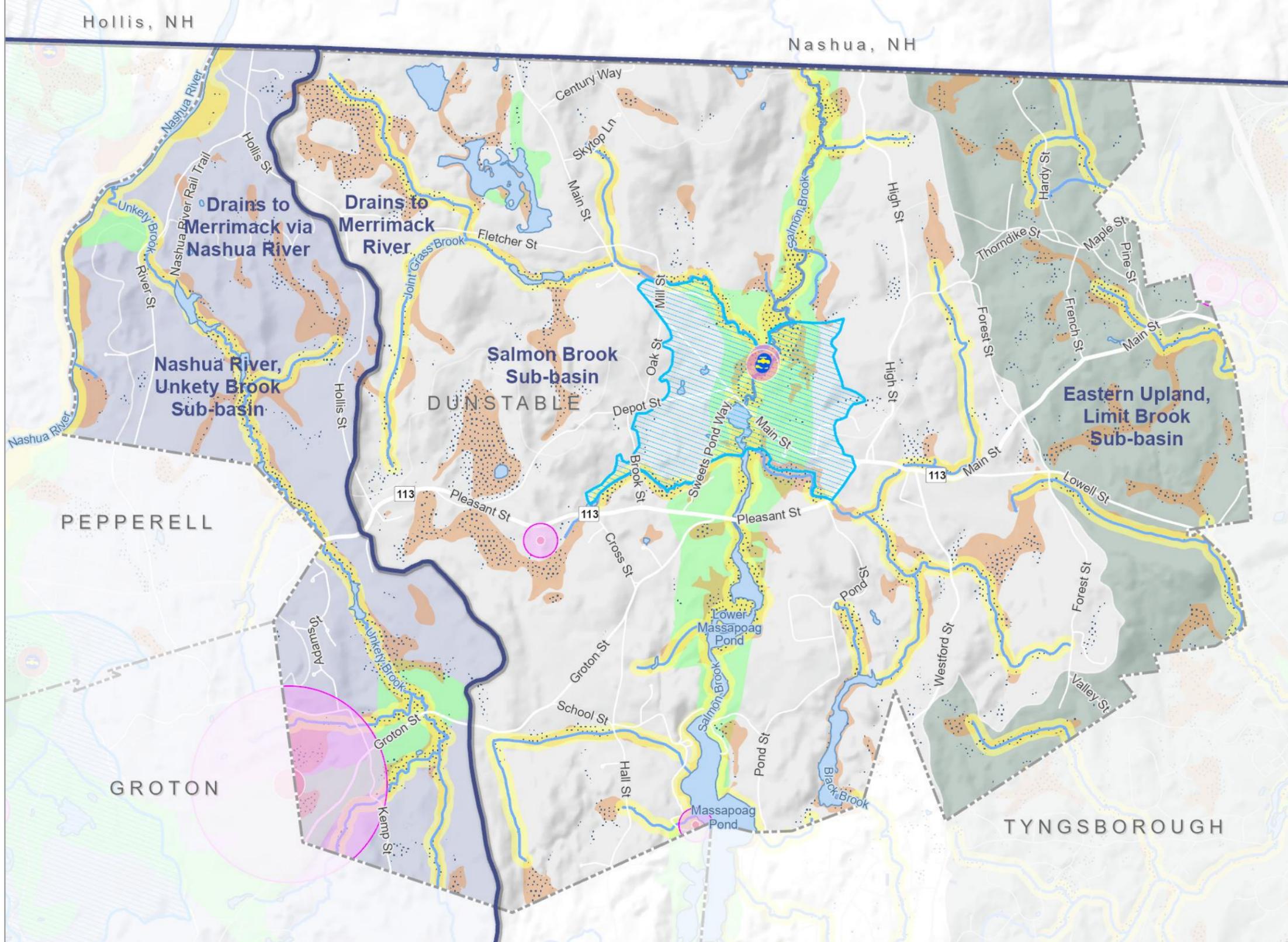
Flood Hazard Areas

FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) identify several Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) in Dunstable, most notably along Salmon Brook and adjacent wetlands. These areas are vulnerable to periodic flooding during intense rainfall or snowmelt events. According to Dunstable's 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan, flood risk is expected to rise due to climate change-driven increases in precipitation intensity. Although Dunstable has limited structural flood damage history, proactive land conservation in flood-prone zones has helped reduce exposure.

Wetlands

Approximately 1,200 acres of Dunstable are classified as wetlands, encompassing forested swamps, shrub wetlands, and emergent marshes, primarily adjacent to stream corridors. Wetlands are regulated under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Dunstable Wetlands Bylaw, and the Conservation Commission oversees permitting and monitoring. Wetland complexes in the central and southern portions of town play a vital role in water filtration, stormwater retention, and biodiversity conservation. BioMap2 from MassWildlife and The Nature Conservancy also identifies several wetlands in Dunstable as Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, reinforcing their ecological value.

Dunstable Water Resources



- Major Basin Boundary, State Boundary
- Watershed Sub-basins**
- Eastern Upland, Limit Brook
- Nashua River, Unkety Brook, Salmon Brook
- Public Water Supply
- Approved Wellhead Protection Area (Zone I)
- Interim Wellhead Protection Areas (IWPA)
- Approved Wellhead Protection Area (Zone II)
- FEMA DFIRM 1% Annual Chance Flood Zone
- Rivers Protection Act Regulated Area (Approx.)
- Wetlands (Approximate)
- Aquifer**
- High yield
- Medium yield
- Low yield
- Non-aquifer area
- Town Boundary



Sources:
 MassDEP (2011 hydrography and wetlands, Water Protection Zones, aquifers); FEMA (DFIRM flood zones A, AE); USGS NHD/MassGIS/NMCOG (watershed sub-basins named per NHD flowlines, hydrography); MassGIS (shaded relief); NMCOG (approximate Rivers Protection Act areas); MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 5/5/2025



4.C: Vegetation

General Inventory

Dunstable is largely forested, with over 70% of its land cover classified as mixed hardwood and coniferous forest. Common native tree species include white pine, red maple, oak, black cherry, and birch, with scattered stands of hemlock. Understory vegetation consists of shrubs such as viburnum, hazelnut, blueberry, and witch hazel, as well as various ferns and herbaceous ground cover. Forest fragmentation is minimal compared to surrounding communities, maintaining large, unbroken habitat blocks that support biodiversity and forest health. Invasive species such as bittersweet, multiflora rose, and Japanese knotweed are present in many areas, posing ongoing management challenges. A comprehensive list of species can be found in *Appendix F - Vegetation Species Inventory List for Dunstable*.

Public Shade Trees

Public shade trees are most prominent along the historic roads near Dunstable's Town Center and residential neighborhoods. While the Town does not currently maintain a full tree inventory, the Tree Warden, under GL Ch. 87, oversees public tree management. Invasive pests such as emerald ash borer and gypsy moth have placed stress on aging roadside trees in recent years. Future planning may benefit from a public tree inventory and proactive planting strategy to maintain canopy coverage along roadways, schoolyards, and Town properties.

Rare Species

According to the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Dunstable provides habitat for several state-listed rare plant species, including populations of slender cottongrass

(*Eriophorum gracile*) and Clammy Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*) in wetland areas. These species rely on undisturbed hydrology and high-quality habitat. Dunstable's location within the Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) further underscores the ecological value of its rare plant.

Agricultural Land

Dunstable retains significant amounts of open agricultural land, primarily located in the north and western sections of town. Hayfields, pastureland, and row crop farms dominate this landscape, with over 600 acres currently assessed under Chapter 61A agricultural use. In addition to commercial farms, many households maintain small orchards, gardens, or hobby farms. Conservation of this land base is essential to maintaining the rural character and ecological diversity of the town, and to supporting pollinators and grassland species.

Wetland Vegetation

The town's wetlands support a diverse plant community, including red maple, swamp white oak, elm, and hemlock in forested swamps, and cattails, sedges, bulrushes, and sphagnum moss in emergent marshes and boggy areas. Shrub swamps include dogwoods, viburnum, buttonbush, and highbush blueberry. Invasive species such as phragmites and purple loosestrife are present in disturbed wetland areas and are being monitored by the Conservation Commission. These wetland systems contribute significantly to regional water quality, flood mitigation, and biodiversity.

BioMap 3 Information

BioMap 3 data identifies large swaths of Dunstable's forests and wetlands as Core Habitat for plant biodiversity, including rare wetland vegetation. The Petapawag ACEC contains significant priority natural vegetation communities, including high-quality

red maple swamps and open fen systems that support rare plant species. Critical Natural Landscape areas in town support ecological processes that maintain plant diversity, such as groundwater-fed wetland hydrology and unfragmented forest patches. These mapped areas represent both current conservation land and priority areas for future habitat protection and climate resilience.

4.D: Fisheries and Wildlife

Dunstable's rural landscape supports a wide range of native wildlife, from common forest species to rare and protected animals and plants. The town's extensive wetlands, forests, streams, and agricultural areas provide critical habitat and ecological connectivity.

Inventory

Common species found in Dunstable are wide ranging from large and small mammals to a variety of bird species and amphibians. Wetlands and water bodies such as Salmon Brook support amphibians and reptiles. The brook is also a habitat for freshwater fish species. A comprehensive list of species can be found in *Appendix E - Fisheries and Wildlife Species Inventory List for Dunstable*.

Wildlife Corridors

Dunstable's natural landscape forms part of a regional greenway network that connects to the Nashua River corridor and the protected lands of the surrounding towns. Conservation areas, such as the Flat Rock Hill Conservation Area, Blanchard Hill, and parcels along Unkety Brook, help maintain ecological connectivity. Open space preservation along the Salmon Brook and Unkety Brook corridors is vital to sustaining wildlife movement and habitat.

Rare Species

According to the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Dunstable contains Priority Habitat for several rare species, including:

- Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*);
- Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*);
- Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*);
- Blue Spotted Salamander; (*Ambystoma laterale*)
- Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*), and;
- Various rare dragonflies and damselflies found in open wetland and stream habitats.

BioMap Information

Dunstable covers 10,721 acres, with 31.8% protected as open space. BioMap Core Habitat spans 79.1% of the town, primarily supporting rare species, wetlands, aquatic systems, and vernal pools. Of this, 30.1% is currently protected. Critical Natural Landscape covers 55% of Dunstable, with 22.5% protected, emphasizing large, intact natural areas and buffers. Local Components account for 7.8% of the land, while Regional Components—focused on rare species—cover 42.4%. Though some areas are well-conserved, others remain vulnerable. Overall, Dunstable plays a key role in regional biodiversity, with ongoing opportunities for land protection and ecological preservation.

4.E: Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Dunstable's scenic character is central to its identity and a key reason residents value the preservation of open space.

Scenic Landscapes

The town features rolling hills, open fields, historic farmsteads, stone walls, and forested ridgelines that define its rural character. Notable views include those from Blanchard Hill and areas along High Street, where panoramic agricultural and woodland views remain intact.

The Gateway to Dunstable

The Gateway to Dunstable is a local-initiative that envisions creating a welcoming, visually cohesive entrance to the community along Route 113, from the Tyngsborough town line to the historic Town Center. The intent is to focus on preserving Dunstable's distinctive rural character while enhancing the aesthetic quality, safety, and functionality of its primary travel corridors. It seeks to balance scenic and natural resource protection with thoughtful improvements such as landscape buffering, gateway signage, roadway beautification, and traffic calming measures. The initiative emphasizes the importance of first impressions, framing Dunstable as a small, historic, and environmentally conscious community. By guiding open space preservation along this key corridor, the Gateway to Dunstable complements the goals of the OSRP by creating a welcoming, safe, walkable rural village that honors its historic heritage and connects residents and visitors to the town's abundant open spaces.

Major Characteristic or Unusual Geological Features

Flat Rock Hill and Blanchard Hill are two of Dunstable's most notable geologic features, composed of granite outcroppings that rise sharply from the surrounding landscape. These formations support dry forest communities and offer scenic vistas.

Cultural, Archaeological, and Historical Areas

Dunstable has a deep colonial history and an ongoing connection to Native American heritage. Before European settlement, Indigenous peoples of the Nipmuc and Pennacook tribes lived throughout the region, cultivating the land, managing forests, and maintaining fertile landscapes that shaped the ecology encountered by settlers. Their presence is still evident in archaeological sites and land-use patterns that predate colonial boundaries.

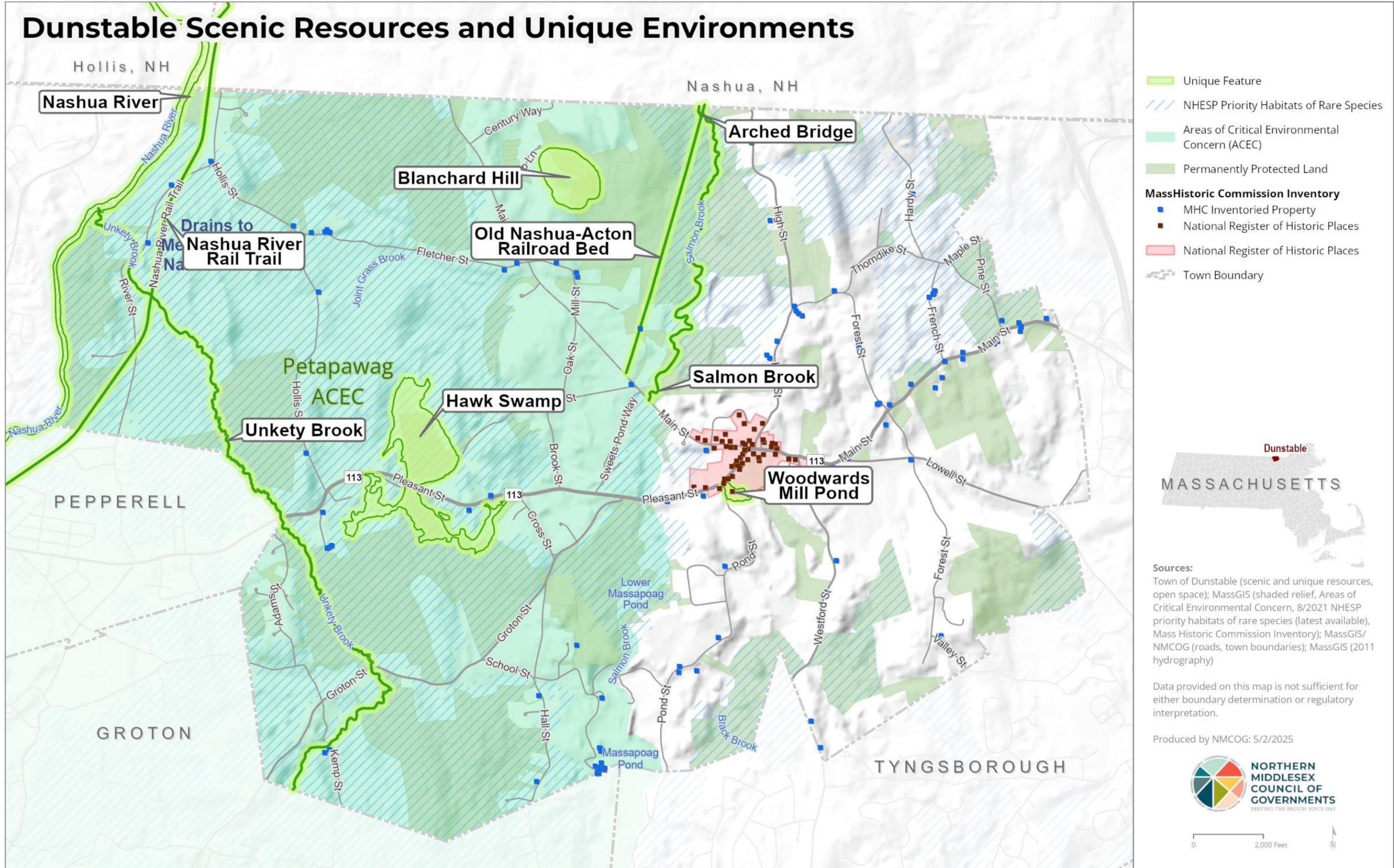
Significant sites and features include the:

- Dunstable Center Historic District, which contains several 18th- and 19th-century homes, the Union School building, Dunstable Town Hall, and the Congregational Church.
- Unkety Brook corridor, with evidence of early mill and farming activity.
- Tyngsborough–Dunstable Historical Society (Little Red Schoolhouse / Sarah Tyng Winslow Schoolhouse) is a one-room schoolhouse built in 1798, preserved and managed by the Tyngsborough–Dunstable Historical Society.
- Areas of archaeological sensitivity noted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, particularly near water sources and early settlement roads.
- Remnants of the town's railroad history, as evidenced by a former railbeds and the Flat Rock Hill granite quarry.
- Glacial features, including kettle ponds and eskers.

Unique Environments

Salmon Brook and Unkety Brook floodplains support rare wetland communities and wildlife habitats. The Unkety Woods and nearby conservation lands contain vernal pools, and ecologically intact stream systems.

Map: 5 - Scenic Resources and Unique Environments Map



- ▬ Unique Feature
- ▨ NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
- Permanently Protected Land
- MassHistoric Commission Inventory**
- MHC Inventoried Property
- National Register of Historic Places
- National Register of Historic Places
- Town Boundary



Sources:
Town of Dunstable (scenic and unique resources, open space); MassGIS (shaded relief, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, 8/2021 NHESP priority habitats of rare species (latest available), Mass Historic Commission Inventory); MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries); MassGIS (2011 hydrography)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 5/2/2025



4.F: Climate Change Impacts

Environmental Challenges

Dunstable faces several key environmental risks:

Flooding: Flooding along Salmon Brook, Unkety Brook, and their tributaries poses a threat to infrastructure and wetlands. Climate change is expected to intensify the frequency and severity of heavy rainfall events. Floodplain protection and stormwater management will be critical to minimizing future impacts.

Drought: Prolonged dry periods are becoming increasingly common, stressing local groundwater supplies and agricultural resources. Promoting water conservation and drought-resistant landscaping will help mitigate these effects.

Wildfires: Drier conditions increase the risk of wildfires in forested areas, particularly during droughts. Maintaining fire breaks and managing forest health will reduce wildfire risk.

Invasive Species: Warming temperatures and disturbed ecosystems facilitate the spread of invasive species, posing a significant threat to forests, wetlands, and agricultural lands. Active management and early detection are necessary to control invasive populations.

Climate Change Impacts

Building resilience will help Dunstable adapt to changing conditions:

Stormwater Management: Incorporating green infrastructure such as rain gardens, vegetated swales, and retention basins will reduce peak runoff and flooding. Low Impact Development (LID) practices should be prioritized in new development.

Wetland Protection: Preserving and restoring wetlands will provide natural flood storage and water filtration. Buffer zones

around wetlands will enhance their ecological function and resilience.

Tree Cover: Maintaining and expanding tree canopy will mitigate urban heat island effects, sequester carbon, and improve air quality.

Agricultural Viability: Protecting prime farmland and promoting sustainable farming practices will strengthen local food security and reduce vulnerability to climate disruptions.

Infrastructure Upgrades: Upgrading culverts, drainage systems, and roadways to withstand extreme weather will protect critical infrastructure.

Community Engagement: Educating residents about climate risks and resilience strategies will build local capacity for adaptation.

Dunstable's Hazard Mitigation Plan emphasizes protecting floodplains and wetlands, upgrading culverts and drainage systems, managing drought impacts, and promoting nature-based solutions to enhance resilience. Integrating these strategies into open space planning will create a more sustainable and resilient community.

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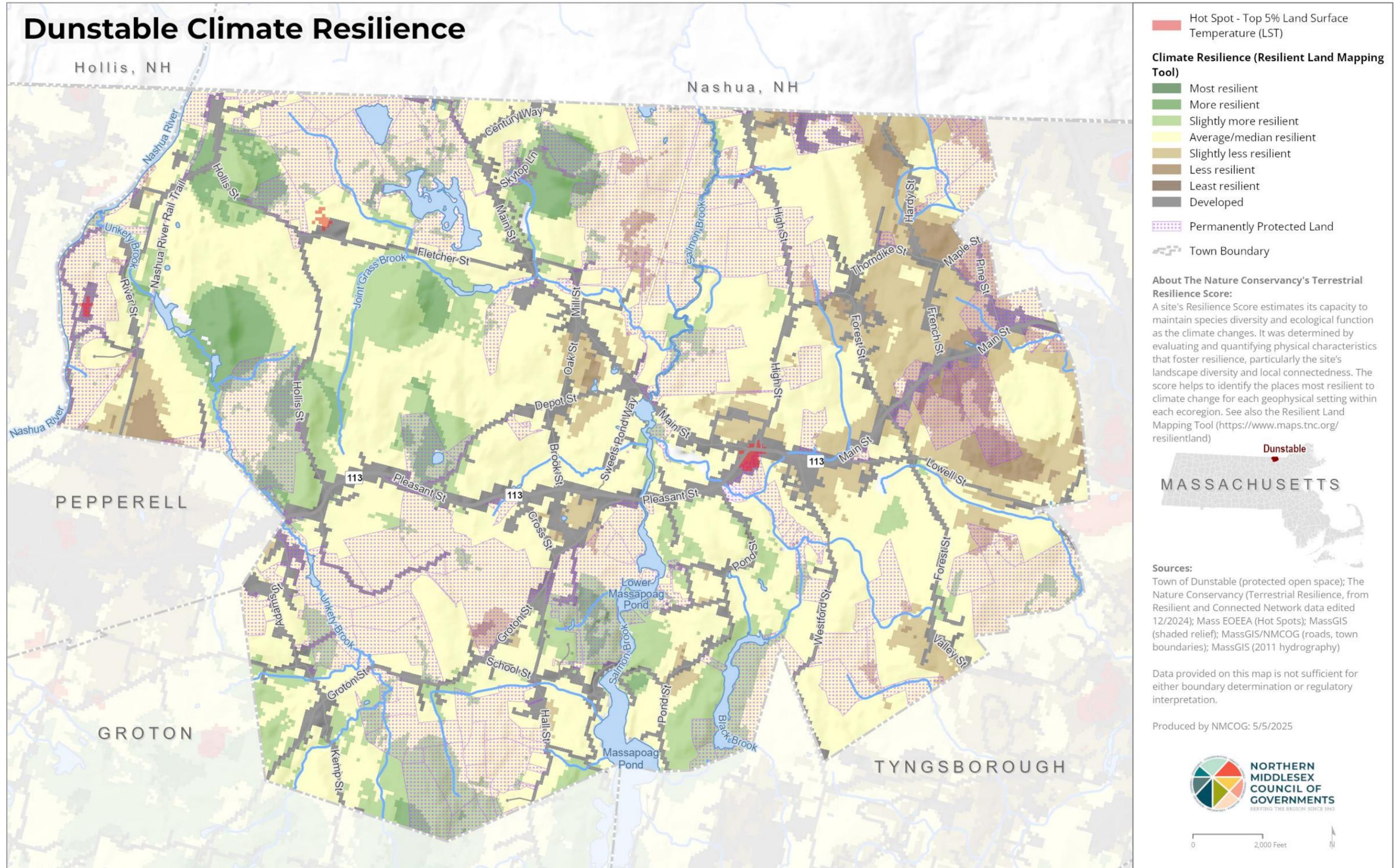
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SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS INVENTORY

Open space shapes Dunstable's identity and anchors the community's shared values. It protects the quantity and quality of the town's drinking water, supports year-round recreation, sustains healthy ecosystems and wetlands, and improves air quality and public health. Open space also preserves local agriculture, protects groundwater and surface water supplies, provides essential wildlife habitat, and maintains the rural character and scenic landscapes that residents consistently describe as central to Dunstable's sense of place.

Open space is broadly defined by the Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook as, "conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation." This definition complements the Recreational and Open Land statute [M.G.L. Ch. 61B] that defines open land as that "retained in substantially a natural, wild, or open condition, or in landscaped condition in such a manner as to allow to a significant extent the preservation of wildlife and natural resources."

Protected lands are recognized as property that is legally safeguarded against development, alteration, usage, or land uses inconsistent with its conservation, recreation, agricultural, water supply, or historic preservation purposes. This protection is secured through constitutional provisions (such as Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution), statutory restrictions (e.g., Conservation Restriction (CR), Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), Historic Preservation Restriction (HPR), or Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR), or ownership by public entities or qualified conservation organizations (such as a municipality or land trusts). Protected status typically requires

legislative or legal action for any change in use or disposition and, in the case of Article 97, often mandates replacement of land to prevent net loss of conservation value.

This does not include land placed under Chapter 61 (forestry), 61A (agriculture), or 61B (recreation) as these currently use classifications are not in perpetuity. Dedicated open space is often associated with passive recreation and wildlife habitat: trails for hiking, skiing, horses, and scenic vistas; sustainable wildlife populations for biodiversity, bird watching, fishing, and hunting.

In a more fundamental sense, however, permanent open space is a measure of the environmental health of a town and its people. Forests provide clean water, clean air, noise reduction, and carbon sequestration. Fields provide similar benefits and help retain some of Dunstable's rural areas. Wetlands purify water, prevent flooding, and maintain stream flows. Open space is vital to aquifer (groundwater) recharge, especially important as the town is wholly dependent on well water.

Finally, open space easements can sustain locally grown produce (agriculture) and forest products. Such easements can provide all of the elements listed above, while supporting the local economy with jobs and taxes.

At the time of Dunstable's 1976 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the town had only 341 acres of conservation land. At the time of 1998 Plan update there were four times that amount or nearly 1,600 acres of permanently protected lands. In July 2010 there were 2,763 ± acres of Town, State and private land permanently protected for conservation, recreation, and agriculture. In 2025, the total is 3,745 acres. This success is due to the public-spirited citizens who formed the Dunstable Rural Land Trust (DRLT), to the generous landowners who have given land/money to the

Town and the Trust, to dedicated members of the Town's boards and commissions, to the Community Preservation Act Committee and to state conservation agencies. Progress since 2010 is shown in the Appendix Record of Accomplishments. Some of the newly acquired parcels over the past ten (10) years include: Emory Woods (48 acres off High St), Swallow Mill Pond (4.7 acres off Main St), Kendall Cranberry Bog (11.5 acres off High St), as well as the Miller Field, Frye Field, and Westford Street Conservation Restrictions, collectively over 100 acres. All of these parcels were purchased with the help of state LAND Grants, CPA funds, and/or Town funding. The Town also accepted two land donations: the Stanichuk 1 acre parcel on Hall St, the Woods Parcel of 10 acres off Main Street.

Recognizing the effect of full market valuation on open space land (notably an acceleration in land subdivision), some decades past the state legislature established special reduced valuation categories for lands in open space use. These are known as Chapter 61, 61A and 61B tax classification programs: respectively: Chapter 61 (forestry), 61A (agriculture), or 61B (recreation).

Dunstable presently has 1,857 acres classified in Chapter 61A. Another 1,139 acres are classified as managed forests in Chapter 61. Considering that Dunstable's largest land use is forest, Chapter 61 land is a relatively small proportion of forested land. There are just 22 acres in Chapter 61B. Although these special property tax classifications do not serve as permanent open space conservation measures, their prevalence indicates that many Dunstable landowners intend to continue farming and forestry.

Throughout this section the following key will be used in the property tables:

Use/Activity	Management Entity	Condition
AG = Agricultural Site	DRLT=Dunstable Rural Land Trust	E = Excellent
B= Canoe (no motors)	TFC=Town Forest Committee	G = Good
BS= Ball Sports	DFW=Div. of Fisheries/Wildlife	F = Fair
F=Fishing	R&P=Recreation & Parks	P=Poor
H=Wildlife Habitat	Cem=Cemetery Commission	Funding
HR=Horseback Riding	CC= Conservation Commission	CPA= Community Preservation Act
HS = Historic Site	DCR= Dept. of Conservation Resources	CPC=Community Preservation Committee
SV=Scenic View	DEM= Dept. of Environmental Management	LAND = Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Grant Program
T=Trails		TF = Timber Fund (Conservation Commission)
TM=Timber Management		COS = Cluster Open Space Development
W=Water Resource		Town = Annual Town Meeting Appropriation
XC=Cross country skiing		

5.A: Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties

Dunstable's municipally owned conservation and recreation properties collectively represent a robust and multi-faceted open space network that balances ecological stewardship, passive recreation, and active community use. The Conservation Commission oversees over 1,072 acres of land permanently protected for conservation and low-impact activities such as hiking, fishing, and wildlife observation. These parcels, acquired through a mix of gifts, grants, Town funds such as CPA and the Conservation Commission's Timber Fund, and development set-asides, include significant areas like Flat Rock Hill, Stone Arch Bridge, Spaulding-Proctor, and the Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge, which offer trail systems and educational amenities. Many smaller properties protect water resources and serve as vital wildlife corridors or nesting habitats, though a majority are designated as having "no additional recreational potential," preserving their natural integrity.

The Parks Commission manages approximately 48 acres dedicated to active recreation across two (2) key sites: Larter Field and Town Fields & Common. These spaces provide infrastructure for sports, walking, and gatherings, with Horse Hill Field offering future development opportunities for new amenities.

Additionally, other departments such as the Town Forest Committee and Cemetery Commission maintain lands that support passive use, cultural heritage, and forestry activities. Notable among these are the Pierce and Gage Town Forests, as well as cemeteries that, while not recreational in nature, enhance the town's historical landscape. Together, municipal lands underscore Dunstable's strong commitment to preserving its rural character while enhancing wildlife habitat, public access to nature and recreation.

Conservation Commission Managed Conservation Lands

The conservation lands under the stewardship of the Dunstable Conservation Commission encompass a diverse and substantial network of over 1,072 acres, as shown in *Table 1: Conservation Commission Managed Conservation Lands*. This reflects the Town's long-standing commitment to land preservation, wildlife protection, watershed protection, and passive recreation. These parcels, acquired through various means including gifts, grants, cluster open space developments, and CPA funding, provide consistent protection in perpetuity and serve as a foundation for ecological stewardship and limited recreational use. Many properties support passive uses such as walking (W), hiking (H), fishing (F), and trail activities (T). Many parcels are described as having no additional recreational potential, including all but two of the parcels gained through cluster open space developments. Larger areas like Flat Rock Hill (148 acres), Spaulding-Proctor (96 acres), and Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge (94 acres) stand out for their ecological and trail-based recreational value, featuring educational signage, wildlife observation opportunities, and habitat enhancement initiatives. Meanwhile, smaller parcels like the Craven and Curtis conservation areas, though modest in size, contribute to wildlife corridors and habitat. Notably, recent acquisitions such as Emery Woods (2021) and Swallow Mill Pond (2023) indicate an ongoing investment in expanding and enhancing the open space network. Despite the predominance of "no additional recreational potential" designations, the system presents a well-protected, ecologically valuable, and moderately accessible landscape that supports low-impact public enjoyment while safeguarding natural resources.

Table 1: Conservation Commission Managed Conservation Lands

Parcel ID	Date Acquired	Site	Acres	Funding Source	Public Access	Activity / Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
13-23-0 13-23-1	2015	Alexander Estates Open Space	15.12	COS	Alexander Way & Larter Field	H,T	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential, entry signage needed
15-9-1	2006	Amos Kendall Conservation Area	25.16	CPA & LAND	High St.	W, H, HR, F, T	Perpetuity	G	Trails to brook/ protected wildlife / signage needed
17-33B-0	1970	Bacon Conservation Area	11.40	Town	through Town Fields	W, H, F, T, XC	Perpetuity	G	trail expansion (Town Center loop)
23-28-2	2003	Bahsler Forest Cons. Area	17.78	Gift (Bertrand)	none	H	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
17-143-3 17-143-4	2012	Best Triangle Parcels	4.36	CPA, Gift (DRLT / TF)	Main St. / Lowell St.	H, SV, AG	Perpetuity	G	Gateway to Dunstable connection
18-22-0	1963	Biron Conservation Area	10.00	Gift (Biron)	Westford St.	W, H	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
10-24-12	1997	Blanchard Hill Cons. Area	39.38	COS	Sky Top Lane	W, H, T	Perpetuity	F	Trail improvement, signage
7-4-0	1987	Chapman Conservation Area	1.70	Town	Pleasant St.	H	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
7-28-0	1992	Craven Conservation Area	2.22	Gift (Craven)	Pleasant St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
12-51-0	1997	Curtis Conservation Area	2.00	COS	Pleasant St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
12-116-1	2021	Drew Landing	1.27	Town	Main St.	W, H, F, B	Perpetuity	F	boardwalk development, trail connections
13-49-0	2015	Drummey Parcel	0.20	Gift (Drummey)	Lower Dam Way	H	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential

Parcel ID	Date Acquired	Site	Acres	Funding Source	Public Access	Activity / Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
17-120-1	2021	Emery Woods Conservation Area & CR	47.99	CPC, State LAND Grant	Salmon Brook by boat	W, H, F, TM	Perpetuity	G	Boardwalk development, trail connections
18-10-0	1996 2008	English/Whippoorwill Wildlife Refuge	34.00	Gift (English)	Westford St.	W, H	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
18-14-0 18-36-0	1979	Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge	94.33	Gift (Farnsworth)	Westford St.	W, H, TM	Perpetuity	G	Wildlife habitat enhancement in collaboration with Mass F&W
11-81-0	2007	Flat Rock Hill Conservation Area	148.0	CPA, Gift (DRLT) LAND/TF	Mill St.	T, XC, TM, HR, H, SV	Perpetuity	F	Trail improvement
12-46-2	1996	Fox Run Conservation Area	2.14	COS	backland on Black Br.	W, H	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
7-31-0	1963	Gardner Conservation Area	3.00	Town	Pleasant St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
13-66-0	1963	Goldthwaite Cons. Area	1.30	Town	Parkhurst St	W, H, F	Perpetuity	G	Trail improvement, signage
16-29-0	1990	Hogg Conservation Area	27.0	Town & Gift (DRLT)	via Salmon Bk / boat	W, H, F, TM	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
11-80-0	2016	Woods Parcel	10.0	Gift (Woods)	Main St.	H, TM	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
13-64-0	1963	Holmes Conservation Area	5.00	Town & state grant	boat only	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational backland
20-30-1	2010	Howard's Brook Cons. Area	10.89	CPA, Gifts (DRLT / residents)	Hardy St	W, H, T, XC, HR	Perpetuity	P	Trail improvement, invasive management

Parcel ID	Date Acquired	Site	Acres	Funding Source	Public Access	Activity / Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
11-54-0	1989	Joint Grass Brook Cons. Area	21.16	COS	Mill St.& Swallow Ln.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
15 9 0	2018	Kendall Cranberry Bog Cons. Area	11.47	Town, LAND, CPA	426 High St	H, W, T, HR, W, XC	Perpetuity	G	Trail improvement
11-82-0 15-180	1978	Kennedy Conservation Area	50.0	TF	Stone Arch Bridge, boat or Flat Rock	W, H, T, F, HR, TM	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
8-26-0	1963	Keyes Meadow Cons. Area	18.0	Town	Groton St	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
22-31-1	2005	Meeting House Hill Conservation Area	13.48	TF, Town	Main St.	H, HS, V	Perpetuity	E	Historic gateway connection, vernal pools, parking delineation
13-47-12 13-47-13	2005	Parkhurst St Conservation Area	16.58	COS	Parkhurst St	W, H, F	Perpetuity	G	trail expansion
11-83-0 11-84-0	1963	Proctor-Grater Conservation Area	30.0	Tax title	Kennedy Cons. Area or by boat	W, H, T, F, HR, TM	Perpetuity	G	no additional recreational potential
12-115-0	1963	Sargent Conservation Area	3.00	Town	Main St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	no additional recreational potential
12-2-0	2002	Sawyer Conservation Area	5.00	Gift (Hogg)	Main St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	no additional recreational potential
17-43-0	1963	Shaw Conservation Area	5.00	Town	Pleasant St.	W, H, F, B, picnic, skate	Perpetuity	F	trail loop, culvert replacement, dam improvements, water resource

Parcel ID	Date Acquired	Site	Acres	Funding Source	Public Access	Activity / Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
12-53 13-50 13-1-0 13-2-0	1963	Spaulding-Proctor Reservation	96.44	Gift (Mason & Roxbury Latin School)	Pleasant St & Groton St.	W, H, T, HR, F, B, TM	Perpetuity	G	sign & parking delineation/kiosk
13-4A-0	2024	Stanichuck Open Space	1.01	Gift	0 Hall St	H	Perpetuity	E	no additional recreational potential
11-23-0	2007	Stoddard Conservation Area	32.01	COS	Main St.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
15-17-0	1981	Stone Arched Bridge Conservation Area	12.24	Gift (Biron)	High St. boat landing-Salmon Brook	W, H, T, XC, F, SV, B, HS	Perpetuity	G	Signage, parking area delineation
11-46-2	2023	Swallow Mill Pond Conservation Area	4.76	CPC, LAND	Mill Street	W, H, F, B, SV, HS	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
8-54 8-73	1995	Unkety Brook Cons. Area	88.86	COS	Adam / Kemp	W, H, F, T	Perpetuity	G	Trail improvement and expansion
8-45-0	1998	Unkety Woods Preserve	62.00	Town, state grant	Woods Court	W, H, F, T, HR, TM, XC,	Perpetuity	G	Trail improvement and expansion
11-88-0	1963	Urqhart Conservation Area	4.00	Tax title	through Sargent Cons.	W, H, F	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
12-114-0	1983	New Town Wellfield	14.39	Town	through Sargent Cons.	town water, H	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
Total Acreage			1,003.64						

Municipally Owned Recreation and Parks Lands

Dunstable's parks and recreation lands, though limited in number, provide vital opportunities for active recreation and community use, encompassing approximately 48 acres across three primary sites, as shown on *Table 2: Municipally Owned Recreation and Parks Lands*. Larter Field, the largest designated recreation parcel at 26.3 acres, was gifted to the Town and serves as a well-maintained hub for athletic events, hiking, and community gatherings. Similarly, the Town Fields and Common, spanning nearly 16 acres along Main Street, offer versatile open space with sports fields, walking areas, and parking, making them

a central destination for organized and informal recreational activities. Horse Hill Field, a 6.25-acre cluster open space parcel on Hall Street, is earmarked for future recreational development, with potential uses including soccer fields, a baseball diamond, or a playground, enhancing recreational access for residents in nearby neighborhoods. All three properties are protected in perpetuity, ensuring long-term community benefit. While small in number compared to conservation lands, these parcels are essential for meeting the town's active recreation needs, providing spaces for sports, gatherings, and outdoor exercise, and offering potential for strategic enhancements to expand programming and accessibility.

Table 2: Municipally Owned Recreation and Parks Lands

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Funding	Activity / Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
14-60-16 14-60-17	Horse Hill Field	R&P	6.25	COS	Meadow	Perpetuity	E	Dog park, community garden
13-3-0	Larter Field	R&P	26.30	Gift (Larter)	BS, HR, H	Perpetuity	P	Sports field, shade access, pavilion, potable water source, concessions, amenities for community events
17-33-0 17-33-A 17-42-0 17-42-38-0	Town Fields & Common	R&P	15.88	Town	W, BS	Perpetuity	F	Sports field, community activities, concerts, and event hosting
Total Acreage			48.43					

Other Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties

The lands managed by the Town Forest Committee, Cemetery Commission, and other municipal departments in Dunstable play specialized but important roles in the town's open space system,

contributing to historical preservation, passive recreation, and future planning needs. These parcels are identified in *Table 3 - Other Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties*. Cemetery parcels, including Central Cemetery (26.42 acres) and smaller sites such as Blood, Rideout, Swallow, and Meeting House

Hill, are all protected in perpetuity and primarily serve as places of remembrance with no additional recreational potential. Despite their limited use, they preserve historical and cultural landscapes and contribute to the town’s rural qualities. In contrast, the Town Forest Committee manages two significant parcels—Pierce Town Forest (131 acres) and Gage Town Forest (37.19 acres)—which offer valuable opportunities for hiking, trail use, habitat restoration, and forestry activities. Though also noted as having no additional recreational potential, these

forests support low-impact outdoor uses and maintain important ecological functions. Other Town-held lands, such as the River Street Property (30 acres), offer future recreational possibilities, including a potential sports field, while the area around Blanchard Hill could support limited passive use such as walking and hiking. Collectively, these properties enhance Dunstable’s green infrastructure, offering a mix of heritage value, conservation benefits, and latent recreational utility.

Table 3 - Other Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Funding Source	Activ/Uses	Degree of Protection	Condition	Recreation & Improvement Potential
1-11-0	Blood Cemetery	Cem	0.34	Town	Cemetery	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
17-11-0 17-9-0	Central Cemetery	Cem	26.42	Town	Cemetery	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
22-32-0	Meeting House Hill Cemetery	Cem	0.43	Town	Cemetery	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
6-8-0	Rideout Cemetery	Cem	0.51	Gift	Cemetery	Perpetuity	G	No additional recreational potential
12-14-0 12-15-0	Swallow Cemetery	Cem	0.54	Gift	Cemetery	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
20-22-0	Gage Town Forest	TFC	37.19	Gift (Gage)	H, T, HR, TM	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
13-103-0	Pierce Town Forest	TFC	131.00	Town	H, T, HR, TM	Perpetuity	G	Manage trail, signage and parking improvements
12-49-1 12-48-0	Mixed Use District	Town	28.50	Town	W, H,	None	E	No additional recreational potential
17-66-0 17-67-0	Old Town Wellfield & Scales	Town	1.59	Town	W, H	None	E	No additional recreational potential
1-7-0	River Street Property	Town	30.00	Town	W, H, HR, F	None	E	Dog park, Playing field & Equestrian use
10-24-13	Blanchard Hill	Water	10.89	COS	H, T, SV	Perpetuity	E	No additional recreational potential
Total Acreage			267.41					

5.B: Public Properties Providing Conservation & Recreation Amenities

In addition to municipally managed properties not held by municipal conservation or recreation, Dunstable benefits from a substantial network of conservation and recreation lands that are publicly accessible but not held by local government departments. These include over 757 acres of conservation land owned by the Dunstable Rural Land Trust (DRLT) and approximately 872 acres of state-owned open space managed by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Conservation Resources (DCR).

DRLT holdings offer a variety of passive recreational opportunities such as hiking, wildlife observation, and scenic enjoyment, with notable sites including the DRLT Wildlife Refuge, McLoon Farm, and Flat Rock Hill Quarry. Similarly, state-owned lands—such as the Unkety Brook and Dunstable Brook Wildlife Management Areas and the Nashua River Rail Trail—contribute critical habitat protection, trail access, and recreational value. These lands are typically in excellent condition and benefit from long-term legal protections, such as Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. Collectively, these non-municipal public properties play a vital role in preserving Dunstable’s rural landscape, enhancing ecological connectivity, and expanding recreational opportunities across the community.

Dunstable Rural Land Trust Owned Conservation Lands

Conservation lands owned and managed by the Dunstable Rural Land Trust (DRLT) represent the single largest category of protected open space in town, encompassing approximately 757 acres, as shown on *Table 4*.

These parcels reflect a decades-long commitment by DRLT to preserving Dunstable’s rural character, natural habitats, and passive recreational opportunities through a mix of private donations, conservation-oriented development, and strategic land stewardship. Notably, the DRLT Wildlife Refuge Open Space which includes Tully and Robbins Farm Open Space spans approximately 416 acres and supports a rich array of uses including hiking, forestry, wildlife observation, cross-country skiing, and scenic viewing. Other significant holdings include the 108-acre McLoon Farm, the 86-acre Flat Rock Hill Quarry Open Space, and Horse Hill Quarry area, all of which help create connected ecological corridors and trail networks. All DRLT parcels are protected in perpetuity and are in excellent condition, with uses typically limited to passive recreation such as walking, hiking, and nature study. All are privately owned and most allow public access, thus having a cumulative impact on vital ecological and recreation benefits.

This extensive network of conserved lands complements Town- and State-owned properties by preserving biodiversity, offering trail-based recreation, and reinforcing community identity rooted in land conservation. All lands in the following table are protected in perpetuity.

Table 4: Dunstable Rural Land Trust Owned Conservation Lands

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Funding Source	Activity / Uses	Condition
16-63-0 16-63-1	Basbanes Open Space	DRLT	4.03	Gift (Basbanes)	W, H	E
14-52-	Bear Hill Estates	DRLT	17.69	COS	H, T	E
10-27-0	Chaney Open Space	DRLT	8.00	Gift (Chaney)	H, T	E
20-24-0	Danforth Road Property	DRLT	24.00	Private	W, H	E
6-14-0 5-3-0 5-6-0 5-12-1 5-12-2 5-12-3	DRLT Wildlife Refuge Open Space	DRLT	318.33	Private (Civic/Brox) Gift (Gregg)	W, H, F, T, XC, HR, SV	E
10-26-0	Flat Rock Hill Quarry Open Space	DRLT	86.00	COS/nh	H, T	E
8-5-0 8-6-0	George R. McGovern Open Space	DRLT	14.00	Gift (McGovern)	W, H, F	E
14-60-0	Horse Hill Quarry Open Space	DRLT	38.15	COS	H, T	E
20-17 20-19 20-20	Kennedy Open Space	DRLT	11.87	Gift (Kennedy)	H, T	E
21-21-0 21-1-0	McLoon Farm	DRLT	108.12	Gift and Private	SV, AG, TM, H, W	E
11-86-0	Mill Brook Open Space	DRLT	7.24	COS	W, H	E
15-27-0	Nyman Open Space	DRLT	1.03	Gift (Nyman)	W, H	E
3-1-6	Off River St Open Space	DRLT	11.50	Gift (Tully)	W, H, F	E
12-40A-0	Randolph Open Space	DRLT	0.16	Gift (Randolph)	W, H	E
1-18-0	Robbins Farm Open Space	DRLT	36.86	COS	H, T	E
20-21-0	Spectacle Hill Open Space	DRLT	1.00	Private	H	E
18-37-0	Talis Open Space	DRLT	4.70	Private	W, H	E
17-121-1	Tobey Parcel	DRLT	6.72	Gift (Tobey)	W, H	E

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Funding Source	Activity / Uses	Condition
5-2-1 5-2-0	Tully Farm Open Space	DRLT	55.59	Gift (Tully)	W	E
15-19-0	Tully Open Space	DRLT	3.00	Gift (Tully)	W, H, F	E
	Total Acreage		757.99			

State Owned Lands Providing Conservation and Recreation Amenities

State-owned lands in Dunstable offer significant conservation and passive recreation value, comprising approximately 872 acres of protected open space managed primarily by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Conservation Resources (DCR). These lands are protected under Article 97, ensuring their long-term preservation for public benefit. The largest holdings include the Unkety Brook Wildlife Management Area (592 acres) and the Dunstable Brook Wildlife Area (171 acres) which support a mix of uses including walking, hiking, and hunting. The Nashua River Rail Trail, managed by DCR, offers 20

acres of linear recreational space that is heavily used for walking, biking, and scenic enjoyment, enhancing accessibility to nature for residents and visitors alike. Nearly all properties are in excellent condition and provide key wildlife habitats, wetland protection, forest protection, and connectivity for regional trail systems. Together, these state-managed areas reinforce Dunstable’s role in broader conservation networks while offering low-impact recreation opportunities that align with the town’s rural and ecological values. All lands listed in the following table are protected under Article 97.

Table 5: State Owned Lands Providing Conservation and Recreation Amenities

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Activity / Uses
1-23-0	Nashua River Rail Trail	DCR	20.20	W, H, F, T
7-55-0 7-54-0	Hawk Swamp WMA	DFW	61.00	W, H
23-3-0 23-2-0 23-4-1 23-1-0	Dunstable Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA)	DFW	171.15	W, H,
19-5-0 19-6-0	Elbow Meadow Wildlife Area	DFW	12.83	W, H,
1-14-0	Kirpatrick Land	DFW	14.97	W, H, F, T

Parcel ID	Site	Manager	Acres	Activity / Uses
2-4-0	Unkety Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA)	DFW	591.64	W, H, T
1-7-1				
2-6-19				
2-9-0				
7-30-0				
8-27-0				
8-32-0				
8-38-0				
8-4-0				
9-10-0				
9-11-0				
9-12-0				
9-13-0				
9-14-0				
9-15-0				
9-16-0				
14-55-0				
14-55B-0				
14-55C-0				
14-56-0				
2-4-1				
Total Acreage			871.79	

Privately Owned Recreation Parcels

The Greater Lowell YMCA operates Camp Massapoag, a youth summer camp, located on Massapoag Pond. The pond is one of the few swimming sites in Dunstable. The Town is exploring usage of the beach, swimming and other recreational programming in collaboration with the YMCA.

5.C. Permanently Protected Private Parcels

Parcels Protected by a CR, APR, or WPR

Less-than-fee-interests are those properties encumbered by a Conservation Restriction (CR) that are permanently protected. These do not include public properties or nonprofit properties that are protected by a CR, which are listed in this section.

An Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) is a voluntary program in Massachusetts that allows landowners to preserve their farmland for agricultural use in perpetuity by receiving

compensation for the difference between the land's fair market value and its agricultural value. This program protects productive farmland, promotes the revitalization of the agricultural industry, and makes land more affordable for farmers. Eligibility requirements for APR are:

- Land Size: The land must be equal to or greater than five acres.
- Agricultural Use: The land must be actively farmed for at least the past two years, and products raised on the land must be sold in the regular course of business.
- Additional Factors: Other factors, such as soil suitability, the threat of development, and proximity to other farms and markets, are also considered.

The Town actively protects its natural resources through the protection of over 569 acres of land under CRs (see Table 6) and more than 249 acres under APRs (see Table 7). These protected parcels, spread across numerous locations such as Westford Street, Brook Street, Frye Field, and Black Brook, are owned and/or managed by a mix of private landowners, local trusts such as the Dunstable Rural Land Trust (DRLT), and conservation organizations like the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW).

Many of these lands are overseen by the Dunstable Conservation Commission (DCC) and serve a range of conservation purposes, from passive recreation and wildlife habitat to working forests and agricultural landscapes. Notably, the Sky Meadow Golf Course maintains public open space while supporting active recreation. Agricultural properties, such as the Kennedy, Larter, and Tully farms, are preserved under APRs to ensure long-term agricultural use. These combined efforts underscore Dunstable's commitment to conservation, sustainable land use, and the protection of vital natural and scenic resources.

A Wetland Preservation Restriction (WPR) is a legal agreement between a landowner and the state (specifically the Division of Water Supply Protection) that restricts certain activities on the land to protect water quality and wetland resources. It allows the landowner to retain ownership and control of their property while ensuring its permanent protection through deed restrictions. At the time of this publication the Town does not have any WPRs.

Table 6: Parcels protected by a CR

Parcel ID	Site	Owner	Mgr.	Acres	Activity / Uses
12-100, 12-101, 12-101-1, 12-101-3, 12-101-2, 12-101-4	Brook Street/Depot Street CR	COVER, JOHN; EVAN. CON. CHURCH; WILLIAMS, HENRY; ABONDARKENKO, OLEXANDR; VALCANAS, TIMOTHY; LANNAN FRANCIS T	DCC	6.95	W
12-83	Frye Field CR	FRYE ROBERT	DCC	12.00	TM, AG, H, T, SV
21-13	Larter Family Estates CR	LINGEMAN SUZANNE L & BYRON TRU	DRLT	75.52	TM, AG, H, T, SV

Parcel ID	Site	Owner	Mgr.	Acres	Activity / Uses
21-15	Edward Larter Jr. CR	LARTER JUDITH K	DRLT	53.72	TM, AG, H, T, SV
22-33, 22-33-4	Miller CR	FORGIONE MATTEO PETER	DCC	6.72	TM, AG, H, HS, T, W, SV
16-40-1, 16-40-2, 16-40-3	Russell CR	RUSSELL JAMES BERNIER GREGORY RUSSELL ROSEMARIE MCGOVERN GEORGE MCGOVERN LEE	DCC	14.74	AG, SV
18-7, 18-8, 18-9, 23-38	Westford Street CR	LESURE ALISON M	DCC	86.87	TM, AG, H, T, HR
17-136-2	Hardman CR	LUCAS DAVID R ESQUIRE	DRLT	14.33	AG, W, H, HS
16-18, 16-19	Sears CR	SEARS DAVID F AND PERMELIA S	DRLT	15.00	AG
15-44	Sky Meadow Golf Course CR	SKY MEADOW COUNTRY CLUB	DCC	49.27	Golf
15-2-0, 15-3-B (portion)	Kennedy CR	KENNEDY ROBERT	DCC	26.26	TM, AG, T, W, SV
10-24, 10-24-1, 10-24-2, 10-24-3, 10-24-4, 10-24-5, 10-24-7, 10-24-19, 10-24-18	Blanchard Hill CR	MAYER, RONALD; BUCHMANN DAVID J, SHANMGAM SHVAKUMAR, LIANG LUO, MOSES DANIEL, LOUIS ADULAPURAM, KRANTHI PRAKASH, REEMA BEAUCHAIN, CHARLES DICICCO MARK	DCC	13.36	W, H
17-120	Lavrakas CR	YANG PETER YANG JEANETTE	DCC	10.40	W, H, T, TM
17-16, 17-16-1, 17-16-5, 17-16-3, 17-16-2, 17-16-6, 18-54,	Black Brook CR	DINICOLA TIMOTHY P KORDUN ROMAN VICTOR MCCUSKER JAMES M TRUSTEE CIPOLLA, JENNIFER M COSTON ANTHONY F FRASER JAMES J	DCC	25.50	W, H

Parcel ID	Site	Owner	Mgr.	Acres	Activity / Uses
18-58 18-55, 18-56, 18-57		CHABOT DAVID M FAN LUSHENG IRENE MCCARTHY JOHN ADAM MAJKUT KEITH, TRUSTEE LIU ZHI YANG			
18-38	Staples CR	CHAMBERS JANET S TR	DRLT, DCC	15.06	W, HS, TM
14-52-4, 14-52-5, 10-52-6, 14-52-7, 14-52-8	Maguire/Bear Hill CR	CALVEY LOGAN, SULLIVAN CHRISTOPHER P, SOARS MATTHEW, MANNING JAKEBZOWEJ EUGENE	DCC	4.00	H
14-52-2, 14-52-3, 14-53	Maguire/Bear Hill Deed Restriction	GATH JOHN GANNON HUGH S DUNSTABLE RURAL LAND TRUST	DCC	2.06	H
8-43, 8-39, 8-37 portions	Goss Family CR	GOSS FAMILY LAND TRUST GOSS FAMILY LAND TRUST ELIAS DAVID L	DFW	72.06	TM, AG, SV, H, T
7-3-0, 8-43-0 portion	Goss CR	GOSS WESLEY CO TRUSTEE GOSS FAMILY LAND TRUST	DFW	65.60	TM, AG, H, T
Total Acreage in CR				569.42	

Table 7: Parcels protected by an APR

Parcel ID	Site	Owner	Acres	Activity / Uses
16-37	Kennedy APR	PSALEDAKIS, SUSAN	7.25	AG
16-35	Kennedy APR	KENNEDY, ROBERT	7.20	TM, AG
16-36	Kennedy APR	KENNEDY, ROBERT	69.00	AG
7-37	Larter Farm APR	LARTER, JUDITH K ETALS TRUSTEE	127.00	TM, AG
5-1-2	Tully Farm Hollis Street APR	TULLY, JUNE L MARITAL QTIP TRUS	3.16	TM, AG
5-1-1	Tully Farm Hollis Street APR	TULLY, JUNE L MARITAL QTIP TRUS	35.43	TM, AG
Total Acreage in APR			249.04	

Parcels Under Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B

GL c. 61, also known as the Forestland Taxation Act, is a program that provides property tax reductions to landowners who commit to keeping their land undeveloped and managing it for forest products. The program is designed to help landowners realize the value of their land's current use. Property owners must annually apply to their local board of assessors to maintain the classification, subsequently, this list can change from year to year.

Approximately 1,139 acres of private land is classified as forest land according to the Dunstable Assessor's records in Chapter 61 program at the time of this publication.

In order to qualify for and retain classification as agricultural or horticultural land under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61A, property must consist of:

- five (5) plus contiguous acres of land,
- under the same ownership, and
- actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses.

Properties enrolled in Chapter 61A are taxed based on the current use of the property (i.e., the productive potential of the land for growing agricultural products), instead of the fair market or development value. Approximately 1,857 acres of private land is classified as agricultural land according to the Dunstable Assessor's records in Chapter 61A program.

Private recreation land includes nonprofit organizations that own and maintain outdoor active recreation facilities. Chapter 61B recreation land classification program is designed to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth's open space and promote recreational land use. It offers significant property tax benefits to

owners willing to make use of outdoor activities. To qualify the property must meet the following criteria:

- Be at least five contiguous acres under the same ownership;
- Be used for certain recreational purposes, such as hiking, camping, boating, or hunting;
- Be open to the public or members of a non-profit organization; and
- Be maintained in a natural, wild, or open condition, or landscaped to preserve wildlife and natural resources.

Approximately 21.63 acres of private land is classified as private recreational land according to the Dunstable Assessor's records in Chapter 61B program.

Parks and Open Space Equity

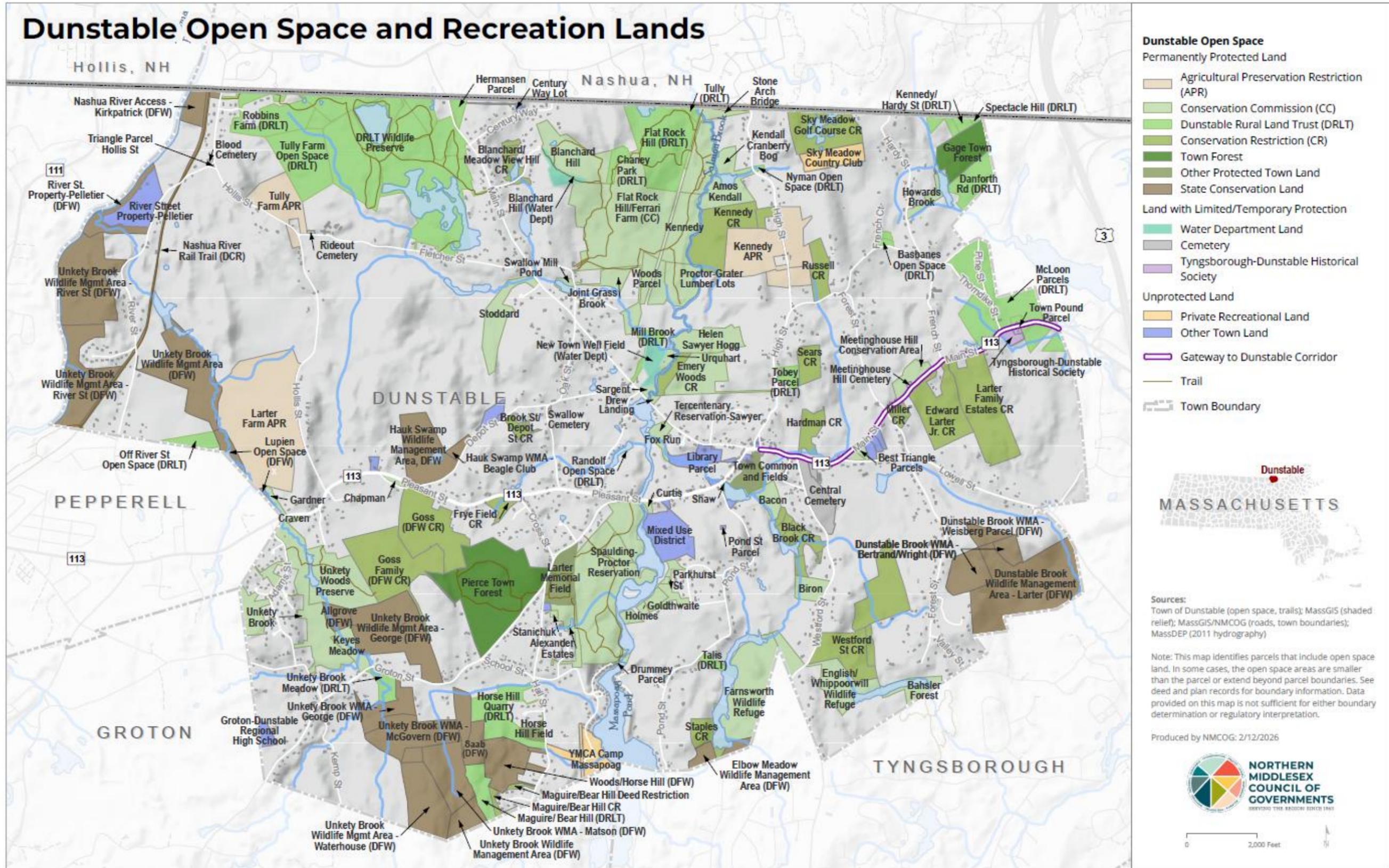
There are no state-designated Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods in Dunstable. This plan highlighted many people in the community with limited access to public open space, especially vulnerable populations.. As highlighted in the above inventories, there are several sites that offer guided hikes by volunteers, barriers such as inaccessible trails, lack of shaded seating, limited rest areas, and outdated and a lack of signage, which limits the usability of these spaces.

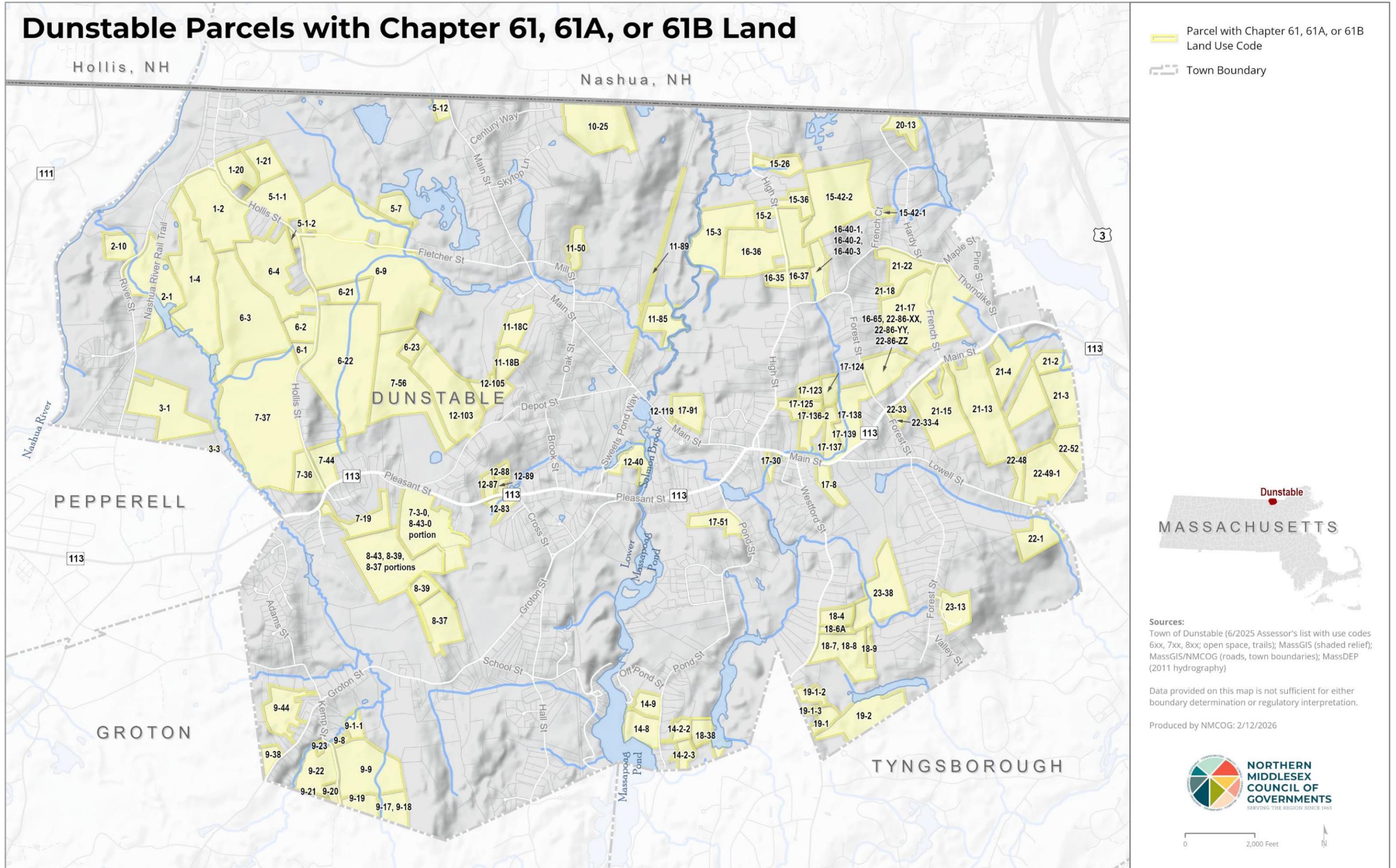
Maintaining forests, wetlands, and existing recreation areas as cost-effective tools for climate resilience and community well-being. The Town might consider focusing on targeted acquisitions, and stewarding and adapting its open spaces by making upgrades such as accessible surfaces, benches, shade structures, and incorporating routine targeted maintenance and land management to expand access. Newly asquired parcels with

passive and active recreation opportunities should be designed with many populations in mind.

Equity also depends on who gets included in decision-making. Listening sessions with vulnerable populations and accessible outreach materials may help ensure that town spaces reflect the community's needs. At the same time, outreach about opportunities should rely more on community bulletin boards, school newsletters, the senior center, and faith-based networks to engage a wider audience. Partnering with groups such as the Greater Lowell YMCA and Camp Massapoag could expand access to adaptive recreation and nature-based programs. With strong land management and stewardship, inclusive design, and targeted outreach, Dunstable can build a more equitable and resilient open space system.

Map: 7 - Open Space and Recreation Lands Map





SECTION 6: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

This section identifies and analyzes Dunstable's open space and recreation needs through the lens of environmental protection, climate resilience, public access, and equity and the town's broader goals of water protection, connectivity, and acquiring large tracts of land. It draws upon demographic and land use data, community input from surveys and workshops, and the findings from the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (HMP-MVP) plan. As a rural community in a larger metropolitan region, the needs identified in this section reflect the town's emerging risks from climate change, growing demand for inclusive recreational opportunities, and the need to steward and manage existing open space resources.

The town's strong agricultural and ecological identity faces pressures from both gradual environmental shifts and increasing recreational expectations. This section helps frame the town's priorities by identifying gaps in access, risks to resources, and population groups who may be underserved or underrepresented in planning. These needs guide the town's strategy to protect its landscape while improving public connection to it. According to the 2023 Massachusetts State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan, rural towns like Dunstable must increase efforts to incorporate nature-based strategies into both planning and capital improvements.

Land conservation and resource protection are central to Dunstable's identity and quality of life, providing lasting environmental, scenic, and recreational benefits. As the Town looks ahead, this plan intends to complement and align with other Town-adopted plans, including the Housing Production Plan and the Master Plan, to ensure a cohesive approach to growth and preservation. Management and stewardship of

conserved and protected lands will help the town maintain its conservation legacy. Balancing where people live, shop, and work in town and ensuring the infrastructure necessary to support people will also help sustain Dunstable's rural landscapes and long-term resilience.

6.A: Summary of Natural Resource Protection Needs

Dunstable's open space system provides critical habitat, scenic beauty, and climate-buffers to protect ecosystems. Natural system functions are increasingly threatened by more frequent and intense rainfall, prolonged drought, and shifts in species and land use. Protecting forests, wetlands, waterways, and farmland remains essential to community safety and long-term resilience.

Community feedback during this and prior planning processes, interviews, and public forums consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining natural buffers and prioritizing parcels that support wildlife corridors, water quality, and flood storage. Survey responses echoed these priorities, with strong support for conservation efforts near the Nashua River, vernal pools, and steep uplands.

Many community members emphasized the importance of connecting conservation lands to preserve ecological corridors and provide safe habitat for sensitive species. BioMap3 designations in Dunstable highlight areas of Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes that support species such as the Blanding's Turtle, Wood Turtle, Eastern Box Turtle, and multiple rare dragonflies. Maintaining forest cover, protecting wetland integrity, and reducing habitat fragmentation are key to supporting long-term biodiversity and climate resilience.

Invasive species also pose a growing threat to Dunstable's native ecosystems and water resources. Species such as Glossy

Buckthorn, Japanese Knotweed, and Asiatic Bittersweet are spreading in fields and forest understories, while aquatic invasives like Variable Leaf and Eurasian Milfoil, Curly Leaf Pondweed and Phragmites, threaten the ecological health of local ponds and streams. Invasive species outcompete native plants, reduce wildlife habitat quality, and impair recreational access. A coordinated management strategy, supported by regional partners, land trusts, and community volunteer stewards, can help control their spread through early detection, monitoring, and public education.

Inactive or abandoned farmland also contributes to the spread of invasive plants by providing disturbed, unmanaged areas where species can establish quickly. Fields that are not actively cultivated become difficult to reclaim once invasives take hold. Maintaining active agricultural use, through haying, rotations, grazing, or specialty crop production, helps suppress invasive species and preserve the town's working landscape. Similarly, regular forest management, selective thinning, and monitoring reduce opportunities for invasive insects and understory plants to expand.

Water resource protection remains a critical priority, given Dunstable's reliance on private wells and its proximity to the Wild & Scenic Nashua River. Maintaining wide riparian buffers, controlling runoff, and protecting headwater wetlands will help sustain groundwater recharge and surface water quality. Integrating water protection goals into future conservation and land-use planning will also support compliance with MS4 stormwater requirements and regional watershed initiatives.

Finally, protecting habitat connectivity across town boundaries is essential for sustaining wildlife movement and ecosystem health. Strategic land acquisitions and conservation restrictions should focus on linking BioMap3 Core Habitats, forest blocks, and riparian corridors with neighboring towns such as Groton,

Pepperell, and Tyngsborough. Improved connectivity will allow species to adapt to climate change, maintain genetic diversity, and preserve Dunstable's distinctive rural ecology.

Farmland remains an essential part of Dunstable's landscape and identity. However, local farming activity has slowed significantly due to aging ownership and market challenges. Many farms now operate at reduced capacity or have transitioned to lower-intensity uses. Community members voiced strong support for continued farmland protection, and also stressed the need to pair it with strategies that encourage active production. Support for small-scale and specialty agriculture, including connecting new farmers with available land and investing in infrastructure such as irrigation systems and farm stands. Without proactive protection, community members expressed concern that farmland could lose its functional value as a community resource. In addition to preserving land for commercial agriculture, the town should consider opportunities for community food production. Several community members expressed interest in starting a community garden, which would serve not only those without adequate yard space, particularly in upcoming housing developments, but also residents seeking a lower-barrier, educational, or social way to grow food.

Community gardens can provide hands-on learning and foster social connections. One forum participant noted that, "lack of space isn't the only reason to use a community garden... it's a place that lowers barriers to gardening and creates community." Seed-sharing libraries, educational workshops, and youth programs could further enhance its value. A pilot garden near Town-owned facilities or the library could offer a scalable, climate-resilient addition to Dunstable's open space network.

As traditional dairy and row-crop farming have declined in Dunstable, community members and Town officials have shown growing interest in supporting alternative and specialty

agriculture. Niche sectors, such as local cut flowers, organic produce, value-added food production, and cannabis cultivation, offer potential economic opportunities for landowners while helping preserve the agricultural landscape. The Town has already approved limited indoor cannabis projects and may benefit from clear siting guidance and design standards to ensure compatibility with conservation goals. Exploring small-scale, high-value models can help keep farmland viable and support a younger generation of farmers, especially when paired with infrastructure support and land access programs.

Open space also plays an increasingly important role in buffering the community from extreme weather. Intact wetlands reduce downstream flooding and erosion. Forest canopy provides critical cooling during heat events. Permanently protected land near streams and ponds helps preserve local water quality. These co-benefits reinforce the importance of aligning conservation with public health, hazard mitigation, and long-term sustainability.

6.B: Summary of Community's Outdoor Recreation Needs

Community members benefit from proximity to fields, forests, and trails, but usability varies. While heavily used spaces like Larter Field are popular for events and sports, some Town-owned conservation lands remain underutilized due to limited or no signage, unclear access, inaccessibility due to the physical characteristics of the land, and/or limited trail information.

During public outreach, both in the survey and interviews, several participants noted that even long-time community members are unsure of the location or how to access public lands. Barriers such as lack of ADA-compliant trails, insufficient parking, and erosion, further limit use.

Survey respondents and stakeholders emphasized the need to prioritize land stewardship and management, and accessibility. Investments in shade, seating, restrooms, trail surface

improvements, and clear wayfinding are key to meeting existing demand and ensuring equity in use and access to resources. Many facilities, including playgrounds and trailheads, are not fully ADA-compliant. People with mobility challenges, seniors, and those without access to vehicles face ongoing exclusion from open space opportunities.

Connectivity remains a community priority. Community members expressed interest in improving trail networks, enhancing accessibility across various terrain types, and strengthening connections between schools, conservation areas, and town amenities. Such improvements would support safe travel and improve the overall quality of life.

In addition to improving physical connectivity, Dunstable should invest in better wayfinding and outreach. Many survey respondents and interviewees noted that they are unsure of the location of public trails, how to access Town-owned land, or what programs and amenities are currently available. Confusion can discourage use and create the impression that public land is off-limits. Community members consistently requested printed and digital trail maps, clearer signage at trailheads and recreation areas, and more frequent communication through the Town's website, email lists, bulletin boards, and social media. Strengthening visibility and information-sharing will help more community members feel confident using and enjoying the town's open spaces.

While some parcels remain difficult to access due to surrounding private ownership, wetlands, or impassable terrain, many Town-owned spaces are accessible and well-suited for improvements. Sites suitable for access should be prioritized for signage, ADA-compliant trail upgrades, and safe, designated parking. Modest investments, such as stone steps, stabilized trail surfaces, or wayfinding signs, can significantly expand access for seniors, families, and residents with mobility limitations.

Several community members also emphasized the need to evaluate the appropriate use of trails for off-road vehicles and mountain e-bikes. There are trails throughout the town which wind through town-owned land e.g.. Conservation Commission and Town Forest, State-owned lands, private properties e.g. the DRLT or individual land owners. It is often difficult to determine where those boundaries are emphasizing the need for increased signage. The State's Wildlife Management Areas prohibit the use of motorized vehicles on their properties, and use on private properties requires permission from the land owner. However, many of these trails are used by hikers, and informally, if not illegally, by dirt bikers and ATV riders. While these uses often conflict with conservation goals or quiet recreation, there is interest in developing a clear trail use policy to reduce unauthorized access and prevent damage. Surveying existing trail conditions, identifying potential shared-use corridors, and engaging trail user groups could help the town determine where low-impact recreational use, such as electric mountain bikes or seasonal off-road vehicle access, might be allowed or restricted. Clear communication and designated areas may also reduce conflicts and improve compliance.

Community members also want more inclusive programming, particularly for teens, seniors, and families with limited time or transportation options. Stakeholders suggested seasonal festivals, outdoor yoga, food truck events, guided nature walks, and intergenerational activities, such as card-writing workshops and shared meals. These events create opportunities for connection while supporting health, resilience, and consistent engagement. A year-round indoor recreation space would further improve access, especially for those who cannot easily travel to neighboring towns. Many interviewees supported converting the old school into a multi-use facility to accommodate year-round

programming, senior services, and youth events, especially as Dunstable continues to grow and diversify.

According to the 2017 Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), towns like Dunstable must prioritize inclusive access, intergenerational programming, and water resource protection to meet state goals for equity, health, and climate resilience.

6.C: Management Needs

Dunstable's network of conserved properties, agricultural lands, and forested landscapes requires consistent stewardship to sustain ecological health, maintain public access, and support long-term resilience. Input from the community survey, public forums, and interviews highlighted several management needs, primarily shaped by the Town's limited staffing capacity and reliance on volunteers, partner organizations, and private landowners.

Invasive Species Management

Invasive species management remains a significant concern on both public and private land. Residents and partner organizations expressed support for a coordinated, town-wide strategy that identifies priority plant and insect species and outlines appropriate management areas. Additional needs include access to shared trainings and resources through regional partners such as watershed associations, NMCOG, and UMass Lowell; volunteer workdays and citizen-science monitoring; and clear, practical guidance for private landowners. A small, predictable budget for tools, signage, and disposal fees would strengthen implementation. These elements are consistent with approaches used effectively in other small communities with limited capacity.

Agricultural Land Stewardship

Agricultural landscapes are an important part of Dunstable's rural identity, yet some fields are currently underutilized or only partially maintained. Property owners would benefit from support to keep fields in active use, through haying, grazing, specialty crops, or lease-to-farm arrangements. Farmers also identified ongoing needs related to soil health, irrigation improvements, and land access. Simple tools such as a public inventory of farmable parcels or template agricultural leases could help connect landowners with new and emerging farmers, including those working with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources or Tufts University's New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Maintaining active agricultural land also helps limit the spread of invasive plants and preserve open, scenic views.

Forest and Habitat Management

Large forest blocks serve as the core of Dunstable's ecological network and several of these parcels have Forest Cutting Plans. The Conservation Commission actively manages many of the properties for selective tree harvests e.g. Spaulding Proctor, Farnsworth, Proctor-Grater, Unkety Woods, Kennedy Conservation. The DRLT also actively manages their properties. However, there are some parcels that lack routine monitoring or long-term management frameworks. Priority needs include periodic forest assessments, baseline documentation for Town-owned parcels, and selective management actions such as thinning or habitat restoration where appropriate. Monitoring for emerging forest pests and coordinating with state foresters and the Dunstable Rural Land Trust would help address capacity constraints. While the Conservation Commission has an active list of parcel management for silviculture, it should be enhanced to include other aspects of property management. Establishing a five- to seven-year review cycle for other town-owned forested

land would support consistent, climate-resilient management. Similar regional collaborations have proven effective in other small towns.

Trails and Public Access

Community feedback emphasized the importance of well-maintained and clearly marked trail systems. Standardized wayfinding, consistent signage, and updated printed and digital trail maps are all needed to improve public access and safety. A combined staff-and-volunteer stewardship model would help organize seasonal maintenance, while some parcels require clarification of access due to complex ownership or conservation restrictions. Improvements to trail surfacing and erosion control are needed in certain areas. Many of these tasks can be achieved through structured volunteer capacity with appropriate guidance.

Administrative and Staffing Capacity

The expansion of protected land has outpaced the Town's administrative and staffing resources. The Conservation Commission, Parks Commission, Select Board, and other volunteer boards share stewardship responsibilities but face growing demands. Improved coordination among boards, clear outreach materials for landowners with conservation restrictions, and additional technical support for mapping, monitoring, grant development, and stewardship planning were all identified as needs. Exploring regional staffing models, such as a shared conservation agent, land management specialist, seasonal interns, or academic partnerships, could significantly enhance capacity. An annual cross-board review of land management priorities would help maintain alignment. Many small communities have strengthened stewardship through regional planning agencies or inter-municipal agreements.

Long-Term Stewardship Planning

Long-term stewardship must be integrated with broader municipal goals to ensure that open space and recreation assets continue to meet community needs. This includes developing management plans for key Town-owned conservation parcels, conducting periodic reviews of open space conditions and public

use, and aligning land management decisions with housing, infrastructure, and climate resilience priorities. Continued focus on maintaining the ecological integrity of conserved lands is essential as development patterns evolve. A coordinated, long-range approach will help ensure that open space remains a defining asset for Dunstable.



Image: 3 Red-bellied Woodpecker at Howards Brook Cons. Area – Photo credit: Leah Basbanes

SECTION 7: ACTION PLAN

This section identifies Dunstable's most important open space and recreation priorities for the next decade and outlines a focused strategy for implementation. The action plan is based on an extensive community engagement process, stakeholder interviews, survey results, and analysis of environmental, recreational, and demographic needs. Recognizing the Town's limited staff and volunteer capacity, the plan prioritizes realistic, high-impact actions that can be completed within the first half of the planning period, while also outlining a set of Phase 2 actions for years 4–10 that can be pursued as resources allow.

Prioritization Framework

To guide implementation, each action is classified by timeframe and priority tier:

- Short-term: Years 1–3
- Mid-term: Years 4–6
- Long-term: Years 7–10
- Ongoing: Continuous or recurring efforts

Priority Tiers:

- High: Foundational, urgent, or widely supported
- Medium: Important but dependent on coordination or future capacity
- Low: Long-term or exploratory actions

A separate Phase 2 list includes longer-range goals that are not feasible under current conditions but align with the community's vision and may be pursued with new funding or staffing.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Each action includes responsible parties and potential funding sources. Many actions rely on local committees and volunteer boards to take action, and Town funding, including Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, may be needed to advance these strategies. Others can be supported by state grant programs such as the, MassTrails Program, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR,), or the ECO One Stop Program. Where applicable, regional planning support from NMCOG, utilizing District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funds or partnerships with nonprofit organizations, can help reduce the implementation burden.

Ten-Year Action Plan Summary

Goal #	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
Goal 1: Manage and Expand Dunstable's Open Space and Recreation Infrastructure					
1A	Conduct basic inventory and signage audit	Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	CPA, DLTA	High
1B	Create an improvement plan to stabilize and upgrade Larter Field to meet the needs of the community. Assess adding shaded seating and potable water, concession facilities, accessible access, and other needed amenities	Recreation Commission	Short-term	CPA, PARC	High
1C	Evaluate reuse potential of underutilized ballfields	Parks Commission, Planning Board	Mid-term	CPA	Medium
1D	Evaluate the Union Building for potential use as a community gathering and programming space	Select Board, Recreation Commission	Short-term	Mass Cultural Council	High
Goal 2: Improve Accessibility and Inclusion Across Select Sites					
2A	Complete an ADA assessment and an ADA implementation plan of key recreation sites to promote inclusive recreation for all ages and abilities	ADA Coordinator, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission	Short-term	MOD, CPA	High
2B	Pilot inclusive intergenerational programs	Recreation Commission, Senior Services	Ongoing	Town Mass Cultural Council	Medium
2C	Assess Town-owned conservation properties to determine where low-impact recreational access may be expanded in a manner consistent with resource protection goals	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission	Mid-term	CPA	Medium

Goal #	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
2D	Develop a townwide improvement plan utilizing <i>the SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS</i> for properties needing improved or expanded trails	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission	Mid-term	MassTrails	High
Goal 3: Support Farmland Preservation and Sustainable Local Food Systems					
3A	Develop farmland viability strategy	Agricultural Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	MDAR, One Stop	High
3B	Pilot community garden and seed-sharing initiative	Library Trustees, Planning Board, Agricultural Commission, Conservation Commission	Mid-term	CPA, local fundraising	High
3C	Ensure no net loss of agricultural land by prioritizing protection and reactivation of farmland	Agricultural Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	MDAR	High
3D	Facilitate connections between retiring farmers or underutilized farmland and young farmers seeking land	Agricultural Commission	Mid-term	MDAR, MVP	High
3E	Strengthen public understanding and appreciation of the town's agricultural heritage through educational opportunities	Agricultural Commission, School Department, Conservation Commission	Short-term	CPA, Mass Cultural Council	High
3F	Preserve active agricultural lands through land use policies and partnerships	Agricultural Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	MDAR	High

Goal #	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
Goal 4: Expand Programming and Community Engagement					
4A	Partner with stewardship organizations like the Greater Lowell YMCA, or other nonprofits to offer adaptive and inclusive programming across age groups and cultures	Recreation Commission, Senior Services, Cultural Council	Short to Mid-term	Program partnerships, CPA, MVP, local donations	Medium
4B	Launch a seasonal intergenerational program series focused on activities for seniors and youth	Recreation Commission, Senior Services	Short-term	Program fees, donations	Medium
4C	Create and promote a community recreation calendar that highlights civic events (e.g., concerts, food trucks) and youth-oriented activities	Recreation Commission, Cultural Council	Short to Mid-term	CPA, local sponsors, Local Budget	Medium
4D	Promote community engagement through surveys, forums, and inclusive outreach	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Town Administrator	Short to Mid-term	TBD	High
Goal 5: Strengthen Communication, Outreach, and Wayfinding					
5A	Consolidate digital trail maps, post QR codes at trailheads	Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	DLTA	High
5B	Install signage on priority trails utilizing <i>the SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS</i> for properties needing signage improvement.	Conservation Commission	Mid-term	CPA, MassTrails	High
5C	Enhance signage, mapping, and wayfinding across trail networks and recreation sites	Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission	Mid-term	TBD	Medium
5D	Seek funding and organize seasonal events, pop-ups, and multigenerational recreation programs	Recreation Commission, Senior Services	Short to Mid-term	Mass Cultural Council	High

Goal #	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
Goal 6: Build Capacity and Coordination for Stewardship					
6A	Form Open Space and Recreation Implementation Working Group	Select Board, Planning Board, Town Administrator, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission	Short-term	Town	High
6B	Create and maintain a public inventory of all Town-managed open space and recreation resources, including access points, permitted uses, infrastructure conditions, and maintenance needs	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission	Short-term	DLTA	High
6C	Strengthen coordination between Town boards for open space and recreation oversight	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Planning Board, Town Administrator	Short-term	Town	High
6D	Explore funding options to hire a part-time land steward to develop, implement, and manage an invasive species management program, to develop land management plans for priority parcels, to strategically manage invasive plant and pest species, and to recruit and train volunteer land stewards.	Conservation Commission, Select Board, Town Administrator	Mid-term	Town, TP	
Goal 7: Advance Climate Resilience and Improved Ecological Function through Nature-Based Solutions and Targeted Land Acquisition					

Goal #	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Sources	Priority
7A	Assess potential amendments to the wetland bylaw to strengthen buffer requirements, including limiting impervious surfaces and restricting removal of vegetation within regulated wetland resource areas	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	Town	High
7B	Integrate nature-based solutions such as tree planting, invasive species removal, and green infrastructure in recreation sites	Highway Dept, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Mid-term	MVP, PARC	Medium
7C	Use the Land Acquisition and Protection Criteria System (<i>Appendix D</i>) to prioritize acquisition and protective actions parcels with sensitive environmental resources, wetlands, and habitat areas, while considering mitigating for climate impacts	Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Select Board	Short-term	Town	High
7D	Integrate heat resilience at key recreation sites through the provision of shade and water access, as seen in Map 5 of the Dunstable Climate Resilience Map	Highway Dept, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Mid-term	MVP	Medium
7E	Acquire lands to protect water resources, enhance greenway and habitat connectivity, utilizing the methodology outlined in Appendix D. Land Acquisition and Protection Criteria System	Select Board, Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Short-term	CPA	High
7G	Continue to support MS4 compliance by coordinating with the Highway Department and the Town’s stormwater consultant to reduce stormwater runoff pollution	Select Board, Town Administrator	Ongoing	Town	High

PHASE 2 ACTIONS

The following actions are identified as Phase 2 opportunities that may be pursued after foundational work is complete or if additional capacity is available:

- Upgrade at least one trail to ADA standards (Goal 2)
- Conduct a feasibility study for reuse of old school as an indoor community space (Goal 4)
- Hire a part-time or regional open space/recreation coordinator (Goal 6)
- Develop a centralized online hub for open space and recreation (Goal 5)
- Expand nature-based retrofits at multiple park sites (Goal 7)
- Explore seasonal farmers market and farmstand infrastructure (Goal 3)

These actions reflect long-term community goals and ensure that the OSRP remains a flexible and forward-looking document.

MEASURING PROGRESS

The Open Space and Recreation Working Group, once established, should meet at least annually to review progress on the plan, adjust priorities as needed, and track metrics such as:

- Number of actions completed

- Grant funding secured
- Accessibility improvements implemented
- Trail access points improved
- Participation in recreation programs
- Review, assess, and update the Conservation Commission's prioritized targeted acquisition list located in Appendix K utilizing the process and criteria outlined in Appendix D. Town of Dunstable – Land Acquisition and Protection Criteria System

These metrics will help maintain momentum, support future grant applications, and ensure that the plan continues to serve the evolving needs of Dunstable residents.

SECTION 8: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Below are letters of review from X, X, X, and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments demonstrating they reviewed, provided input and approve of this OSRP.

DRAFT

SECTION 9: PLAN REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary of Acronyms

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

ARPA – American Rescue Plan Act

CPA – Community Preservation Act

DLTA – District Local Technical Assistance

EEA – Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
(Massachusetts)

EOHLC - Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

GIS – Geographic Information System

HMP – Hazard Mitigation Plan

MASSDOT – Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MassTrails – Massachusetts Recreational Trails Grant Program

MDAR – Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

MEPA – Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act

MOD – Massachusetts Office on Disability

MS4 - Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

MVP – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (Program)

NMCOG – Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

OSRP – Open Space and Recreation Plan

PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
(Grant Program)

SCORP – Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
(Massachusetts)

TBD – To Be Determined

UMass – University of Massachusetts

YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association

Appendix B: Outreach Methods and Data Analysis

A. OVERVIEW

Community engagement for the Dunstable Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was conducted between December 2024 and June 2025 to identify community values, recreation and conservation needs, and priorities for future action. This outreach analysis fulfills the community engagement and data interpretation requirements outlined in the *2025 Massachusetts Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook* ("the Workbook").

The Workbook emphasizes public input should be both quantified and interpreted, requiring each plan to explain how data were analyzed and how findings directly inform goals and actions. Following this guidance, NMCOG employed a structured mixed-methods approach that combined:

- Quantitative data (survey frequencies, rankings, and proportional responses), and
- Qualitative data (themes drawn from interviews, open-ended survey responses, and public forum notes).
- All data sources were systematically reviewed, coded, and cross-referenced to identify consistent trends, areas of divergence, and emerging community priorities. This interpretation process ensured that the OSRP's goals and Ten-Year Action Plan are data-driven, transparent, and traceable to the public input required under the Workbook.

Public engagement for the Dunstable OSRP included:

1. A thirteen-question online Community Survey, which received 133 responses;
2. Semi-structured Interviews with Town staff (2) and board representatives (3);
3. Two Public Forums: Public Forum 1, in-person at Town Hall in February 2025, and Public Forum 2 in June 2025 online;
4. Ongoing Open Space and Recreation Committee discussions; and
5. Presentations to the Conservation Commission, The Planning Board, and The Select Board

Together, these methods provided both breadth and depth of input, ensuring that the final plan reflects the perspectives of residents, boards, and Town staff.

B. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

Survey Design and Distribution

The online community survey was hosted via the Town's website and shared through social media, email lists, and local networks. The survey included a mix of question types, ranking, multiple-choice, and open-ended prompts, focused on:

- Recreation preferences and use patterns;
- Conservation priorities and stewardship attitudes; and
- Perspectives on land preservation and acquisition.

Quantitative Analysis

Survey data were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate response frequencies and percentages. For ranking questions, options were weighted based on how often they appeared in the top positions to identify the most consistently prioritized activities and needs.

Qualitative Analysis

Open-ended responses were thematically coded to reveal recurring ideas and values. Codes were grouped into seven major categories:

1. Access and Awareness
2. Maintenance and Stewardship
3. Connectivity and Trails
4. Facilities and Amenities
5. Programming and Use
6. Conservation and Character
7. Climate Resilience

Patterns emerging from survey comments were compared with interview and public forum data to verify consistency and clarify intent behind quantitative responses.

Interviews and Public Forum

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from two Town departments and three local boards, including the Planning Board and Parks Commission. These interviews explored operational capacity, overlapping priorities, and the feasibility of implementing OSRP goals.

Public Forum #2 engaged residents, board members, and Town staff in group discussion and polling exercises to validate survey trends and gather detailed input on implementation priorities. Notes and transcripts were coded using the same thematic framework to facilitate cross-verification of findings across all data sources.

C. SURVEY FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Respondent Profile

Tenure in Dunstable	% of Respondents
21+ years	37.4%
6–10 years	21.1%
0–5 years	17.9%
11–15 years	12.2%
16–20 years	11.4%

Interpretation: Most respondents (≈70%) have lived in Dunstable for over ten years, offering perspectives grounded in long-term familiarity with the Town's open space network and rural character.

Recreation and Conservation Priorities

Most Frequently Ranked #1	Count	% of Respondents
Hiking / Walking Trails	38	30.9%
Wildlife Areas	27	22.0%
Playgrounds	25	20.3%
General Town Parks	11	8.9%
Playing Fields	10	8.1%

Interpretation: Passive and family-oriented recreation, particularly hiking trails, wildlife areas, and playgrounds, ranked significantly higher than organized sports or new facility construction. Residents overwhelmingly value the preservation of Dunstable’s rural landscape and prefer improvements that enhance access, comfort, and inclusivity within existing facilities.

Land Preservation Attitudes

Question	Yes	No	Interpretation
Donate Land	21%	79%	Residents are reluctant to donate land, preferring to retain ownership and property rights
Donate Money	43%	57%	Mixed support
Sell Below Market Value	19%	81%	Limited willingness reflects emphasis on maintaining property value
Vote for Town-Supported Acquisition (No Tax Increase)	80%	20%	Quantitative support for Town-led acquisition; however, qualitative data clarify that residents favor strategic, need-based purchases, not large-scale acquisition.

Interpretation: Quantitative data indicates broad conceptual support for land preservation, but qualitative input reframes this as conditional support, focused on acquisitions that improve public access, trail connectivity, or flood protection rather than expansion for its own sake.

Open-Ended Themes

Theme	Description	Representative Comment
Access & Awareness	Improve signage, mapping, and online resources to clarify which properties are open to the public	"People don't know what's public or how to access it."
Maintenance & Stewardship	Prioritize care and upgrades for existing open space before acquiring more	"Take care of what we already have."
Connectivity & Trails	Improve walking and biking connections between recreation areas and trail networks	"Connect trails and properties across town."
Facilities & Amenities	Add shaded seating, potable water, and ADA upgrades at Larter Field and other parks	"Add shade and water access at playgrounds."
Programming & Use	Expand intergenerational and year-round community activities	"More opportunities for family and community activities."
Conservation & Character	Protect wetlands, wildlife corridors, and scenic landscapes central to Dunstable's identity	"Preserve wetlands and brooks."
Climate Resilience	Integrate shade, trees, green infrastructure, and sustainable materials into recreation areas	"Provide shaded gathering areas and refillable water stations."

D. INTERVIEWS AND PUBLIC FORUM ANALYSIS

Access and Awareness:

Community members and board members emphasized confusion regarding public access boundaries and trail ownership. Limited signage, mapping, and parking deter use. Participants recommended clear trailhead signage, expanded parking, and a digital interactive maps through applications such as MapGeo or ArcGIS.

Facilities and Recreation Needs:

Larter Field was identified as the most heavily used recreation area, yet it lacks basic amenities like shade, water, and ADA-compliant surfaces. Participants supported installing a covered pavilion, shaded seating, and exploring reuse of the Union School Building as an indoor community or senior space. E-bike and dirt bike use emerged as a growing management challenge; participants favored a permit-based or designated-route system.

Conservation and Land Management:

Interviewees expressed pride in Dunstable's extensive open space but cited limited capacity for maintenance and enforcement. Most agreed that future acquisitions should be strategic and connectivity-driven, filling gaps rather than expanding total acreage.

Climate Resilience and Natural Comfort:

Concerns about heat exposure during recreation informed requests for tree planting, shaded seating, refillable water stations, and use of sustainable materials at recreation sites.

Programming and Community Connection:

Survey respondents requested more intergenerational and family-oriented programming, such as outdoor yoga, food-truck nights, and youth-senior activities, and expressed interest in community gardens and seed swaps to strengthen local identity and agricultural heritage.

Regional Coordination:

Given Dunstable's small population and volunteer-based operations, participants advocated for collaboration with neighboring towns on shared trail mapping, programming, and consistent e-bike policies to reduce costs and improve regional connectivity.

E. SYNTHESIS AND VALIDATION

Findings across all engagement methods are consistent, reinforcing the reliability of the conclusions. The six most widely shared community priorities are:

1. Improved access, signage, and awareness of existing open space
2. Maintenance and ADA upgrades to current facilities, particularly Larter Field
3. Strategic land acquisition focused on connectivity and access
4. Shade, trees, and climate-resilient design features in public spaces
5. Expanded intergenerational and community programming, including gardens and volunteer opportunities
6. Regional partnerships and coordinated management of emerging recreation types (e.g., e-bikes)

Collectively, these findings show that residents value Dunstable's rural character and natural beauty but expect the Town's future open space efforts to focus on stewardship, accessibility, and shared experience rather than expansion.

F. ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FOR CONSIDERATION

While less frequent in survey data, several issues were consistently raised during interviews and public discussions and warrant consideration during implementation:

E-Bike and Dirt Bike Management:

Increased off-road use prompted calls for clear policy guidance balancing recreation, safety, and environmental protection. Suggested strategies include:

- Designating specific trails or areas for e-bike and off-road use;
- Creating a permit or registration system to support maintenance funding;
- Posting consistent trail signage; and
- Coordinating policies regionally with Pepperell, Groton, and Tyngsborough.

Local Food Initiatives:

Residents expressed enthusiasm for community gardens, seed swaps, and educational gardens, potentially at the Union Building site, as affordable, social ways to foster stewardship, community connection, and food resilience.

Other Comments:

Participants highlighted needs for additional shade and tree planting in high-use areas, improved water access for paddling and fishing, and expanded volunteer recruitment to sustain maintenance and programming capacity.

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Appendix C: Public Comments

During the process of developing this plan, NMCOG gathered the following public comments. They are outlined as received and as stated, unedited. Full details of NMCOG's engagement is outlined in this plan in Section 2.

Written Comment:

Received via email June 25, 2025: "Just a thought I had in the open space meeting that I didn't get to voice as we were short on time - I actually think a community garden would have a ton of use for us as a community. I understand the argument that nearly everyone in town has enough land to garden/farm if they like. Firstly, if we complete the two housing projects that are in the works, that won't necessarily continue to be true. Secondly, lack of space isn't the only reason to use a community garden. That would be a space that lowers a lot of barriers for people to get into gardening, as well as being a valuable community building space and gathering point for sharing information. (and seeds! Westford has a nice seed sharing area in their library and we should definitely have one somewhere.) Starting a garden in your yard can feel intimidating and I think a community garden would be a huge value add for the town. Just wanted to share that opinion to see if it's worth considering further for the open space plan or elsewhere."

From: Nikole47@verizon.net <nikole47@verizon.net>

Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 7:09 AM

To: Jason Silva <jsilva@dunstable-ma.gov>

Subject: [External] Comments on open space plan plus additional

"Hello Jason

This is the first opportunity available to me to express my comments as they pertain to the plan and other scenic activities.

1. You noted that only 133 people responded to the winter survey that was emailed. Well that survey is not a fair representation of the all town participants. It excludes many responders that might have answered. The reason being is the survey required a google sign in to participate or account to participate. If you do not use Google and wanted to respond then a person would be forced to create a google account.

I do not use google and believe your survey to be bias reflecting only the opinions of Google users. More friendly formats would be much appreciated.

2. Section 3 B where is your data coming from? Sure Dunstable shows 177K average mean income of paper. Most likely because of higher wage earners, million dollar houses out numbering the long term senior residents whose income does not rise to meet the demands. This population of people is dwindling, some forced to sell because they cannot meet the constant prop 2 over rides in addition to rising taxes.

Why is there no grandfathering in place for Seniors Greater than 70 yrs and long term residents? Your data excludes those much lower income people and is NOT a fair representation of all the people. Instead it favors the haves and excluded the have nots. Just look at the prices of the homes being built and sold in this town. Certainly the incomes needed to buy these homes are above average!

3. Page 18 scenic road "High ST" I have mentioned many times the issues resulting from scenic bikers. YET the town wants to promote more of this which is fine HOWEVER, rules of the road need to **established** and **REINFORCED** . Many Many times these bikers travel two and three abreast along Thorndyke and High, They zoom through **STOP** and **Yield** signs at the intersections of Thorndyke and Forest AND Thorndyke and High. They do not move over and continue to ignore the rules of the roads in most cases. Often times **NO HAND SIGNALS**

There have been plenty of near misses. Especially when pedaling the incline from Nashua up the high street hill which slows them way down. Now your vehicle speed goes from 25 to 10mph as you follow behind a set of two and three abreast.

The same holds true for the everyday road walkers. They walk two and three abreast , they do not move over for cars, often times you need to pull over and stop before it is safe to pass them because they walk in the middle of the roadway.

It is wonderful that the town wants to create new and exciting opportunities however you also must think about safety. Common sense seems to deficient in people these days. At the end of this email I will attach to you the rules of the road for bikers in case you may address this issue before someone gets hurt.

4. Page 20 section 4F Does this include the dead tree branches crossing over High Street and Forest Streets? You state they are scenic roads. But are there any plans to monitor these town owned trees? I can tell you there is tree that four years ago around Covid I complained to Mr. Miko's about a tree in front of my house. The town claims it to be historic and yet does nothing to trim the dead wood, falling debris from this tree. I will not speak any more of this, as it is pointless. But I suggest that you include in your plan the provision to maintain these scenic trees - especially since pedestrians and bicyclists pass under them.

Nikole Roth 176 High St Dunstable Ma

Resident this town 15 years!"

From Joe VLcek

"My suggestions/corrections #1:

Please

Please correct the spelling of my last name, which starts with three consonants,

Please change from:

VI"e"ck

To:

VLcek

My suggestions/corrections #2:

The word **met** seems to be missing from a sentence Under the section: **2.B: Planning and Public Participation**

Perhaps the below sentence should be changed **from:**

OSRP Working Group

The OSRP Working Group six times throughout the planning process to review findings, shape priorities, and guide outreach efforts. Members included:

To:

OSRP Working Group

The OSRP Working Group **met** six times throughout the planning process to review findings, shape priorities, and guide outreach efforts. Members included:

My suggestions/corrections #3:

I'm not sure on this one but I think "was" might read better as "were"

Consider changing from:

Flyer Distribution: Information about the survey and forums **was** posted at key locations including the library, general store, senior center, post office, and Town Hall.

To:

Flyer Distribution: Information about the survey and forums

were posted at key locations including the library, general store, senior center, post office, and Town Hall.”

Survey Comments:

Dunstable received the following comments as part of the community survey, which was available from January 8, 2025 to January 31, 2025.

- Consider collaboration with trail groups such as NEMBA to add/enhance/maintain trails for hiking and biking where such activities make sense. Partner with organizations to integrate trails / trail networks if possible.
- I’m also open to ideas that will generate revenue for the town. We need more of those.
- There needs to be more planned recreational outings in town throughout the year. There is very little to do, specifically for families with young children.
- Explain how our town being littered with trump signs, including massive banners and huge billboards on private land adds to the character of this town? It’s disgusting. Laws need to be put in place so this never happens again.
- Dunstable is a beautiful area to bike through, but it’s very dangerous because the roads are so narrow. When paving is scheduled, we should think about widening roads and adding a bike lane. Also: There’s a lot of preserved land that’s hard to access. Trails get overgrown and they’re expensive to maintain. Allowing ATVs would help keep brush at bay. Perhaps we could look at a certain month during the year when ATVs could be allowed on certain areas? Also: I would love to volunteer to help mow trails. I would need access to equipment though.
- I am passionate about invasive plant control! If there was a coordinated effort I could donate time to, I would love to help with the control of bittersweet and buckthorn. I was so happy to see the knotweed at the Mcloon barn was chopped down...best of luck with dealing with that.
- Town needs a trail building and maintenance volunteer crew like some other nearby areas have. The lack of trails or quality trails for the amount of land is a shame. Check out Kingdom Trails in VT to see how private and public lands can be used for public use.
- "We are fortunate to live right next to the DRLT on Main Street and walk the trails every single day. We Have a great appreciation for Dunstable’s conservation efforts.
- If there’s anything we can do to help in this work, please feel free to contact email: jguy148@yahoo.com"
- "I'd prefer some ""maybe"" choices in these last questions, and clarification of Question 11 - what is town supported land acquisition? Is it a forced land sale at market value or below market value? Is it acquisition from willing land donors/sellers? I'd support the latter but not the former.

- Also, there are a few trail maps on the town website, but it seems there are many more areas. I still don't really know where these trails are, or where to safely park to access these areas. I'd enjoy a more robust introduction to and info about these many lovely areas! "
- Union school should have an area for the Historical Society.
- Sidewalks along RT113 that connect Town Center with: Lowell St, Groton St, Arch bridge trail head off Main St.
- Email these locations and maps. I never knew we had this many
- Will the town organize a Pickleball league for residents? It's a great way to build community and connect folks.
- Take better care of the property already owned before purchasing more
- "Town needs to work with & improve areas we already have acquired.
- Need to let people run businesses in center, breathe a little life into this town....."
- Of the 20 areas listed above, I'm only familiar with less than 1/3 and I'm sure I'm not alone. Is there an online map that can be sent out so more people are aware of our abundance.
- thank you. the reason we live here is the connection with nature.
- All areas especially those, areas already owned by town. No one cares or visits it from the boards who bought and "preserved " this ka ds in town. Trash, debris, loud visitors are left for the neighbors who live next to it to take care of it.
- I never want to see the clear cutting of trees that happened in the Greggs woods area. It was a beautiful area and it likely won't recover for over a decade if not two. I would like to see conservation areas connected as much as possible with more walking trails.
- Would it be possible to designate stewards for each conservation area to monitor activity and trail clearance?
- We need a better equipped fire station given the most recent fire across the street from it.
- Despite having lovely areas throughout town, the interconnection of areas is nonexistent. Dunstable has an opportunity to create its own "emerald necklace" trail system should the trails be interlinked and connected. The sort of connection would greatly enhance economic development for the town.
- Please add shade and seating to Larter field. Recreation pavilion would be great and shade over the playground.
- "I would love a bigger playground at Larter field with more play structures and shading as well as benches.
- Like mentioned above, trail maps would be awesome. I didn't even know half the conservation areas listed above. If there was a list with maps it would be super easy to explore new trails!"
- We need running trails that connect major roads. We need sidewalks on Westford Street that connect to existing sidewalks and lead to the trailhead near town line at the other end of Westford Street.
- Thank you for all the efforts to keep Dunstable rural, open and full of wildlife, forests and fields.
- the Town has enough conservation land. "

- No More Conservation Restriction, either buy it or let it go.
- I'd like to see more outreach to secure volunteers from the community to support our conservation properties and their maintenance needs. Perhaps organizing trail cleanups or invasive control. The CC May guided walks are awesome, and I wish they were held at other times of year as well. These are a great way to encourage explore new properties with a comfortable guide that knows the way!
- Trail maintenance on Conservation properties, drives and parking areas improvements and invasive plants control.
- Would be nice to have more unique shops and a little downtown area
- Better, well marked, off street parking that is plowed in the winter.
- Great job everyone!
- I would be interested in knowing if we have a committee/group responsible for the beautification of Dunstable, especially related to the "gateway" areas. TY!
- Would like to see more control over the invasive species along many of our roads. They are strangling and killing the trees
- I would be willing to donate land...if I had any extra!
- "Question 11: I'm not sure if I understand the question. To clarify my response, I would vote for town-supported land acquisition both with or without raising taxes for it.
- In general, I do not value unused agricultural land or other large areas/fields containing mostly/only grass in comparison to other forms of land use more beneficial to the natural ecosystem (e.g., forest).
- Thank you for making this survey!"
- Stop buying land and conserving it. It's enough.
- Please stop buying/acquiring land. The town does not need any more land that we have to maintain and that cannot become revenue generating.
- Numbers 4, 5, and to a degree 7 are impossible to put in rank order, since all are important."
- We need to preserve the towns farm land to allow a new generation of farmer to operate in the town
- I am unsure about #11. I feel the town already owns and protects a ton of land and I'm not sure we need more. Maybe if it's a situation like the most recent purchase that protected the watershed.
- Encourage businesses to reduce taxes.
- These polls are impossible! Dunstable is fine as it is now!
- Dunstable's unique character lies in its open spaces. However, these areas are increasingly burdened by high tax rates on local residents. Many conservation areas are often filled with vehicles from New Hampshire or neighboring towns, allowing non-residents to enjoy Dunstable's open spaces at the expense of its citizens. To address this, the town should implement a QR

code-based fee system for conservation lands and or establish a yearly permit to use these areas—free for residents and fee-based for non-residents.

- Motorized vehicles such as ATV's & Dirt Bike's are so heavily frowned upon now in this community. When I was a kid that was our childhood combined with riding bicycles everywhere. It got us out of the house to just be kids and not stuck in front of a screen all the time. Now raising kids in this community it is so heavily frowned upon to ride these vehicles. I know it has never been "allowed" but no one ever cared. I can't take my kids into the woods on their four wheelers without someone calling the cops on us and are restricted to staying in our yard. The use of motorized vehicles in the trails also helped to maintain them. The trails now get so overgrown due to the lack of use.

Interview Comments

NMCOG conducted interviews with key stakeholders in June 2025. The following represents unedited comments received from participants:

- I think we need better trail signage and maps. It's hard to know which trails are public and where they go.
- More programs for kids and teens would be great, especially in the summer. Outdoor movie nights, campouts, etc.
- I would love to see events that bring the town together. Maybe outdoor concerts or food trucks at Larter Field.
- We need more options for seniors who want to walk but can't handle uneven trails. Benches and smooth walking paths would help.
- There are trails behind my house I didn't even know were public. Better outreach would help people use what we already have.
- Parking is a challenge at some of the trailheads. There's nowhere to safely leave a car.
- Some trails are overgrown or not well maintained. It discourages use and makes it hard for older residents or families with kids.
- We should look into e-bike access on trails. It would expand who can use them.
- Accessibility is a big issue. I'd love to take my grandparent on a walk, but very few places are ADA accessible.
- A calendar of recreation events would make it easier to participate. Right now, everything feels word-of-mouth.
- Our family would love a dog park or designated dog-friendly space.
- Shade is critical in the summer months. More trees or structures are needed at town fields.
- Consider pop-up programming—like yoga in the park, or nature education sessions—without needing new facilities.
- Community composting or a seed exchange would be amazing for folks who garden.

Appendix D: Town of Dunstable – Land Acquisition and Protection Criteria System

Purpose

To provide a consistent, transparent framework for evaluating parcels for potential acquisition or protection through purchase, donation, or conservation restriction. This system guides the Town of Dunstable in prioritizing projects that advance Town goals for open space, recreation, farmland preservation, environmental stewardship, climate change, and habitat protection.

I. Core Evaluation Categories

Each parcel is rated across five major categories using a weighted scoring system (total = 100 points). Scores are used to guide discussions, not to replace professional judgment.

Category	Weight	Criteria Overview
1. Natural Resource and Ecological Value	30	Presence of wetlands, floodplain, prime forest or wildlife habitat, rare species habitat, connectivity to existing conservation land
2. Water Resource Protection	20	Contribution to water quality, aquifer recharge, wellhead protection, riparian buffers, or pond frontage
3. Agricultural and Scenic Value	15	Active or potential farmland, soil quality (Prime or State-Important soils), scenic views, rural character
4. Recreation and Public Access Potential	15	Suitability for trails, active and/or passive recreation, located in or near neighborhoods, or access to existing open space network
5. Strategic and Financial Considerations	20	Adjacency to protected land, threat of development, community support, acquisition cost, CPA funding eligibility

II. Detailed Scoring Criteria

1. Natural Resource and Ecological Value (0–30 pts)

- Borders or connects to existing conservation land or wildlife corridor (+10)
- Contains certified vernal pools, wetlands, or NHESP Priority Habitat (+8)
- Supports native species diversity, invasive species mitigation, or mature forest (+7)
- Minimal fragmentation by roads or development (+5)

2. Water Resource Protection (0–20 pts)

- Within Zone II wellhead protection area or aquifer recharge zone (+8)
- Frontage on river, pond, or perennial stream (+5)
- Provides natural flood storage or erosion control (+5)
- Part of watershed priority area (e.g., MassGIS Surface Water Supply Protection Zone) (+2)

3. Agricultural, Historical and Scenic Value (0–15 pts)

- Contains active farmland or hayfields (+4)
- Contains Prime or State-Important Agricultural Soils (+4)
- Contributes to scenic rural character or the Dunstable Gateway views (+4)
- Contains a site of historical significance to the Town (+3)

4. Recreation and Public Access Potential (0–15 pts)

- Suitable for walking, hiking, cross-country skiing, or passive recreation (+3)
- Suitable for a desired recreational amenity (+3)
- Offers trail connections to existing open space (+3)
- Located close to a populated neighborhood or town center (+3)
- Offers community members climate adaptive amenities such as shade or other cooling features (+3)

5. Strategic and Financial Considerations (0–20 pts)

- Adjacent to existing town- or state-protected open space (+7)
- Broad community support (public meeting, survey, letters, etc.) (+3)
- Eligible for MVP, CPA, LAND, or LWCF funding (+5)
- Cost-effective acquisition (e.g., bargain sale, partial donation) (+5)

III. Implementation Process

1. Initial Screening:

The Conservation Commission or other designees identify potential parcels through landowner interest, Chapter 61 notifications, or mapping analysis.

2. Field Evaluation:

Site visit to assess habitat, access, and resource conditions; complete scoring sheet.

3. Conservation Commission Review:

Weighted property scoring assessments are performed by or in consultation with the Conservation Commission for funding consideration.

4. Prioritization:

Parcels ranked as:

- **High Priority (75–100 points)** – pursue immediately if feasible
- **Moderate Priority (50–74 points)** – monitor for future opportunity
- **Low Priority (<50 points)** – limited conservation or recreation benefit

5. Acquisition Pathways:

Options include outright purchase, conservation restriction (CR), Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or donation of land/easement.

IV. Supplementary Considerations

- **Article 97 Protection:** All acquired lands intended for open space or recreation should be permanently protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution.
- **Alignment with OSRP Goals:** Criteria should reinforce Dunstable's Open Space & Recreation Plan priorities (e.g., farmland protection, trail connectivity, biodiversity conservation).
- **Public Engagement:** Solicit input from residents, landowners, and local boards to ensure transparency and community alignment.
- **Periodic Review:** Update scoring system every 5 years in coordination with OSRP updates.

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Appendix E: Fisheries and Wildlife Species Inventory List for Dunstable

List developed using the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and deep local knowledge.

Mammals

Beaver	Hairy-tailed Mole	Raccoon
Big Brown Bat	Little Brown Bat	Red Fox
Black Bear	Long-tailed Weasel	Red Squirrel
Bobcat	Masked Shrew	River Otter
Chipmunk	Meadow Jumping Mouse	Roof Rat
Coyote	Meadow Vole	Southern Bog Lemming
Deer Mouse	Mink	Star-nosed Mole
Eastern Cottontail	Moose	Striped Skunk
Eastern Mole	Muskrat	Virginia Opossum
Ermine (Short-tailed Weasel)	Northern Flying Squirrel	White-footed Mouse
Fisher	Northern short-tailed Shrew	White-tailed Deer
Gray Fox	Norway Rat	Woodchuck
Gray Squirrel	Porcupine	Woodland Vole

Amphibians & Reptiles

Blanding's Turtle	Northern Leopard Frog	Eastern Garter Snake
Eastern Box Turtle	Pickerel Frog	Eastern Milk Snake
Eastern Painted Turtle	Spring Peeper	Eastern Ribbon Snake
Red-eared Slider	Wood Frog	Northern Black Racer
Snapping Turtle	Blue-spotted Salamander	Northern Redbelly Snake
Yellow spotted Turtle	Four-toed Salamander	Northern Ringneck Snake
Wood Turtle	Marbled Salamander	Northern Water Snake
American Bullfrog	Northern Two-lined Sal.	
Eastern American Toad	Red-backed Salamander	
Gray Treefrog	Red-spotted Newt	
Green Frog	Yellow-spotted Salamander	

Birds**Raptors**

American Kestrel
 Bald Eagle
 Broad-winged Hawk
 Cooper's Hawk
 Merlin
 Northern Goshawk
 Northern Harrier
 Osprey
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Red-shouldered Hawk

Owls

Barred Owl
 Eastern Screech Owl
 Great Horned Owl
 Northern Saw-whet Owl

Woodpeckers

Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

American Crow
 American Goldfinch
 American Redstart
 American Robin
 American Tree Sparrow
 American Woodcock
 Baltimore Oriole
 Barn Swallow
 Black and White Warbler
 Black-billed Cuckoo
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Black-throated Blue Warbler
 Blue Jay
 Bobolink
 Brown Creeper
 Brown Thrasher
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Carolina Wren
 Canada Goose
 Cedar Waxwing
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Chimney Swift
 Chipping Sparrow
 Common Grackle
 Common Nighthawk
 Common Yellowthroat
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Eastern Bluebird
 Eastern Kingbird
 Eastern Towhee
 Eastern Wood-Pewee

Song, Migratory, Shore And Other Birds

European Starling
 Evening Grosbeak
 Fish Crow
 Gray Catbird
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 Green Heron
 Hermit Thrush
 Hooded Merganser
 House Finch
 House Sparrow
 House Wren
 Indigo Bunting
 Killdeer
 Kingfisher
 Magnolia Warbler
 Mallard Duck
 Marsh Wren
 Mourning Dove
 Northern Cardinal
 Northern Mockingbird
 Northern Parula
 Ovenbird
 Pine Warbler
 Prairie Warbler
 Raven
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 Red-eyed Virco
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Ruffed Grouse
 Scarlet Tanager
 Song Sparrow
 Tree Swallow
 Tufted Titmouse
 Turkey Vulture
 Veery
 Whip-poor-will
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 White-throated Sparrow
 Wild Turkey
 Winter Wren
 Wood Thrush
 Yellow Rumped Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Wood Duck

Appendix F: Vegetation Species Inventory List for Dunstable**Forested Areas**

Ash, White *Fraxinus americana*
 Aspen, Quaking *Populus tremula*
 Birch, Black *Betula lenta*
 Birch, White *Betula alba*
 Birch, Yellow *Betula alleghaniensis*
 Birch, Gray *Betula populifolia*
 Black Cherry *Prunus serotina*
 Hickory *Carya spp*
 Maple, Red *Acer rubrum*
 Maple, Sugar *Acer saccharum*
 Oak, Red *Quercus rubra*
 Oak, White *Quercus alba*
 Pine, Red *Pinus resinosa*
 Pine, White *Pinus strobus*
 Partridgeberry *Mitchella repens*
 Dewberry Northern *Rubus jagellaris*
 Poison Ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*
 Virginia Creeper *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*
 Wintergreen *Gaultheria procumbens*

Alternate Leaf Dogwood *Cornus alternifolia*
 Barberry *Berberis thunbergii*
 Hazelnut *Corylus americana*
 Honeysuckle *Lonicera tatarica*
 Hornbeam/Ironwood *Carpinus caroliniana*
 Huckleberry, Black *Gaylussacia baccata*
 Lowbush Blueberry *Vaccinium angustifolium*
 Maple-leaf Viburnum *Viburnum acerifolium*
 Shadbush *Amelanchier canadensis*
 Withe-rod *Viburnum cassinoides*
 Aster New England *Aster novae-angliae*
 Canada Mayflower *Maianthemum canadense*
 Clubmoss *Lycopodium obscurum*
 Fern Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*
 Fern Hayscented *Dennistaedtia punctilobula*
 Fern Marginal Wood *Dryopteris marginalis*
 Fern Wood *Dryopteris spinulosa*
 Indian-pipe *Monotropa uniflora*

Wetland Areas

Arrowwood *Viburnum recognitum*
 Elderberry *Sambucus Canadensis*
 Dogwood Silky *Cornus amomum*
 Blueberry *Vaccinium Corymbosum*
 Spicebush *Lindera benzoin*
 Steeplebush *Spiraea tomentosa*
 Blueflag Iris *Iris versicolor*
 Blue Vervain *Verbena hastate*
 Big Bluestem *Andropogon gerardi*
 Boneset *Eupatorium perfoliatum*
 Cardinal Flower *Lobelia cardinalis*
 Red *Acer rubrum*

Fern Royal *Osmunda regalis*
 Fem Interrupted *Osmunda claytoniana*
 Fem Sensitive *Onoclea sensibilis* Highbush
 Fem Cinnamon *Osmunda cinnamomea*
 Joe-Pye-Weed *Eupatoriadelphus maculate*
 Woolgrass *Scirpus cyperinum*
 Skunk Cabbage *Symplocarpus foetidus*
 Soft Rush *Juncus effuses*
 Tall Meadow Rue *Thalictrum pubescens*
 Tussock Sedge *Carex stricta*
 Cattail *Typha latifolia* Maple
 Pinged Sedge *Carex crinite*

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