

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dudley's Labor Force: The number of employed Dudley residents has grown steadily over the past fifteen years, growing from 4,291 employed people in 1983 to 5,175 people in 1998 (an overall increase of roughly 20%). There was a small decline in Dudley's labor force during the early part of the 1990's, as well as a surge in the local unemployment rate. However, this trend has reversed over the past five years. The small decline in employment during the 1990's was more the product of a slow down in the regional economy of New England, as opposed to factors specific to Dudley itself. The table below presents the number of employed/unemployed Dudley residents dating back to 1983. The table also allows for a comparison of Dudley's unemployment rate with the overall State unemployment rate.

**Table ED-1**

### Employment Status of Dudley Residents

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Dudley Labor Force</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Dudley Rate of Unemployment</b>	<b>State Rate</b>
1983	4,589	4,291	298	6.5%	6.9%
1984	4,581	4,404	177	3.9%	4.8%
1985	4,645	4,501	144	3.1%	3.9%
1986	4,753	4,607	147	3.1%	3.8%
1987	4,862	4,743	119	2.4%	3.2%
1988	5,203	5,041	162	3.1%	3.3%
1989	5,206	5,017	189	3.6%	4.0%
1990	5,201	4,880	321	6.2%	6.0%
1991	5,176	4,679	497	9.6%	9.1%
1992	5,158	4,661	497	9.6%	8.6%
1993	5,173	4,797	376	7.3%	6.9%
1994	5,129	4,846	283	5.5%	6.0%
1995	5,068	4,824	244	4.8%	5.4%
1996	5,104	4,896	208	4.1%	4.3%

1997	5,276	5,609	207	3.9%	4.0%
1998	5,388	5,175	213	4.0%	3.3%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.

CMRPC projects that Dudley's labor force will grow to 5,943 by the year 2010. If this projection is correct, it will represent an increase of 14% in Dudley's labor force over a twenty year time period from 1990 to 2010.

Where Dudley Residents Work: According to the 1990 US Census (the most recent work-related origin/destination count), here's where Dudley residents work:

In Dudley: 1,043      Auburn: 160      Charlton: 74      Oxford: 226  
 Southbridge: 259      Sturbridge: 90      Webster: 962      Worcester: 917  
 Elsewhere in the immediate region: 447  
 Elsewhere in Worcester County: 87  
 Elsewhere in the State: 335  
 Out of State: 280

The above numbers indicate that roughly 21% of Dudley's employed people work in town, while 20% work in nearby Webster and 19% work in Worcester. The number of workers going to Worcester is not surprising as the City serves as the region's center of commerce. Conversely, only 38 Worcester residents traveled to work in Dudley as of 1990.

The Number and Types of Jobs in Dudley: The number of business establishments operating in Dudley has grown steadily over the past fifteen years, from 116 establishments in 1983, to 159 establishments in 1998 (an increase of roughly 37%). The biggest increase was in the service sector, although the construction, manufacturing, and wholesale/retail trade sectors also increased during this timeframe. Table ED-2 below shows how the various sectors of Dudley's economy have changes over the past 15 years.

**Table ED-2**

**Employment and Wages in Dudley**

	Total Annual	Average Annual	Establishments	# of Workers	Agri./ Forest	Government	Construction	Manufacture		Wholesale/	FIRE	Service
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Year	Payroll	Wage			/ Fish		-tion		TCPU*	Retail Trade	*	e
1985	\$28 mill.	\$15,800	116	1,794	n/a	440	59	615	n/a	277	49	253
1986	\$33.5 m.	\$16,350	124	2,050	n/a	468	59	691	n/a	425	45	254
1987	\$39 mill.	\$18,000	142	2,180	27	504	72	762	n/a	421	41	281
1988	\$41 mill.	\$17,900	156	2,296	25	523	74	819	77	427	29	322
1989	\$42.5 m.	\$18,700	158	2,272	n/a	497	53	783	74	390	31	420
1990	\$44 mill.	\$19,100	146	2,305	n/a	506	49	792	67	356	28	484
1991	\$43 mill.	\$20,300	139	2,116	21	489	36	695	40	347	25	463
1992	\$44 mill.	\$20,950	134	2,120	n/a	466	63	699	42	349	26	452
1993	\$44 mill.	\$21,450	134	2,049	n/a	536	65	612	n/a	344	28	428
1994	\$49 mill.	\$21,400	142	2,305	n/a	563	98	648	n/a	360	37	558
1995	\$52.5 m.	\$22,500	145	2,336	n/a	448	75	766	22	412	38	548
1996	\$54.5 m.	\$22,000	154	2,471	n/a	473	79	732	19	492	39	611
1997	\$62 mill.	\$23,700	154	2,618	20	497	91	865	20	540	42	537
1998	\$69 mill.	\$25,600	159	2,689	22	501	107	971	23	509	42	508

TCPU = Transportation, Communication, and Public Utilities.

FIRE = Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate.

n/a = Data suppressed due to confidentiality.

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.

The previous table indicates that manufacturing continues to make up one third of the total jobs in Dudley, as was the case in 1985. The service sector now accounts for 18% of the jobs in Dudley, as opposed to 13% in 1985. Overall total payroll and annual wages have risen steadily

over the past fifteen years.

Looking all the way back to 1950, the importance of Dudley's manufacturing base to the local economy has been in decline, yet still remains a substantial component. According to the 1950 US Census, manufacturing accounted for roughly half of the jobs in Dudley. This trend held steady until the 1970's when manufacturing began to decline, both in terms of the number of manufacturing jobs and its importance to the local and regional economy. By 1985, manufacturing accounted for roughly one third of the jobs in Dudley, and this trend has held steady up to today.

Other towns in the region have demonstrated a similar trend. Southbridge had manufacturing account for 59% of the local jobs in 1980, as compared with roughly 37% today. Webster had manufacturing account for 42% of the local jobs in 1980, as compared with roughly 20% today. Spencer is the *only* town in the region to demonstrate a significant growth in manufacturing jobs: 30% of local jobs were in manufacturing as of 1980, compared to roughly 39% today.

Dudley's Largest Employers: According to the annual census conducted by the Town Clerk, here are the five largest employers in Dudley:

Gentex Optics Inc.:	350 employees
Nichols College:	170 employees (figure obtained directly from Nichols College)
Ethan Allen Inc.:	150 employees
Guilford of Maine Inc.:	100 employees
Park and Shop:	75 employees

These five employers account for approximately one third of the jobs existing in Dudley.

In fiscal year 1999, Dudley levied \$4,249,191 in taxes, based on a local tax rate of \$10.80 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation (the tax rate for fiscal year 2000 is \$12.20). For 1999, Dudley homeowners accounted for approximately 90% of the tax base (\$3,822,057), while the businesses and industries in Town accounted for approximately 7.9% of the tax base (\$335,034). The remaining 2.1% of the tax base was derived from taxes on personal property (\$92,100). The table on the following page looks at how Dudley compares to its adjacent Massachusetts neighbors in terms of their non-residential tax base:

**Table ED-3**

**Non-Residential Tax Base Comparison**

<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>Comm./Ind.</b>	<b>Percent of</b>
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<u>Community</u>	<u>Local Tax Rate</u>	<u>Taxes Levied</u>	<u>Total Tax Levy</u>
<b>Dudley</b>	\$10.80	\$335,034	7.9%
Charlton	\$12.81	\$777,717	10.4%
Oxford	\$15.92	\$1,185,621	13.7%
Southbridge	\$15.78	\$1,630,716	20.2%
Webster	\$13.86	\$2,647,423	24.9%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

The table above indicates that not only does Dudley raise the least amount of non-residential taxes (dollar-wise) of the five communities, but also the Town's non-residential tax revenue is the smallest percentage-wise of the compared communities. This situation cannot be solely attributed to the Town's low tax rate (second lowest in the region - only East Brookfield is lower); rather, it has more to do with the number of businesses/industries in Town and the amount of taxes they pay.

Home Occupations in Dudley: Currently, home occupations are allowed in every zoning district in Dudley, with the following restrictions:

- no non-resident employees are involved;
- not more than 25% of the dwelling unit's floor area can be used for the business;
- no change to the outside appearance of the structure (except for a small sign);
- no home occupation shall be conducted in any accessory building;
- no additional traffic or parking shall be generated by the home occupation; and
- the home occupation cannot create nuisance conditions for abutting neighbors.

It is a trend of our modern-day economy that more and more people are establishing home businesses and/or working from their homes. Increased numbers of people are employed by a company and yet spend a good deal of their work week working from home or, "tele-commuting". The Internet and advances in home computers have created conditions where people can be quite productive working out of their homes. There are no definitive rules or regulations governing tele-commuting, and the practice is still evolving. Dudley can expect to see an increase in the number of people working from their homes, whether they are starting home businesses or simply tele-commuting.

Opportunities for Economic Development: Dudley has made use of a number of State-sponsored economic development programs and has participated in a variety of inter-community efforts as well. Below is a description of Dudley's efforts to stimulate economic development.

1. *The Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)*: Created by the Legislature in 1993, the EDIP is designed to stimulate job creation in distressed areas, attract

new businesses, encourage existing businesses to expand, and increase overall economic readiness among Massachusetts towns and cities. The EDIP is administered by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. The EDIP is overseen by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) which is charged with three responsibilities:

- designating Economic Target Areas (ETAs);
- designating Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs) within an ETA; and
- designating Certified Projects within an EOA.

Dudley is a member of the South Central Massachusetts Economic Target Area (ETA), established in 1994. Other towns in this ETA include: Brimfield, Wales, Holland, Sturbridge, Southbridge, Charlton, Spencer, Webster and Oxford. Within this ETA, Dudley has established three Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs): the Gentex property on West Main Street, the Toltec Fabrics site, and the Webco site. The businesses on these sites also represent the three Certified Projects existing in Dudley at this time.

Dudley has developed its own Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program to lure new economic development and retain existing businesses. Dudley's TIF program was utilized for all three of their Certified Projects. The way Dudley's TIF program works is that new businesses or existing businesses wishing to expand need to demonstrate that they will hire people from Dudley and the immediate area, and that they will utilize local businesses and construction firms for their new/expanded building. In return, the Town forgives a percentage of the taxes assessed on the new/expanded building over a period of ten years. The percentage of forgiven assessed taxes gets smaller over the ten year period. All TIF projects must be approved at Town Meeting. Selected details for Dudley's three existing TIF projects are provided below:

-- Gentex Optics, Inc. Certified by the State in June of 1998

Full-Time Jobs Created: 200 Full-Time Jobs Retained: 422

Private Investment: \$14,600,000

\* note that the number of jobs created/retained is less than the total number of employees reported to the Town Clerk.

-- Webco Chemical Corp. Certified by the State in June of 1999

Full-Time Jobs Created: 18 Full-Time Jobs Retained: 43

Private Investment: \$1,400,000

-- Toltec Fabrics Inc. Certified by the State in June of 1999

Full-Time Jobs Created: 54 Full-Time Jobs Retained: 98

Private Investment: \$2,400,000

It should be noted that a new TIF project will be proposed for consideration at the May 2000 Town Meeting. This will be for KoKo's Machine Inc. on Oxford Avenue.

There are two benefits that the State confers on Certified Projects within designated EOAs: a 5% State Investment Tax Credit for qualifying tangible, depreciable investments; and a 10% Abandoned Building Tax Deduction for costs associated with renovating an abandoned building.

There has been some criticism about the tax revenue lost because of the TIF program; however, citizens need to realize that this program keeps jobs in Dudley (most of which are held by Dudley residents), promotes the use of local businesses for the building/expansion effort, and helps to attract new businesses that otherwise may not come to Dudley. The TIF program is essential to attracting new businesses when one considers that the Town cannot offer much in the way of infra-structure improvements (namely, municipal water service). Dudley's TIF program is a long-term community investment program and has served the Town well. Dudley should continue to utilize the TIF program to retain existing businesses and stimulate new economic development.

2. *The Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA)*: Established in 1996, this regional organization was created to address former industrial sites that have been contaminated; specifically, their clean-up and re-use. Under Chapter 21-E of the Massachusetts General Laws, the State's Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to designate such sites for clean-up. Such sites are more commonly known as "brownfields". There are over 950 such sites in Central Massachusetts.

Dudley joined the CMEDA in 1999 in an effort to address the Town-owned "brownfield" properties. The Town's current brownfield clean-up project involves the old highway garage site on West Main Street owned by the Highway Department. The site is contaminated with petroleum products and VOC's. The Town submitted the first site assessment report for this property to DEP in late 1999. The redevelopment concept for this property is for Dudley and CMEDA to share the cost of clean-up and site work, and then split the proceeds once the property is sold. It should be noted that Dudley recently cleaned up some contamination at the West Main Street Fire Station on its own, without utilizing the CMEDA process. There was a small amount of contamination on this property; enough to have DEP designate the site as a "brownfield". There are nine remaining brownfield sites in Dudley, all under private ownership. Dudley should work with the owners of these contaminated properties to utilize the CMEDA process for clean-up and re-use.

3. *The Dudley-Oxford-Webster Chamber of Commerce*: The Chamber has been a valuable information resource for local businesses (business planning, grant opportunities), as well as for businesses considering a move to the tri-town area. The Chamber also acts as a promoter of local businesses. The Chamber provides a forum for business owners/operators to talk about the local business climate and economic development in general. The majority of businesses in Dudley are active Chamber members. Dudley should establish a dialogue with the Chamber in order to listen and respond to the concerns of its local businesses.

4. *The Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor*: This Connecticut portion of this area was designated as a National Heritage Corridor by an act of Congress in 1994, and the Massachusetts portion was added in late 1999. The Massachusetts portion of the Corridor covers parts of nine towns including Dudley, Charlton, Webster, Oxford, Brimfield, Holland, Southbridge, Sturbridge, and East Brookfield. The National Heritage Corridor Program is managed at the federal level by the National Parks Service. The designated area covers

roughly 1,000 square miles in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The Program's purpose is to encourage grassroots efforts for the preservation and restoration of significant historic and natural assets within the Corridor; foster compatible economic development (including tourism); and enhance recreational opportunities. The Program is administered on the regional level by the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley Advisory Council which consists of local officials and residents, regional planning agencies and councils of governments, tourism districts and several state agencies. The operating body for the Council is Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., located in Putnam, Connecticut. The Council has prepared a Management Plan to guide their efforts. It is anticipated that approximately *one million dollars* in annual federal funds will be provided to the Council over the next decade.

The Corridor's recent expansion represents a significant economic development opportunity for the nine Massachusetts communities now included in the project area. These communities can now work with the Corridor's Advisory Council to obtain significant funds for developing recreation opportunities along the French and Quinebaug Rivers, preserving historic buildings, creating tourism attractions around old mill buildings and other sites of historical significance, and developing other history-related tourism projects. Dudley should take full advantage of this economic development opportunity to promote its historic buildings and sites, and become a player in the region's significant historic tourism market. One only has to look at Old Sturbridge Village as a successful example of such an effort.

#### Impediments to Economic Development:

1. *Lack of Access to Regional Interstates:* As mentioned in the Transportation chapter, Dudley does not have direct access to any of the region's interstate highways. Commercial vehicles have to travel through downtown Webster in order to reach Dudley from I-395; and such vehicles have to travel through downtown Southbridge in order to reach Dudley from I-90 and I-84. The lack of direct access to the interstates can be considered an impediment to economic development. Access to major roadways is high on the list of factors that spur economic development. Such is the nature of Dudley's geography.

2. *Lack of Capacity in the Municipal Water System:* Probably the single biggest impediment to future economic development in Dudley is the municipal water system's lack of capacity. The system's supply sources can provide water to existing connections, but would not be able to service much in the way of new economic development. Under current circumstances, new businesses and industries have to take care of their own water needs through drilling wells on their properties. Drilling a well can be an expensive proposition for a new business, and as such, they prefer to tie into municipal water lines when available. Maintaining an on-site well also represents a substantial cost for new businesses. Under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act, businesses that provide daily water to 25 people or more (employees and/or customers) must test their well's water quality on a periodic basis. The annual costs associated with these water quality testing requirements are often more expensive than if the business purchased water from a municipal supplier. Also, the business assumes clean-up liability should their on-site water well become contaminated. Thus, new businesses prefer to tie into existing water lines. Dudley will simply not be able to accommodate new economic development (especially large-scale operations like Gentex) unless it finds a new water source and expands the capacity of the municipal water system.

3. *Residential Development within the Town's Industrial Zoning Districts:* Currently, the Zoning By-Laws allow residential development as a use by-right in all of the Town's industrial zoning districts. While it has been proven that residential uses and commercial uses can work well together as permitted uses in a single zoning district, the same cannot be said for residential uses and industrial uses. Industries, especially manufacturing and warehousing operations, are reluctant to set up shop in a zoning district where residential uses are also permitted by right. This reluctance is due to the possibility of having a new subdivision built next door to an industrial operation. Residences located next to industries have a tendency to complain about the industry next door. Balancing a homeowner's right to peace and quiet against an industry's right to conduct business can be quite difficult and the Town should not put itself in the position of being the arbitrator.

There is also a safety issue here. Some industries make use of hazardous chemicals and substances. In such cases, the industry in question is required to work out an emergency response plan with the municipality. In a case where there are houses adjacent to the regulated industry, the safety of the residential neighbors needs to be factored into the industry's emergency response plan. The Town's zoning scheme should not set up a situation where numerous residences need to be evacuated if there is a chemical spill or accident at a nearby industrial operation.

Another problem with allowing residential uses in the industrial zoning districts is that land zoned for industry is eaten up by residential development. This is already quite evident in some of Dudley's industrial zoning districts when one reviews the Existing Land Use Map against the Town's zoning scheme. The IND-43 District in the southeast corner of Town shows evidence of residential development with an additional 39 units (Perryville Farm Estates) on the way. Extensive residential development can also be seen in the IND-43 District located between Dresser Hill Road and Dudley Center Road. It should also be noted that half of the district's land (51 acres) is taken up by a permanently protected property (the Hall Farm). Dudley will continue to lose its industrially zoned land to residential development unless changes are made to the Town's Zoning By-Law.

Municipalities count on the tax dollars provided by industrial development. Thus, having a town's industrial land eaten up by residential development can result in decreased tax revenues. This phenomenon often results in the need for a town to find new areas for industrial development, which requires the rezoning of land currently zoned for other purposes. The Town should not have to search out new land suitable for industrial development due to its industrially-zoned land having been developed residentially.

4. *Lack of a Coordinated Municipal Site Plan Review Process:* As mentioned in the Housing chapter, the Town does not have a coordinated municipal review process for new large-scale development plans, be they residential or commercial/industrial. Currently, someone wanting to establish a new business/industry in Dudley would need to talk to the relevant town departments one at a time about their development plans, and await their response. This has resulted in an uncoordinated and time consuming process, both for the developer and the Town.

In some cases, the recommendations from one town department are in conflict with the recommendations of another town department. Resolving such a conflict also takes time, time the developer wants to use to get the business/industry up and running. The Town should have a coordinated municipal review process in place; one where a developer can drop off sets of plans at *one* municipal office and be assured that all of the relevant departments will review said plans, and the Town will provide comments to the developer in a single response.

### **Economic Development - Goals**

1. Promote economic development that is in keeping with the Town's character and natural environment, and that results in long-term tax revenue and good paying local jobs.
2. Promote a business friendly environment where new businesses can find a streamlined regulatory process, modern high-speed communication availability, a qualified workforce, and a competitive tax rate.

### **Economic Development - Recommendations**

1. Dudley should continue utilizing its Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program to create/retain jobs in Town, and stimulate the local economy. Dudley's TIF program should continue to insist that new businesses reserve a certain percentage of jobs for Dudley residents, that local contractors are used for building construction/rehabilitation, and that local businesses are used as service providers. Although it will be a few years before Dudley reaps the tax benefits from the TIF-created projects, the benefits to the local economy will be felt immediately. If Dudley wants to maintain a low tax rate while still providing quality municipal services, then it has to grow its non-residential tax base, even if the tax benefits get pushed ten years into the future. Since the Town cannot offer new businesses much in the way of infrastructure (no municipal water, poor interstate access, etc.), the TIF program is a significant draw for new economic development and should be continued. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator.
2. Dudley should continue to clean up its "brownfields", whether these properties are Town-owned or under private ownership. Dudley has aggressively addressed the known Town-owned brownfield sites, yet there are nine privately-owned brownfields where no clean up is occurring. Dudley should work with the Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA) to develop a strategy for cleaning up the nine privately-owned brownfield sites in Dudley. Getting these contaminated properties cleaned up and back on the tax rolls will add to the Town's non-residential tax base and benefit the local economy. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator.
3. Dudley should strengthen its ties with the Dudley-Oxford-Charlton Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber provides a forum for local businesses to discuss the economy and the problems they encounter doing business at their particular location. Dudley should establish a dialogue with the Chamber in order to listen and respond to the concerns of its local businesses. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. This could also be one of the duties of a local economic development committee (see Recommendation #7).
4. Dudley should take advantage of the economic development opportunity presented by the recent expansion of the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor, whether

on its own or in conjunction with the other eight Massachusetts communities now included in the project area. These communities can now work with the Corridor's Advisory Council to obtain funds for preserving historic buildings, creating tourism attractions around old mill buildings and other sites of historical significance, and developing other history-related tourism projects. As the Corridor is expected to receive over one million dollars a year in federal funds over the next ten years, Dudley should take full advantage of this economic development opportunity to promote its historic buildings and sites, and become a player in the region's significant historic tourism market. The Town could start the process by compiling a list and description of its historic resources and share this information with the Corridor's Executive Director. The Director has an office in Putnam, Connecticut and can be reached at: 860-963-7226. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. This could also be one of the duties of a local economic development committee (see Recommendation #8). Any attempt to develop historic-based tourism in Dudley should involve the Dudley Historical Commission, the Black Tavern Historical Society, and Nichols College.

5. The Zoning By-Law should be amended to remove residential development as a by-right permitted use within the Town's industrial zoning districts. Dudley will have a very hard time expanding its non-residential tax base when its industrially-zoned land continues to be eaten up by residential development. There are already two areas of Town where industrially-zoned land has been eaten up by residential development and land protection efforts: the IND-43 District in the southeast corner of Town, and the IND-43 District located between Dresser Hill Road and Dudley Center Road. It is further recommended that these two areas be re-zoned residentially. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Dudley Planning Board.

6. The Water Department should investigate its options for finding a new water supply source, whether this means looking for a new well site within Dudley, or working with a neighboring community on a shared water resource. The Town's options for growing its non-residential tax base will be quite limited until a new water source is found and the water system's capacity is expanded. As mentioned previously, finding a new water source and getting it up and running is a very expensive proposition, one that the Water Department cannot afford to handle on its own. Since the whole Town benefits from an expanded non-residential tax base, and the growth of this tax base cannot occur without an expanded municipal water system, it would be appropriate for the Water Department to seek funds at Town Meeting for the identification and development of a new water source. The Town may also want to pursue State grant opportunities for such a project. Responsible Municipal Entity: Dudley Water Commissioners in consultation with the Board of Selectmen.

7. The Town should establish a local economic development committee to coordinate all of the various elements of an economic development strategy for Dudley. Currently, there is no municipal entity whose sole role is to plan for, and act as an advocate of new economic development in Town. Finding volunteers for an economic development committee will be a challenge, as it usually is for local boards. The committee would need to begin by reviewing the Town's zoning scheme, tax policies, road improvement plans, and water/sewer expansion plans as they relate to the Town's ability to attract new businesses. This committee would then work with the various municipal boards and departments to develop an economic development strategy for Dudley. As part of an economic development strategy, the Town should designate a staff person in Town Hall to handle economic development issues. Once contact person is

essential, as businesses want straight answers fast. Responsible Municipal Entity: The Board of Selectmen would need to establish the economic development committee, and appoint its membership. The committee should be charged with developing an economic development strategy for Dudley and be prepared to work with the various municipal boards/departments to implement the strategy.

8. The Town should establish a Technical Review Community (TRC) to review large-scale commercial and industrial development plans, whether through a site plan review process or the building permit process. This was mentioned in the Housing chapter (Recommendation #4) within the context of reviewing large-scale residential developments, yet having a TRC in place would also facilitate the municipal review of large-scale commercial/industrial development proposals. A TRC would be composed of representatives from various municipal departments (water, sewer, health, highways, conservation, planning, building, fire and police), and would only meet as needed. Having the TRC review large-scale development plans would ensure that such plans are reviewed in a coordinated fashion and that all municipal concerns are addressed comprehensively. A coordinated TRC review process would also benefit the potential business/industry trying to establish themselves in Dudley. The Town's concerns would be presented to the developer all at once, instead of the time consuming department-by-department review that currently takes place in an uncoordinated fashion. Responsible Municipal Entity: since commercial/industrial development proposals are not currently reviewed by the Planning Board, it is the Building Inspector who would take the lead on reviewing such plans when the developer comes in for a building permit. Once again, the Board of Selectmen would have to instruct the departments under their jurisdiction to participate in the TRC process. Likewise, the Water Commission, Sewer Commission, and Board of Health.

9. The Town needs to influence local cable companies and telecommunication firms to provide access to high speed data and networking technologies in preparation for existing and new businesses that may want to take advantage of these technologies. Put quite simply, these technologies are the wave of the future, and if businesses can't find them in Dudley, they *will* look elsewhere. Responsible Municipal Entity: the Information Technology Committee (ITC), in conjunction with the Town Administrator.