

INTRODUCTION

Why Dudley Needs a Master Plan: It is a fact of life that communities grow, whether through an increase in population, housing, and/or economic development activity. Managing growth has always been a considerable challenge for those in charge of handling community affairs. Dudley town planners recognize that the Town needs a community Master Plan in order to help local officials act in concert on a common agenda for the long-range good of the Town.

Chapter 41, Section 81-D of Massachusetts General law states that a community Master Plan shall be "...a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality." It further states that such a plan "...identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development." In a practical sense, community Master Plans have always been intended to serve as a land use and future development policy guide for local decision makers. Typically, a community Master Plan does five things:

- Articulates the goals and objectives of the community (i.e., what the community wants for its future, what type of community it wants to be);
- Outlines the existing resources and conditions of a community (this is usually done through a review of existing data sources, collection of new data, and updates of inventory information);
- Evaluates and assesses the existing resources and conditions with an eye towards identifying shortfalls and deficiencies;
- Projects the current trends and conditions into the future in an effort to identify shortcomings that can be corrected through advanced planning, as well as the future needs of the community;
- Sets forth a strategy for addressing the needs of the community and helping the community become what it wants to be.

Although a community Master Plan has the latitude to deal with a variety of issues and concerns, there are several subjects that such a plan must address by law. Chapter 41, Section 81-D states that community Master Plans must contain the following elements: a goals and policies statement; a land use plan; chapters that deal with economic development, traffic circulation, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, community services and facilities; and an implementation plan.

This community Master Plan for the Town of Dudley sets forth the community's goals and provides the background data and analysis necessary for developing strategies to employ when guiding Dudley as it continues to grow and develop over the coming decades.

The Master Planning Process in Dudley: The Dudley Master Plan was prepared by the Dudley Master Plan Committee, which was appointed by the Dudley Planning Board. The Committee is composed of Dudley residents, some with experience on local boards, and some with no previous municipal experience. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

provided technical assistance throughout the entirety of this project. The Master Plan Committee met on a monthly basis (sometimes twice a month) and all meetings were open to the public. These meetings were occasionally attended by representatives from other municipal boards and committees including the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Water Commissioners, Sewer Commissioners and the Cemetery Commission. Interested citizens also stopped in periodically to provide their input.

During the initial stages of Master Plan preparation, interviews were conducted with all key municipal committees, boards, commissions and personnel. Everyone contacted was very helpful in terms of assisting with the update of inventory information, identifying upcoming needs, and providing candid assessments of the challenges they face. The Master Plan Committee reviewed this input in detail.

To further increase the public's involvement in the Master Plan update process, the Committee prepared a citizen survey to solicit the opinions and desires of the people and businesses residing in Dudley. The survey was publicized on the local cable access channel, as well as through a variety of press releases. The survey was sent to every household and business in Dudley in July of 1999. The survey results were tabulated over the summer. The survey results were presented to the Dudley Board of Selectmen at their evening meeting on October 4, 1999. Another presentation was made to the Dudley Grange on October 12, 1999. The survey results were also reviewed at the first Master Plan public forum held on January 26, 2000.

All told, the Master Plan Committee held 21 evening meetings (all open to the public) and two well-attended public forums. CMRPC staff interviewed over 27 Dudley department heads and committee/board chairmen. Joint meetings were held with the Planning Board during the preparation of the Land Use chapter.