

**Town of Dudley**



# **Economic Development Plan 2018**

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# Town of Dudley's Economic Development Plan

## Introduction

For decades, the Town of Dudley has operated without a formal economic development plan. The last major planning project undertaken by the town was the adoption of the town's master plan in 2000.

Over time, the Town's Master Plan lost its effectiveness when various boards no longer referenced it in making decisions for the town. This Economic Development plan will only be successful if each town board and official uses it as their directional navigation aid in the decisions which must be made in the future.

The plan is the result of almost a year and a half of open, public hearings, dozens of meetings with various boards, Town and State Officials, Residents and Businesses within the town, numerous forums and a community survey which was undertaken in the fall of 2017.

Maintaining a resilient economy requires planning. While we cannot always predict economic cycles, we know our economy will periodically experience downturns. The Town of Dudley seeks to minimize the impact of economic cycles and maximize its abilities to seize new economic opportunities—recognizing the balance between growth and livability.

This economic development plan outlines the role of the Town of Dudley and its contribution to local economic development efforts.

Although not perfect, we feel the plan is solid... and will work... only if each board steps up and executes it. This is merely a good place to start.

## Town of Dudley's Economic Development Mission Statement:

***"Our Goal is to make The Town of Dudley a vibrant, community oriented Town that is a great place to live, work and play. We strive to create a community that will foster an array of economic opportunities for all of our residents while preserving the environmental, cultural and historical elements which are the cornerstones of our town. For the workforce of today and tomorrow... Dudley will provide the leadership and business environment needed to compete in our current knowledge-based economy."***

The Town of Dudley has both a historical and contemporary New England Charm. It has long been considered one of the most desirable towns in Massachusetts. Low property taxes, High Educational Standards, Convenient Shopping and numerous Recreational Opportunities all make Dudley the perfect place to Live, Work and Play!

Located at the crossroads of New England, Dudley is a mere one hour drive to Boston, Hartford and Providence.

Leading the economic stability in Dudley is a large employment workforce, occupational strengths, education, and an excellent business climate. Having one of the lowest tax rates in the Northeast, The Town of Dudley offers businesses the ability to become successful and a talented pool of workers to help them grow.

The area has outstanding schools both at primary and secondary levels; and Nichols College offers an excellent MBA program which was ranked 14th Best Value School among business schools nationally by Payscale.

A vibrant atmosphere, safe streets, green lush and rolling hills... all make the town of Dudley a “*Special Place*” for residents to live.

## Where We Stand Today - Baseline Dudley GRP

**Gross regional product** (GRP) is a monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced in a **region** or subdivision of a country in a period (quarterly or yearly) of time. A metropolitan area's GRP, i.e. **Gross metropolitan product** or GMP, is one of several measures of the size of its economy.

Below is the Gross Regional Product of the Town of Dudley for FY2016.

It is our goal to have this number produced on an annual basis so that the town has an objective, third party analysis of the success or failure of current town policies.

### Gross Regional Product (GRP)

\$200.5M	\$91.6M	\$14.4M	\$306.5M
Earnings (2016)	Property Income (2016)	Taxes on Production (2016)	Total GRP (2016)

Meeting Town of Dudley’s economic development vision and goals may require efforts to be targeted towards industries that can best contribute to these goals. Land availability and use, the ability to pay for infrastructure improvements required for on-going economic development, the connections to Town and regional planning goals, and links to other community development issues all play a role in determining businesses and industries best suited for Dudley.

These may include:

***Dudley should be a Town that offers economic opportunities to its children, so they can acquire a quality education in the region, then stay and work in well-paying competitive jobs.***

- § Industries that do not require large parcels of land,
- § Industries with job densities that fit comprehensive planning objectives,
- § Industries that create or bring in additional wealth by exporting their goods and services outside the region,
- § Industries that provide quality jobs, and
- § Industries that provide health benefits and education incentives for their workers.

Examples of industries that may fulfill many of the listed criteria include biotechnology, agricultural, software, professional services (finance, consulting, engineering, etc.), electronics, creative services (multi-media, advertising, public relations, film & video) bioscience, engineering and environmental technology, and selected manufacturing.

In addition, it is important that we balance our job growth with businesses that serve the local economy, especially those that fill gaps in needed business services and retail, and those that increase Town of Dudley's image as a destination point for specific services.

## Town of Dudley's Economic Strategies

Town of Dudley's economic strategies are overall plans of action. Each describes a set of specific objectives and performance measures, and a set of recommended actions that the Town of Dudley could lead or support.

For each goal described, an economic strategy was developed. The strategies are listed in the same order as the goals. In developing these strategies, a number of consistent themes kept arising during the planning committee discussions. These included:

- § How to retain, expand and recruit new businesses.
- § The ability to create quality jobs that provide livable wages and good benefits.
- § The ease and convenience of doing business in Dudley.
- § How people think about Dudley—as a place to “get through” or as a place to “go to.”
- § What niches Dudley should promote—its strengths and competitive advantages.
- § How Dudley fits into and interacts with the regional economy.
- § Planning for business (re)development—what infrastructure is needed, what public policies will support it.
- § How activities are funded and what partnerships can be developed to sustain activities.

The following strategies contain specific objectives, performance measures and suggested actions that identify activities, primary players, and timeframes. It should be noted that the performance measures listed in this document should be considered indicators of economic performance. There are many variables that affect how our economy functions; therefore, local governments and their partners have limited control over specific results. To the extent possible, this plan identifies measures that the planning committee believes best reflects local ability to foster desired economic activity.

The actions listed under each goal are intended to be flexible as circumstances and conditions change over time.

## Vision Statements – A Strong Community Effort Needed to Achieve

***To retain, expand and attract targeted businesses and industries that create quality jobs and share Town of Dudley's economic vision.***

1. **Dudley is Open for Business:**

- a. *To enable businesses to easily start or expand their enterprise in the Town of Dudley.*
- b. *To support business development through an effective transportation system, targeted land (re)development, and adequate modernized infrastructure such as Water/Sewer and Broadband technologies.*
- c. *To foster entrepreneurial networks which promote innovation and healthy businesses in Dudley.*

2. **Dudley could be the Bread Basket or Next Napa Valley of Massachusetts:**

- a. *To bring dormant Agricultural Lands back to Life and promote high dollar crops that bring maximum income and value to the farmers and area.*

3. **Dudley has a skilled workforce, ready and willing to work!**

- a. *To capture the opportunities of the new knowledge-based economy by having a skilled workforce and strong connections between business and local educational institutions.*

## Specific Action Items Needed for Promoting and Achieving the Vision

There are some aspects of business development that are required by any company, regardless of size or industry. These include the ability for businesses to keep up to date on standards and practices, having an adequate supply of skilled workers, and being able to connect with and learn from related businesses and experienced entrepreneurs.

It also includes strong regional networks that address issues such as capital and links to higher education. While local government may have an active role in supporting these issues, activities are often driven by a partnership of public and private organizations.



## Dudley is Open for Business:

- A. *To enable businesses to easily start or expand their enterprise in the Town of Dudley.*
- B. *To support business development through an effective transportation system, targeted land (re)development, and adequate modernized infrastructure such as Water/Sewer and Broadband technologies.*
- C. *To foster entrepreneurial networks which promote innovation and healthy businesses in Dudley.*

### A. To enable businesses to easily start or expand their enterprise.

#### **Action Item #1:**

##### **Streamline the Town processes required to start or expand a business**

- Investigate on-line applications for common licenses or permits
  - o Use the internet as a tool to explain codes, map out the processes, track permits, etc
- Consolidate related license and permit processes. Investigate whether certain permit processes could be consolidated and streamlined.
  - o Provide feedback and advice regarding individual permits as well as overall processes.
- Use Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator as “lead” Board as a forum to discuss procedural issues which could streamline process.
- Use in house training opportunities to enhance staff understanding of business time and cost constraints related to development.
- Provide coordinated information through central channels including the Town Web site and local business groups.
- Consider using an ombudsman or Project Manager Approach to guiding permits through the process.
  - o Utilize senior volunteers for assisting businesses and Town Planner
- Include permit processes in “How-To” information packet
- **Who: Town Staff**
- **When: Fall 2019**

#### **Action Item #2:**

##### **Develop a Communication Plan and How-To Information Packet for the Town that identifies the most effective means to reach businesses, increases the access of Town information for businesses and strengthens two -way communication between the Town and business**

- The number of agencies or contacts a business must interface with to obtain information on operating a business in Dudley.
- Active involvement of Town staff in key business associations
- **What:** Develop an easy to use “How-To” information packet for operating a business in Dudley (starting, expanding or relocating). Work with the State of Massachusetts, Worcester Chamber of Commerce, Webster Dudley Business Alliance and other business groups to coordinate information. Distribute the “How-to” packet to business and industry groups and individual businesses.
  - o **Who:** Dudley Economic Development Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator
  - o **When:** Spring 2019

**Action Item #3:**

**Continue to enhance the Town of Dudley’s web site for economic development and develop active links to local and regional business and industry groups and regional and state government agencies involved in business operations.**

- o **Who:** Town staff and EDC with review from users such as the Chamber and Massachusetts Entrepreneurs Forums for clarity and content
- o **When:** Develop Web links by Fall 2019

**Action Item #4:**

**Target six business organizations or industry groups on an annual basis to build working relationships between the Town and each group.**

- o **Who:** Town Administrator, Town Planner, Board of Selectmen, EDC
- o **Work with** the Chamber, Webster Dudley Business Alliance and Massachusetts Entrepreneurs Forums for clarity and content
- o **When:** Begin Immediately Fall 2018

**B. To support business development through an effective transportation system, targeted land (re)development, and adequate modernized infrastructure such as Water/Sewer and Broadband technologies.**

**Action Item #1:**

**Water and Sewer Department Long Term Planning, Buildout and turning it into an Asset**

- A. Years of Moratoriums, 100 year old pipes and MA DEP regulations and demands has brought economic expansion in Dudley to a standstill. This is the number one obstacle to future business and residential growth in Dudley. Is there a better way?
- B. We recommend an immediate 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent review of the current Water/Sewer Structure within the town.
  - a. It is not a reflection on the current board or their capabilities, but rather it

is only common sense to review our number one impediment to growth and determine how to fix it.

- b. We support the Board of Selectmen efforts to independently evaluate if a DPW director is a better solution for the town.
- C. Water/Sewer Department needs a point person to scan for current Grant opportunities, prepare bid responses and be relentless in their pursuit for monies on the Federal and State level to fix the entire Dudley Water Sewer System. Discussed in more detail later in plan.

**WHO:** Water/Sewer Commissioners, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and Town Planner

**When:** Immediately and Ongoing

### **Action Item #2:**

#### **Advance to Phase II of the CMRPC Technical Assistance Portion of the Economic Development Plan.**

- Targeted Infrastructure Improvements. Town can target infrastructure dollars to an area to solve specific problems, generally to meet established goals.
- **Who:** Town to fund the identification of business districts and their potential uses and needed public improvements. Town Staff to implement economic activities related to each district
- **When:** Determine districts and uses by year-end 2019 Implementation continuous

Highlighted topics and possible action items for the Phase II of this project.

#### 1. Desired Deliverables

- a. Develop a Home Occupation Inventory
- b. Host a local farmer workshop to discuss how to integrate agriculture into the overall ED Strategy
- c. Create an Agricultural/Working Land Landscape Map
- d. Provide Online Permitting Software options

#### 2. Data Collection, Research, Document Review

- a. List of available funding resources for Water/Sewer infrastructure improvements
- b. Review local zoning as it relates to Home Based Businesses to consider if an incubator or shared space might be worth exploring
- c. Research available Commercial growth opportunities along West Main Street and Schofield Avenue

#### 3. Meet with the following for their perspective on opportunities/challenges of business development in Dudley:

- a. Haas Senke, Webco and Gentex
- b. Webster Dudley Business Alliance
- c. Nichols College
- d. Dudley Grange
- e. Local Commercial Real Estate Agents
- f. Water Sewer Commission

4. Draft Recommendation by end of November to EDC and Don Johnson
5. Final Memo to EDC by end of December

### **C: To foster entrepreneurial networks that promotes innovative and healthy businesses in Dudley**

*Business and industry networks are key to building vital companies. How can Dudley best support the formation and operations of business networks, and the issues and activities identified by these groups? Is it easy for a business to seize new opportunities, or change the way they operate to stay competitive?*

<p><b>Current Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There exists strong local and regional business and industry groups such as Webster Dudley Business Alliance, Chamber of Commerce and Greater Worcester Chamber of Commerce, MA Biotech Council</li> <li>• There is a willingness of the Town to participate in and support these business activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of centralized information on Town business policies and practices</li> <li>• Lack of connectivity between business groups and the Town</li> <li>• There has never been a concentrated effort on behalf of the town to proactively go out and “Sell” the Town to Businesses.</li> </ul>
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#### **Action Item #1: Investigate the potential for a private or public funded incubator or innovation center by working with regional economic partners, higher education, venture capitalists and others who are fostering technology transfer and business development in emerging industries.**

- Research best practices in the Greater Worcester region and Boston.
- Identify possible incubator/center locations within the Town
- Identify funding options and partners for development and operations
- Pursue viable options

**Who:** Town and Webster Dudley Business Alliance staff to work with existing tech transfer and start-up partners to evaluate options

**When:** Investigate options by year end 2020

**Action Item #2: To increase the networks and connections among Dudley businesses and with other regional, state and global businesses.**

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**Performance Measures**

- The number of region wide business seminars and association meetings attended by Town of Dudley Officials
- Town should support of at least two business events each year with their largest employers

**Actions:**

- **What:** Work with business groups to develop a “Business Activity Support Plan”
- Identify and develop a list of Dudley area business groups and state and regional industry groups with a Worcester County connection.
- **Who:** Town staff with input from business groups
- **When:** Plan development by Year End 2020 Plan implementation starting 2019

**Dudley could be the Bread Basket or Next Napa Valley of Massachusetts:**

Bring dormant Agricultural Lands back to Life and promote high dollar crops that bring maximum income and value to the farmers and area.

**Action Item #1: Establish an Agricultural Commission**

These Commissions are formed by passing a local bylaw or ordinance and serve as advocates for local farms. Responsibilities can include protecting farmland, providing assistance for natural resource management, affording visibility to local farmers, and assisting local boards with community development decisions. Ninety-one cities and towns have established Agricultural Commissions. Currently, Dudley does not.

**When:** Fall 2018 Bylaw Change

**Action Item #2: After the establishment of The Agricultural Commission, a full effort should be undertaken to explore and sell the Agricultural Benefits of Dudley to the following Industry Sectors**

- Vineyards in Northern Fork of Long Island which are running out of land and need to expand
- Helping Existing Farmers transition from Hay Crops to Higher Value Crops such as Hops, Barley, Grapes, Hemp
- Biotechnology Trade Groups based in Boston
- Matching Dormant Agricultural Lands with Individuals looking to farm

**Who:** Agricultural Commission, MA Dept of Agricultural Resources, Boston Biotech Council, Worcester Chamber of Commerce

**Action Item #3: Promote the development and expansion of innovative businesses in targeted industry clusters including Agriculture.**

**Performance Measures:**

- The number of start-ups or spin-offs of “targeted” industries encouraged by Town-supported incubators or innovation centers.
  - The quantity of Agricultural lands which have transitioned from dormant to Active
  - The Occupancy Rate of Mill Complexes In Town
- 

**Capture the opportunities of the knowledge-based economy by having a skilled workforce and strong connections between business and education**

*A skilled workforce is key to healthy businesses. Are there adequate workforce development and continual learning opportunities for Dudley workers? Are we promoting connections between businesses and education to ensure our children learn skills for their future?*

<b><i>Current Strengths</i></b>	<b><i>Current Weaknesses</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dudley schools are well regarded in the region.</li><li>- Nichols College was awarded “Best Business Education” by the Worcester Business Journal’s Best of Business reader’s poll for 2017.</li><li>- Nichols College was ranked 14th Best Value School among business schools nationally by Payscale.</li><li>- Businesses are willing to explore strategies with schools</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town is not strategically engaged in workforce issues.</li><li>• Town and businesses not well connected</li><li>• Lack of stable funding for skill development of emerging and existing workforce.</li><li>• No Formal Curriculum set up with K-12 for transition to local economy in partnership with major Employers</li></ul>

**Action Item #1: Identify the appropriate role of the Town in addressing workforce issues and support key workforce issues related to Dudley-based companies.**

**Performance Measures:**

- Definition of measurable results which are appropriate for the Town in workforce development.
- Dudley based Employers should be surveyed annually on their workforce development needs and time to fill open job vacancies.

**Actions:**

- **What:** Meet with existing partners with active workforce efforts (Chamber of Commerce, MA Dept. of Labor, Nichols College, QVCC, Regional School District etc.) to determine the Town's role in workforce development
- **What:** Identify specific actions the Town can take to support workforce issues. Specifically address existing workforce activities of businesses and workforce organizations to identify the most critical skills gaps for workers and best practices used in the Worcester County region and other towns the size of Dudley.

**Action Item #2: The Dudley Charlton Regional School District should consider partnering with Nichols College, QVCC and Private Corporations to develop innovative lab centers and centers of learning to educate students and retrain workforces.**

- School Dept. should Reach out to Major Local Employers within 30 minutes of Dudley and seek financial sponsorship of various training and educational programs.
- School District should utilize and pay Nichols for advanced education for gifted Juniors and Seniors in High School. Early College Admission.

# Town of Dudley's Economic Development Specific Goals

## Goal #1 : Review our Official Philosophy of Government:

Town government today is a government by the book. Pages upon pages of rules, regulations and bylaws covering every conceivable situation that our officials and town employees may have to deal with in their working life. This reliance on a firm set of rules has been the foundation on which our town has operated and our town employees managed for hundreds of years.

But as times have changed... and change continues to occur at a breath-taking rate, we are now being asked to do things for which there are no current rules— to create and design programs that require us to evaluate options, make decisions and take quick action.

To make decisions on things for which there are no rules... no precedence. The result is often needless time delays and confusion for all of the parties involved.

### **What are the Choices? There are 2 ways to address this.... Either we**

**#1) Do We Create more rules?... more regulations?**... to the point where soon our regulations will eventually be thousands of pages... and far too complex for our town employees to understand and do their jobs well. In addition, our town will become too bureaucratic... too slow... too ineffective to achieve anything prosperous and lasting.

Or

**#2) Empower our officials with a “set of written guidelines”** so that they can make educated decisions and use their discretion to get things done quickly and efficiently for situations in which there are simply no rules in place. ***These guidelines should ensure the highest ethical standards, consistency in application and have a series of checks and balances.*** By empowering our officials and employees with the ability to make decisions, we will stimulate positive change, improve processes and make our town more responsive to the needs of our residents.

According to ***Reinventing Local Government: A Case Study of Organizational Change through Community Learning By Carol Rusaw***, “Community-based governance is superior to the bureaucratic model in that communities have more commitment to serving particular clientele, more flexibility and creativity, more effective and efficient normative standards, and more capacity for stimulating change.”



## **Goal #2 : It is time to address the Water/Sewer Infrastructure as a Single, Complete Repair and Upgrade Project**

### **The Primary Impediment for continued Growth in the Town of Dudley is the inadequate Water/Sewer System and Infrastructure within the Town.**

Years of Moratoriums, 100 year old pipes and MA DEP regulations and demands has brought economic expansion in Dudley to a standstill. Is there a better way?

Currently our Water Sewer System is an Enterprise System that is independently managed by a separate elected Board of Commissioners. It is entirely paid for by the users.

The benefits are that funds remain separate from the town and all monies coming in get applied to the system... which is how it should be. However, with increasing costs, shared amongst a fixed number of users, Water/Sewer rates will dramatically increase for users on the system unless we are able to expand the system and bring on New Users.

The system is currently managed to provide the highest quality of service and delivery for current customers, with total independence from the town for planning future service for potential customers and development. Repairs... and there are many... take precedence over expansion.

**It is time to address the Water/Sewer Infrastructure as a Single, Complete Repair and Upgrade project.** There are billions of dollars now available thru the Trump Administration for exactly these types of projects.

We need to create a full blown, town wide Water/Sewer Plan and apply for funding the entire project, rather than putting Band-Aids on a dying horse. Sometimes, it easier to apply and receive a \$50 million Grant than a \$60,000 grant, especially if the project is shovel ready. We need to try for funding the whole project here.

### **Explore the Creation of Dept. of Public Works : Does it Make Sense?**

With the current vacancy of the Highway Superintendent position, now is the optimal time for due diligence in having a 3<sup>rd</sup> party review our current municipal works and water/sewer setup and determine if things might run more efficiently and effectively by creating a DPW director position instead.

## **Goal #3 : Making Local Government More Efficient:**

### **More Efficient and Less Government Spending**

It's natural for town government and individual departments to simply go from year to year conducting business the way they always have. Traditionally, a department will have a budget and simply increase that budget by a certain % the following year.

But what if the department was incentivized to reduce spending?

What if a town employee could receive a financial bonus or paid time off as a reward for reducing their department's expenses by 5% a year... even more for a 10% or 25% savings without affecting the performance of that department in a negative way?

We recommend a "Bottom Up Review of Every Town Department Budget and Spending" by the Board of Selectmen, Treasurer and Town Administrator with each department head. The Joint Committee should review every spending line item for FY2018 and determine what is a needed expense, what is state mandated, what is a nice to have... and what is simply unnecessary.

An incentive program should be created that will reward town employees and department heads with significant reductions in their financial expenses and spending habits.

**Who:** Board of Selectmen  
Treasurer  
Town Administrator

**When:** Should be completed by March 2019

### **Online Permit and Licensing System**

***Adopt an Online Permit and Licensing System to make it easier for residents and businesses to know if and when a permit is required. Will also allow town employees to be more efficient and handle increased applications without adding additional personnel.***

***Government open 24 x 7 for residents and businesses to handle their paperwork online.***

We recommend that the Town of Dudley explore the adoption of an Online Permitting System (eg: ViewPoint Government Solutions.) and GIS. This will allow faster, more efficient permitting and licensing and give town employees a mobile platform for anything related to permitting. Residents can apply and view real-time their permit application and status.

- Eg Link: <http://www.viewpointcloud.com/products/>
- All-in-one citizen service platform for permitting, licensing, inspections, and enforcement.
- Route, approve, and issue permits electronically
- Every record has a workflow where post-submission activity is recorded. Let

each submission flow electronically from intake to departmental reviews, automatically assigning to the next available employee. And ensure that no permit is ever issued before all required approvals are complete.

- Allows Govt Employees real time access to GIS and necessary information

Every Department in the town that issues any kind of permit, license or has a fee will be able to benefit from this system and collect more revenues.

**Who:** Joint Committee consisting of:

Board of Selectmen  
Treasurer  
Assessor  
Building Dept  
Planning Board  
Conservation Commission  
Board of Health  
IT Manager  
Collector  
Town Clerk  
Town Administrator

**When:** Should be completed by March 2019

### **Review Every Department Fee and Licensing Schedule to ensure that the monies collected actually pay for the work and time involved.**

Rather than raise taxes across the entire town, each department should have a goal of being revenue neutral. The Building Department fees collected should in an ideal world be adequate to cover the expenses of running the building department or paying for the employee's time in inspecting a building site or job.

However, we do understand in many cases, that many departments cannot do this. Public Safety, Highway, Senior Services and services which help those who are in need are departments that exist for the overall town welfare and must be funded through a municipal tax.

### **Review Every Town Regulation.... From "A to Z"**

There are too many rules and regulations that exist on the Federal, State and Local level. All Town regulations should state its purpose, why it exists and then be in a written, simple and understandable fashion so that you do not need a lawyer to understand what is expected. We need to simplify and review every regulation and bylaw that the town has adopted.

***"Ensure regulations and codes are consistent with or complementary to one another, and are easy to understand and implement."***

- Determine if really necessary for the Health and Welfare of the Town and its residents.
- Why was the regulation created... does the regulation actually achieve its goal?
- Is the language of the regulation difficult to understand or vague in any manner?
- Has the regulation caused more harm than good since its adoption?
- Is there a better way to achieve the regulation's goal?

## **Goal #4 : Increasing Town Revenue without Increasing Property Taxes**

They say the only certain things in Life are Death and taxes. Taxes are important because they fund the services that residents of a community demand. Residents demand Safe Streets and homes, Safe Roads and a Quality of Life that allows them to pursue the American Dream.

Unfortunately, more and more of that burden is being put on the shoulders of Property owners, rather than the actual users of the services.

In addition, The State of Massachusetts continues to increase the size of the State Government and mandates to local towns, while continuing to fall short on the revenue guarantees and promises it has made to its communities.

If the State of Massachusetts continues down this path, it will eventually follow a path of self-destruction pioneered by high property tax states like NY, CT and NJ, and will soon see a mass migration of businesses and residents to lower tax states like the Carolinas.

The time has come now for Dudley to take the lead and pioneer a different path.

## **Lobby for Changes in Chapter 70 School Funding Formula**

### **WHAT IS CHAPTER 70?**

Chapter 70 education aid is the Commonwealth's primary program for distributing its portion of K-12 public education funding to the state 's 328 local and regional school districts.<sup>1</sup> The Chapter 70 formula aims to ensure that each school district has sufficient resources to provide an adequate education for all of its students, taking into account the ability of each local government to contribute. In short, the formula is designed to have an equalizing effect, with less wealthy districts receiving more state aid than wealthier ones.<sup>2</sup>

Due to declining state tax revenues during the ongoing state fiscal crisis, Chapter 70 aid has been cut across the board during each of the last three fiscal years. The slowed phase-in of the 2007 reforms has also had the effect of slowing an increase in state aid that had been planned. Additionally, in FY 2010 the Legislature used an inflation factor in calculating Chapter 70 aid that was lower than the factor required by state law, resulting in reduced state aid for FY 2010 and for all subsequent years until it is corrected retroactively.<sup>6</sup>

**The Real problem with Chapter 70, It simply does not work.**

A "preliminary contribution" is calculated by taking the previous year 's required local contribution and multiplying it by the Municipal Revenue Growth Factor, a rate that estimates growth in local revenues from year to year.

A "target contribution" is calculated by looking at the specific property values and income wealth of a given community (as described above).

3. Since the target contribution is more directly tied to each community 's current ability to contribute, the state then sets a "required contribution" designed to move districts whose preliminary contributions are either above or below their target contributions towards the target. The final required contribution is then set based on uniform rules, and falls in between the preliminary and target contributions.<sup>5</sup>

**Where the Law mandates the State Reimburse 100% of certain costs, they usually only provide 70% of the funding.**

**By including a "Income Wealth factor", the State Legislature has seriously affected the calculation and put an undue burden of Senior Citizens on Fixed Incomes, Lower Income Families and Younger Families just starting their careers.**

**The Wealth Factor inclusion unfairly targeted smaller towns and favored larger city populations.**

**Wealth Factor explained in simplest terms;**

	<b>Town A has 5,000 Residents</b>	<b>City with 100,000 Population</b>
<b>Average Income Per Person</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>New Person Moves in that has income of \$10 Million</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>
<b>New Average Income Per Person</b>	<b>\$27,000</b>	<b>\$25,100</b>
<b>Increase in Town/City Wealth</b>	<b>7.5% Increase</b>	<b>.04% Increase</b>

## **Amnesty Program for Homeowners (Building Permits):**

Many Homeowners are simply unaware of when and how a building permit might be required for work done on their homes. Building permits are required for window replacement, roofs, gas and wood burning stoves, pools etc.

It is our opinion that there exists an opportunity for the town to increase the value of its taxable real estate base by giving residents the ability to self-report any improvements which might have been done in the past and a building permit was not pulled. It is our understanding that improvements to a property's value counts as New Revenue for Prop 2 ½ guidelines and would increase the revenue of the town.

This amnesty program would allow a homeowner to report the upgrade or work without incurring any financial penalties or legal actions.

It will give the homeowner the ability to have

- the building inspector come and inspect the work that was done.
- Advise the homeowner if a permit was actually required
- Advise the homeowner if the work is up to code
- If the work is not up to code, guide the homeowner on what needs to be done to get the house to code
- Give the Homeowner needed time to get the repairs made.
- Homeowner would still be responsible for paying the original building dept. fee for the permit.
- Assessor's database would be automatically updated with increased value of home and repairs.

## **The Establishment of a Charitable Giving and Estate Foundation for the Town**

Many residents in town would like to remember the Town or particular departments in their wills and estate planning. Currently, the town offers no such guidance.

The Town should offer workshops and programs to assist and encourage residents to consider giving back to the town in their estate planning.

Examples include...

**How to donate to the Town in Your Will** so that your wishes are implemented. Eg: Someone might want to donate specifically to the Library, School, Police, Fire or Rail trail. How do you assure their wishes are granted.

**Charitable gift annuities** are contracts that a nonprofit makes with a donor whereby the donor contributes money, and the nonprofit agrees to pay that donor an annual income for life. The donor receives a partial tax deduction and cash flow for life. The charity receives the remainder of the amount donated when the donor dies.

## State of MA Marijuana Tax encourages use of Marijuana over Tobacco

***The State of Massachusetts has significantly undertaxed Marijuana in comparison to traditional Tobacco products such as Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco.***

In Massachusetts, cigarettes are subject to a state excise tax of \$3.51 per pack of 20. Cigarettes are also subject to Massachusetts **sales** tax of approximately \$0.53 per pack, which adds up to a total tax per pack of \$4.04.

When Marijuana was legalized in Massachusetts, the Legislature established the following taxes on marijuana

- a state sales tax : 6.25% A state excise tax: 10.75% a local option for cities or towns – Upto 3%

***Thus, the Massachusetts House and Senate have created a disparity in the taxing structure which now encourages the use of Marijuana over Tobacco on a retail level.***

This is madness considering the increased health risks of Marijuana over tobacco and the increased police and EMT responses in regards to the Sale of Marijuana within a town.

The solution is to simply equalize the taxing levels of both Tobacco and Marijuana.

Towns should have the right to utilize the Tobacco Excise Tax Rate on Marijuana and keep the proceeds in order to defray costs and educate the public and youth on the dangers of smoking. The Town should keep 100% of the excise tax on Marijuana Sales within its boundaries.

### ***Current:***

	<b>Tobacco</b>	<b>Marijuana</b>
Retail Value before any taxes	\$5.00	\$5.00
Current Excise Tax	\$3.51	\$.5375
State Sales Tax (6.25%)	\$.53	\$.35
Local Option tax (3%)	NA	\$.15
<b>Current Final Cost to Consumer</b>	<b>\$9.04</b>	<b>\$6.04</b>

### ***Proposed Revamp to State of MA Legislative Taxation of Marijuana***

	<b>Tobacco</b>	<b>Marijuana</b>
Retail Value before any taxes	\$5.00	\$5.00
Current Excise Tax	\$3.51	\$ .5375
State Sales Tax (6.25%)	\$.53	\$ .53
Local Option tax (3%)	NA	\$ .15



Old Cost to Consumer	\$9.04	\$6.04
New TOWN EXCISE TAX	NA	<b>\$2.82</b>
<b>New Cost to Consumer</b>	<b>\$9.04</b>	<b>\$9.04</b>

## AirBnB Fees and Promotion

Airbnb is an American company which operates an online marketplace and hospitality service for people to lease or rent short-term lodging including holiday cottages, apartments, homestays, hostel beds, or hotel rooms, to participate in or facilitate experiences related to tourism such as walking tours, and to make reservations at restaurants. The company does not own any real estate or conduct tours; it is a broker which receives percentage service fees in conjunction with every booking. The company has over 5 million lodging listings in 81,000 cities and 191 countries and has facilitated over 300 million check-ins. (Wikipedia)

Despite Dudley having Nichols College within its town borders and having a handful of world class companies headquartered within the town (Henke Saas, Gentex, WebCo) and within 10 miles of the town (IPG Photonics, Mapfre), it has no lodging facilities.

Adopting regulations to allow AirBnB within the town and regulating it so that the guests are assured of safe, fire code approved lodging is a win-win for the town and its residents.

- Residents can earn income from unused rooms in their homes or farms.
- It would promote Bed and Breakfast Establishments within Town helping promote tourism
- It would provide lodging for employers and their staff and vendors when visiting their headquarters in town
- Parents visiting Nichols college students could stay local, spending money on food, drink and recreation within the Town of Dudley, thereby helping local businesses.
- **The Town could earn income through a very minor “Occupancy Tax” that would cover the cost for safety inspections and add a small amount to the general fund.**

The MA House of Representatives passed a bill in March 2018 to tax property owners who list lodging on sites like Airbnb and HomeAway. Hosts would be taxed in tiers based on how many units they offer—the more units, the higher the rate. Professional managers with at least six rooms up for grabs would face an 8 percent tax per rental, according to State House News Service. Lawmakers also want to create a publicly-available registry of short-term listings and give the Department of Revenue the option to charge hosts to be included in the database.

In addition to state-imposed taxes, **the bill would also allow cities and towns to impose their own fees on hosts and investors. Should a municipality opt to move forward with such a tariff, they would need to also adopt a policy that requires short-term**

**rentals to pass a safety inspection paid for by the host.**

(<https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2018/03/23/massachusetts-airbnb-tax/>)

As of 6/18/2018, Only 2 Homes in Dudley are listed on [AirBNB](#)

## **GOAL #5: Revitalize West Main Street and Schofield Ave**

The Town Survey stated

What should be the top economic development priorities?

- 22% Turning our dormant Agricultural Lands into Active Farms, Wineries and Craft Breweries
- 16.5% Revitalize West Main Street
- 15% Creating a Restaurant District

Where Should Town Officials Concentrate Their Economic Development Efforts?

- 47% West Main Street
- 26% Schofield Avenue ( Rt. 12 From West Main to CT State Line)

Work with CMRPC on Phase 2 and Phase 3 to Continue to develop and produce a strategy to accomplish this.

## **Goal #6 : Agricultural Initiative**

### **APR Land and Chapter 61A Lands**

**Chapter 61A** - The Chapter 61 Program provides a tax break to owners of recreational, forest or agricultural lands as long as the land remains in the specified use. It is important to note that Chapter 61 is an incentive program not a permanent protection of open space or farmland. Local planners should assume that all of these lands in their community have development potential. Changes were made to this law in 2006.

**Agricultural Commissions** - These Commissions are formed by passing a local bylaw or ordinance and serve as advocates for local farms. Responsibilities can include protecting farmland, providing assistance for natural resource management, affording visibility to local farmers, and assisting local boards with community development decisions. Ninety-one cities and towns have established Agricultural Commissions. Currently, Dudley does not.

**Right to Farm** - The Right to Farm is vested in all residents of the Commonwealth under Article 97 of the state Constitution. Communities interested in formally re-asserting that right within the community may pass a Right to Farm Bylaw that clearly states the priorities of the community relative to fostering agricultural activities and allowing farms to operate "with minimal conflict with abutters and Town agencies". The bylaw/ordinance also

establishes the notification procedure for informing all residents of the Town of the community's status as a Right to Farm entity. Dudley has passed a Right to Farm Bylaw.

**Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APRs)** - This program is designed to protect the most productive agricultural lands in the Commonwealth and establishes permanent deed restrictions on agricultural lands, protecting them from any use that might diminish the area's agricultural potential. These deed restrictions are purchased with state funds that can be matched to some extent by municipal and in some cases federal funding as well.

**Dudley needs to do the following in order to reinvigorate its Agricultural lands and Industry.**

### **AG GOAL #1 : Establishment of a “New Agricultural Commission”**

#### ***Process: Warrant Article for 2018 Spring Town Meeting***

Sponsored by Dudley Economic Development Committee, Bylaw Change

Comprised of 3 Town Residents who own farms + 2 at-large interested in promoting farming

To establish the Agricultural Commission in the Town of Dudley to serve as a forum for matters of interest to farmers in Dudley, and to advise the Board on how the Town can best support farming in Dudley. The committee's five members include three Dudley residents who are engaged in farming and two citizens at-large interested in promoting farming.

The committee meets monthly. All are welcome.

**Mission Statement:** The Commission's duties shall include, but are not limited to: serving as facilitators for encouraging the pursuits of agriculture in Dudley; promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities in Town; acting as mediators, advocates, educators, and/or negotiators on farming issues; working for preservation of prime agricultural lands; advising the Board of Selectman, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Historical Commission, Board of Assessors, and the Open Space Committee, or any other appropriate Town Boards, on issues involving agriculture; and pursuing all initiatives appropriate to creating a sustainable agricultural community.

All Chapter 61A, APR or any other Agricultural Use issue should be directed to the Agricultural Commission First.

The Agricultural Commission will be the official representative of the Town of Dudley to the MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources and be empowered with such authority to apply for and secure grants and funding in related to Agricultural land issues and agricultural training in the town of Dudley.

## **AG GOAL #2 : Outreach to all land owners who are currently paying reduced taxes on Chapter 61A or APR Lands.**

**What:** Determine if they are in compliance with the current State Requirements for Chapter 61A or APR Lands

**What:** Farmers or Landowners who are not farming due to low economic returns should be offered assistance and training from the State of MA MDAR and Town of Dudley to transition into higher yield and revenue crops.

**What:** Determine those land owners who are merely using these reduced taxes as a tax break and whom have no intention of Farming or preserving the land. Work with them to either develop the land or offer it to a third party for Agricultural uses.

**What:** Create a Database of Available Agricultural or APR Lands and whose Owners are receptive to leasing out the land to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party for active agricultural uses.

- Use this database to Lands that can be matched with those who are looking to farm.
- The AG Commission should Act as a “Facilitator” matching potential farmers with landowners who are willing to lease their lands.
- Advertise this land listing to Biotechnology and Industries which require farmlands to produce their products
- List these lands as available on Town Website

## **AG GOAL #3 : Promote Farm to Table – “Dudley Fresh”**

**What: Promote Farm to Table – “Dudley Fresh”**

Try to facilitate retail venues for Dudley Farmers to sell their goods to Dudley Residents via Grocery Stores and Local Restaurants

- Reach out to Park N Shop and see if they would Promote “Dudley Fresh”
- Reach out to Dudley and Webster restaurants and see if they would be willing to offer a “Dudley Fresh” option for Steaks, Burgers, Eggs and locally produced dairy products
- Ask Nichols if they would be willing to offer “Dudley Fresh” Options on their School menus

## AG GOAL #4 : The NAPA Valley of New England

**What:** Invest now so that one day Dudley will be known as the Napa Valley of New England.

- Find 3 Farmers who would be willing to experiment with Growing Grapes and establishing a Vineyard on a portion of their property
- Begin marketing our Agricultural lands to North Fork Long Island Wineries and CA Wineries looking to expand.

## GOAL #7: Establishment of a “New Recreation Commission”

**Ensuring A High Quality Of Life.** In addition to issues that affect the direct operations of a business, there are quality of life factors from parks and arts to public safety that are critical to the overall economic environment that attracts and retains business owners and their workforce. Successfully linking economic development with the array of community development efforts will enhance both business and community activities.

Dudley has tremendous outdoor assets. Hundreds of miles of hiking trails, boating opportunities on various ponds and rivers, tremendous fishing locations, a beach and a community that loves to celebrate.

It is time for a new Recreation Commission to manage all of those assets and maximize the dollar return for the residents of town.

### ***Process: Warrant Article for 2018 Town Meeting***

Sponsored by Dudley Economic Development Committee, Bylaw Change

Compromised of 5 Town Residents + Town Administrator + DPW/Highway Superintendent

**Mission Statement:** The purpose of the Recreation Commission is to seek the development of recreational programs and the enhancement of recreational facilities and opportunities within the town of Dudley.

Such programs will include

- Management of the beaches
- Management of all Town owned Open Space and Conservation lands
- Rail trails
- Boating
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Hiking trails
- Walking trails,
- Town owned lands
- Water Recreational Opportunities
- Partnering with public and private agencies for all sports and community activities within the Town of Dudley.
- Partnering with other Dudley Town Depts. and organizations to promote recreational, cultural and social opportunities within Dudley.

- Special Events, Town Celebrations

In addition, the commission will work closely with regional organizations such as the last Green Valley, Dudley Conservation Trust and others, to have the Town of Dudley play a visible and active role in promoting the town as a recreational destination.

The Commission shall be vested with the power, duties and obligations necessary to accomplish this purpose. They shall be charged with full responsibility for the recreation programs designated by the Commission. They shall have the ability to set up sub committees for specific recreational purposes such as “Rail Trail Committee”, “Town Beach Committee”

They shall have their own budget which will be separate from the general Funds of the Town. Other depts. cannot transfer funds out of the commission’s budget.

They shall have the ability to propose “Fees” which must be approved at Town meeting.

## GOAL #8: Old Mill Complexes : Tough Choices Ahead

**Stephens Linens and Stephens Mills are teetering on the edge of extinction.**

Old, Historic structures which were once pillars of the Industrial Revolution, now slowly deteriorating from the inside out. Out of town owners removed from the day to day operation of these structures.

Frozen, Broken Pipes forced dozens of small businesses out of business this winter.

The Town Survey stated that overwhelming, residents would like to see these structures converted to Multi Use, Mixed Use Commercial Space with Residential Condos on upper floors.

However, the out of town owners stated there is no demand for that.

There was a proposal to turn Stephen's Linen's into a 94 Unit, Low Income Rental Housing Complex at an estimated \$40 million dollar renovation budget. However, the Planning Board rightfully pushed back when the developer requested to pay No taxes for the next 20+ years, thereby costing the town of Dudley an extra \$940,000 in added annual expenses for the school system alone (assuming each unit had only 1 child.)

The Planning Board pushed for 55+ older housing, but the developer had no interest in exploring this.

The Planning Board also pushed for private sale condos, instead of rentals, so that the town could earn property taxes, but the developer showed no interest in exploring this.

Where the proposal stands today.. is unknown.

There is a possibility that no adequate proposal or agreement can be reached on this building. In full disclosure, it is quite possible that unless a suitable use and agreement can be reached, there is the remote possibility that the building may be demolished and the land sold.

**Recommended Actions:** Work with the Owners of the Old Mill Buildings and try to proactively solicit interest from businesses in Worcester and Boston looking to expand.

Could the town turn a profit owning the building and using it for a 55+ Community for Dudley Residents? We don't know the answer... yet.



**We can agree that a full court press and plan should be created to save this building and maximize the revenues for the town in the process.**

**Preferred Goal for the Mill Properties:**

Encourage Mixed Commercial Use.

Private Sale Condos, Office Space and Retail Storefronts on Ground Level Units.

**Minimally Acceptable:**

Private Sale Residences (Condos), Market Rate.

Senior Housing (Rentals)

Assisted Living

## Dudley Economic Development Strategic Plan 5 Year Timeline

Year	ACTIVITIES
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off Meeting: Introductions &amp; Review of Format/Process</li> <li>• Committee Work Sessions: Vision and Goals</li> <li>• Refine Vision &amp; Goals; Develop Overall Strategies</li> <li>• Engage Professional Technical Assistance thru CMRPC (Central MA Regional Planning Commission)</li> <li>• Begin Phase 1 of Technical Build of Plan thru CMRPC</li> <li>• Prior Plans Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000 Master Plan</li> <li>• 2004 Community Development</li> <li>• Central 13 PDA/PPA Plan, 2012</li> <li>• EMSI Data, 2010-16</li> <li>• 2012 Economic census</li> <li>• Open space Data</li> <li>• CEDS economic indicators</li> <li>• DBA data</li> <li>• CAMA (computer assisted mass appraisal) parcel data</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Community Survey - 20 Questions</li> <li>• 12 Months of Open Public Hearings</li> <li>• Meet with various Boards in Town</li> <li>• Meet with various business organizations and associations in the Town</li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of Agricultural Commission – Warrant Article</li> <li>• Creation of New Recreation Commission – Warrant Article</li> <li>• <b>Begin Phase 2 with CMRPC (Spring-Fall 2018):</b> Impediments analysis: What is stopping growth in these places, sectors? Review of zoning, regulations, permitting processes Review of agricultural market conditions; what factors are limiting the success and growth of farming Dudley? What can the town do to mitigate them?</li> <li>• <b>Sector Specific Workshops</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agriculture:</b> Convene farmers, aggregators and educators using contacts developed in Phase I</li> <li>• <b>Webster-Dudley Main St. Corridor:</b> What can both towns be doing to promote and support the Main St. Corridor. Work with Webster-Dudley Business Alliance</li> <li>• <b>Nichols/Main St. Neighborhood Workshop:</b> Convene a public workshop to understand concerns, needs of residents, property and business owners between Nichols and W. Main St.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Town Website</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Include Commercial Real Estate Listings</b> of Available properties</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>on Town Website</p> <p><b>New Recreation Commission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Should begin their work by 11-1-2018</b></li> <li>• <b>Inventory of all recreational properties and opportunities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop a Plan for use and self-funding, Town beach, Trails</b></li> <li>• <b>A Resident Sticker program should be explored for revenue</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Begin Review of DPW Director Option by independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party</b></p>
2019	<p><b>Phase 3 with CMRPC (2019):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation recommendations</li> <li>• Zoning, regulatory amendments</li> <li>• Funding sources</li> <li>• Marketing strategies</li> <li>• Continuing governance</li> </ul> <p><b>Develop an easy to use “How-To” information packet</b></p> <p><b>Streamline the Town processes / Online Permitting</b></p>
2020	<p><b>Establish a Foundation Program for the Town</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charitable Gift Annuity Program</li> <li>- Estate Planning and remembering the town in Your Estate Plans</li> </ul>
2021	<p><b>Update EDC Plan:</b></p> <p><b>Public Presentation &amp; Input</b></p>



Janet A. Pierce	Executive Director
Chris J. Ryan	Community Development
Sujatha Krishnan	Transportation
Trish Settles	Municipal Collaboration
Diana Provancher	Business Manager

## TOWN OF DUDLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, PHASE 1: COMMUNITY ASSETS

REPORT AND ANALYSIS PREPARED BY THE CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION

### 1) PROJECT BACKGROUND

This Community Assets report is phase one of a three phase proposed planning project in the Town of Dudley. This project will help Dudley develop an economic development vision, strategy, and implementation framework. This first phase will support Dudley in its goal of pursuing Community Compact Best Practice "Preparing for success through the development and goals of the community that foster the successful completion of public/private/nonprofit projects."

This project has three distinct phases. Project phases include:

#### Phase 1: Asset inventory and participatory planning (visioning) activities (completed)

In Phase 1, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) identified economic development assets and opportunities through consultation with town officials, key stakeholders, field work, and review of existing materials. Additionally, CMRPC solicited feedback from Dudley business owners and other economic development stakeholders. CMRPC will use findings from this process to identify key "Opportunity Areas" for potential investment or reform. For the purposes of this report, an Opportunity Area refers to either a geographic district or segment of the economy that can be better developed for economic growth. These together informed the following Phase 1 deliverables:

- Community Asset inventory
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of identified Opportunity Areas
- Economic Development Vision Statement

#### Phase 2: Regulatory and procedural analysis (subsequent phase)

In Phase 2, CMRPC will review Dudley's regulations and procedures for best practices and missed opportunities. This review will include regulations and procedures related to zoning, permitting, and

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