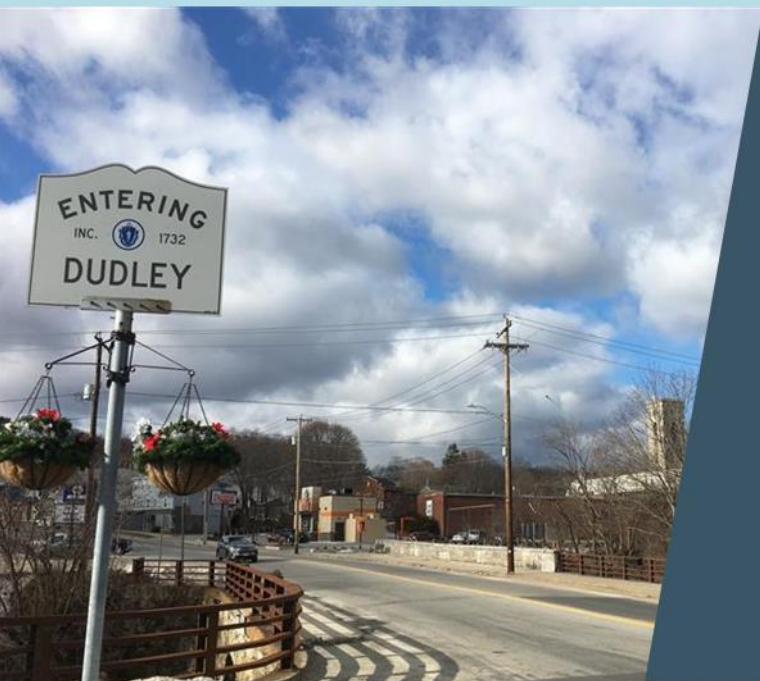


Webster- Dudley Corridor Study

2020



Produced by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) on behalf of the towns of Webster and Dudley and funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)



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Main Street looking west, Webster Massachusetts, 10 August 2008, John Phelan via Wikipedia

View of Dudley Town Border, CMRPC

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT ORIGIN

In 2019 the towns of Webster and Dudley entered into an agreement with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to conduct a corridor study of a shared commercial district crossing the border of the two towns. A corridor study is a planning project that defines the relationships between a roadway and its adjacent land. Corridor studies are used to: define acceptable levels of access and mobility, determine transportation system needs to support surrounding land uses, and promote redevelopment.

The Webster-Dudley corridor project is unique in that it seeks to integrate the vision and municipal policies of two distinctive communities. Through this study we will provide economic development recommendations that bring municipal policies in line with smart growth strategies and improve cohesion and sense of place for Webster and Dudley residents.

IMAGE 1: VIEW OF DUDLEY TOWN BORDER



Source: CMRPC

IMAGE 2: VIEW OF WEBSTER TOWN BORDER



Source: CMRPC

1.2 STUDY AREA

The study area comprises 364 parcels adjacent to Main Street and South Main Street in Webster (State Route 12) and West Main Street in Dudley (State Route 197). Of the parcels identified as being in the study area, 103 are in Webster and 261 are in Dudley. The nearest major highway, Route 395, exits onto State Route 12, which carries you west directly into the heart of Webster's downtown.

The Webster side of the study area contains several commercial store fronts, a town hall, and municipal buildings. Continuing west, Route 12 turns into Route 197 upon crossing the French River into Dudley. The Dudley side of the corridor includes a smaller strip of stores, chain restaurants and municipal buildings such as the Dudley Police Department. A coordinated effort to integrate commercial, recreational, and place-making components across the two segments of the study area will support a vision for a cohesive downtown, shared by two distinctive communities.

MAP 1: STUDY AREA



Source: MassGIS Data Layers, Map Produced by CMRPC

1.3 PAST PLANNING

In beginning this planning process, several past planning efforts were reviewed. In particular, we built on the vision outlined in the 2018 Dudley Economic Development Plan and the 2014 Webster Master Plan. The following is a summary of the plans we referenced:

Dudley

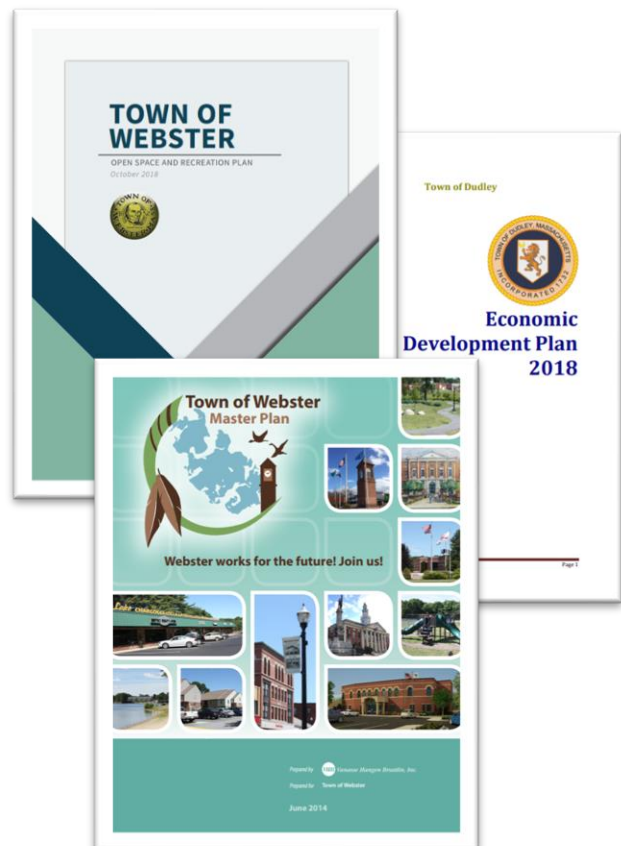
- 2018 Economic Development Plan
- 2018 Asset inventory
- 2000 Master Plan
- 2004 Community Development
- Quinebaug River Valley Trail and Bikeway

Webster

- 2014 Master Plan
- 2008 Open Space Plan
- Marijuana Local Process Guide
- French River and Downtown Phasing Plan

Regional Plans

- Central 13 PDA/PPA Plan, 2012



VISIONING

2.1 MEETINGS WITH MUNICIPALITIES

Planning kicked off with meetings with the Town Administrator and Town Planner in Webster in early February and April. Discussion focused on the project goals and pin-pointing a study area for the Webster section of the corridor. The town of Dudley appointed a new Town Administrator soon after, and CMRPC planners met with him to bring him up to speed on the project. A follow-up meeting with the Town Planner in Dudley was used to delineate the study area and hash out the details of the plan on the Dudley side. Staff turnovers took place in the town of Dudley throughout the planning process, including the Town Administrator, Planner and EDC Chair. Despite this, and challenges faced as a result of COVID-19 in 2020, the team of municipal representatives, planners, and stakeholders remained engaged and invested in the project goals throughout.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

During the course of planning, CMRPC planners arranged meetings with local stakeholders including the Webster-Dudley Business Alliance, the Dudley Downtown Development Committee, Nichols College, a local Commercial Realtor, the Director of the Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce, and the Dudley Agricultural Commission. The following is a summary of the key takeaways from these meetings.

WEBSTER-DUDLEY BUSINESS



- Small town feel, scenery, and natural beauty can be capitalized on to attract foot and car traffic to the corridor
- Low crime provides peace of mind to local business owners and customers

NICHOLS COLLEGE



- With 1,318 students enrolled in 2019 Nichols College provides a major customer-base to local businesses
- Having a *college town* economy means businesses face a summer lull
- Nichols offers 12 business and 7 liberal arts concentrations. The academics are highly leadership driven, providing an opportunity for motivated graduates to invest locally
- Many students intern with local businesses and more opportunities are welcomed by the university
- Currently Nichols College is not well connected to the corridor by pedestrian and bike facilities

AGRICULTURE IN DUDLEY



- The Dudley Farm Dayz Event is held once a year and draws foot traffic to the area
- The Agriculture Commission has an active Facebook Page encouraging buy-local and promoting local events and farmers markets
- The Ag commission is interested in how production of hemp could expand the agricultural market in Dudley
- Agritourism remains a key focus with the town of Dudley having the 2nd highest quantity of agriculturally protected lands in the state

2.3 BUSINESS COMMUNITY

In 2019 CMRPC met with the Webster-Dudley Business Alliance (WDBA), the Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber and the Dudley Economic Development Committee to better understand the current climate for business owners in the corridors. A key point of interconnection between Webster and Dudley is the Webster-Dudley Business Alliance (WDBA), which creates promotional materials, offers networking opportunities, and develops local events. This organization is of key importance to creating an active local business climate.

A recent article in the Yankee Press hailed the business environment in Dudley, interviewing several small business owners who described their experience living, working, and owning a business in Dudley.¹

IMAGE 3: WDBA EVENT



Source: Webster-Dudley Business Alliance Summer Festival, www.thewdba.org

IN THE NEWS

“Doing Business in Dudley is Easy, the town is very accommodating, very helpful, for licensing and for paperwork”

- Laurie Sullivan, Owner of Sully’s Dog Shack on West Main Street

“The town of Dudley is easy to work with for signs. There is not a lot of resistance on permitting. Dudley is Forward-thinking, very willing to work with new people coming to town, even someone wanting to put a shed up”

- Travis Blair, VP of Project development for Graphics Unlimited On West Main Street

“Webster Five has been part of the Dudley community since 1973, providing financial products and solutions to both consumers and businesses”

- Holly Deslauriers, Assistant Vice President of Webster Five Bank

“A good place to live too. Boston has too many Ubers, too many Lifts. Dudley still maintains its rural character and there’s a new fire station in the works”

- Steven Duszlak, Horton’s on Schofield Ave

Source: Published by Yankee Xpress (<http://theyankeeexpress.com>) by Rod Lee

¹ Source: Published by Yankee Xpress (<http://theyankeeexpress.com>) by Rod Lee

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR STUDY

3.1 CORRIDOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The census tracts that best align with the study area had a combined population of approximately 6,714 people and approximately 2,634 households in 2018. Median household income in Dudley (tract 7551) is slightly higher than Webster (tract 7543). The population living in Webster is also denser, concentrated in a smaller tract around Main Street, where the population in Dudley is spread over a larger geography around West Main Street.

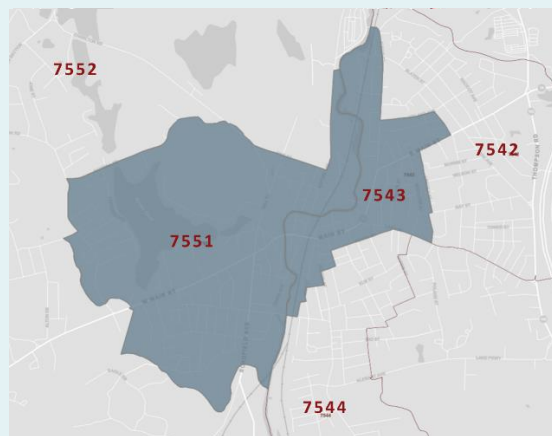
TABLE 1: CENSUS DATA

	Dudley Tract # 7551	Webster Tract # 7543
Total Population	3,460 +/-297	3,254 +/- 380
Total Households	1,365 +/-86	1,269 +/-111
Median Household Income	\$54,162 +/- \$9,505	\$36,560 +/- \$5,137

Source: U.S. Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

CENSUS DATA

- The data represented applies to census Tracts 7551 in Dudley and 7543 in Webster, which most closely align with the defined study area.
- Data was taken from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the most recent estimates available.
- The American Community Survey uses a sample of respondents and the 2010 census data to estimate data in years where the Census is not taken. Given this, the data has a margin of error (+/-) that should be considered in interpreting the data.



Source: Census.data.gov

Median age in the census tracts containing the study area is overall slightly younger than the wider region. However, like many towns in Massachusetts, the population is aging. The population in the census tracts, although slightly younger, is aging slightly faster than the community as a whole. As populations age, creating walkable, accessible, and interconnected downtown spaces becomes increasingly important, both to meet the needs of older adults and attract younger populations, drawn to walkable and bikeable commercial areas.

TABLE 2: MEDIAN AGE 2014-2018

	Census Tract 7543	Census Tract 7551	Webster CDP	Worcester, MA-CT Metro NECTA
Median Age 2014 (DP05)	34 +/-7.1	36.2 +/-4.1	39.5 +/-1.7	39.4 +/-0.2
Median Age 2018 (DP05)	36.5 +/-9	40.3 +/-3.5	40.1 +/-1.9	40.1 +/-0.3

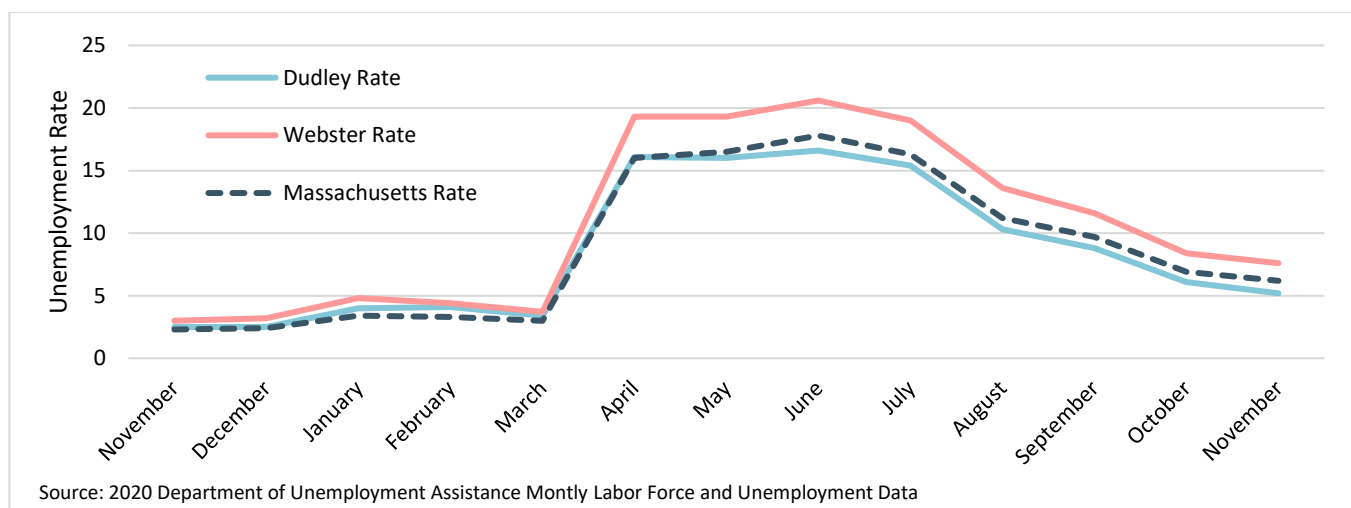
Source: U.S. Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

3.2 EFFECTS OF COVID-19

We would do this plan an injustice if we did not highlight that amid assembling the data, planning site visits and interviewing stakeholders the world was brought to a halt with the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic sent shockwaves through essentially every type of industry and left much of the country on lock down. Many businesses closed their doors and workers were forced into remote work settings or unemployment almost immediately. The long-term effect that this year has had on main streets and local employment is still playing out across the nation and in the towns of Webster and Dudley.

As seen in figure 1, both Webster and Dudley's unemployment rates spiked to over 15% in April 2020, over 3 times the unemployment rate reported the month prior. This unprecedented spike followed the state shut down of all non-essential businesses on March 23rd. By June 2020, 20% of Webster's labor force and 16.6% of Dudley's labor force was unemployed.

FIGURE 1: 2020 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



Governor Charlie Baker began a phased reopening of Massachusetts, starting May 19th. As of December 2020, Massachusetts is in Phase 3, *Vigilant*. Following the gradual reopening of businesses, unemployment rates have seen corresponding improvements. Dudley's most recent reported unemployment rate, in November of 2020, dropped to 5.2% and Webster's unemployment rate dropped to 7.6%.

FIGURE 2: MASSACHUSETTS REOPENING PLAN PHASES

Stay at home	Phase 1: Start	Phase 2: Causes	Phase 3: Vigilant	Phase 4: New Normal
Only essential businesses and services	Limited industries resume operations with severe restrictions	Additional industries resume operations with restrictions and capacity limitations	Additional industries resume operations with guidance	Development of vaccines and/ or treatments enable resumption of "new normal"

Source: Massachusetts COVID-19 Information for Local Boards of Health, Reopening Massachusetts Plan

Unemployment claims followed a similar trend, as can be seen in figure 3, with 9,407 claims filed in Webster and 5,030 claims filed in Dudley since April of 2020 (as of November 1st, 2020). In both Dudley and Webster women

were hit hardest by the effects of the pandemic. Pre-COVID-19, men made up a sizable majority of unemployment claims. Beginning in March, however, women in both towns accounted for a slight majority of unemployment claimants. This trend was particularly prominent in Dudley as can be seen in figure 4.

FIGURE 3: UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS

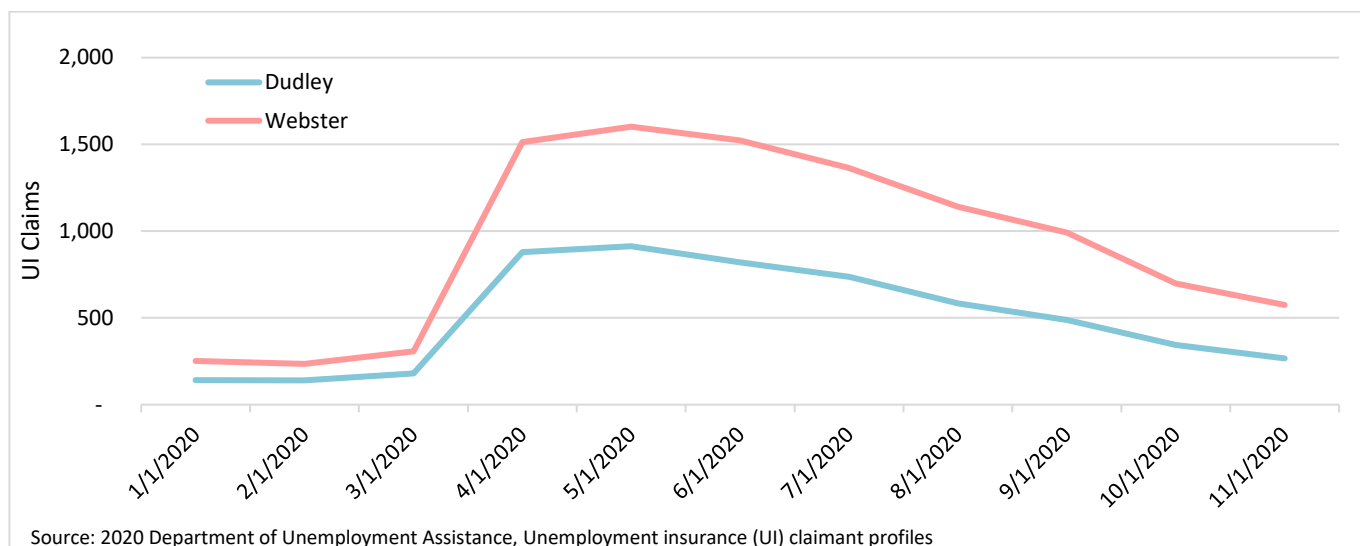
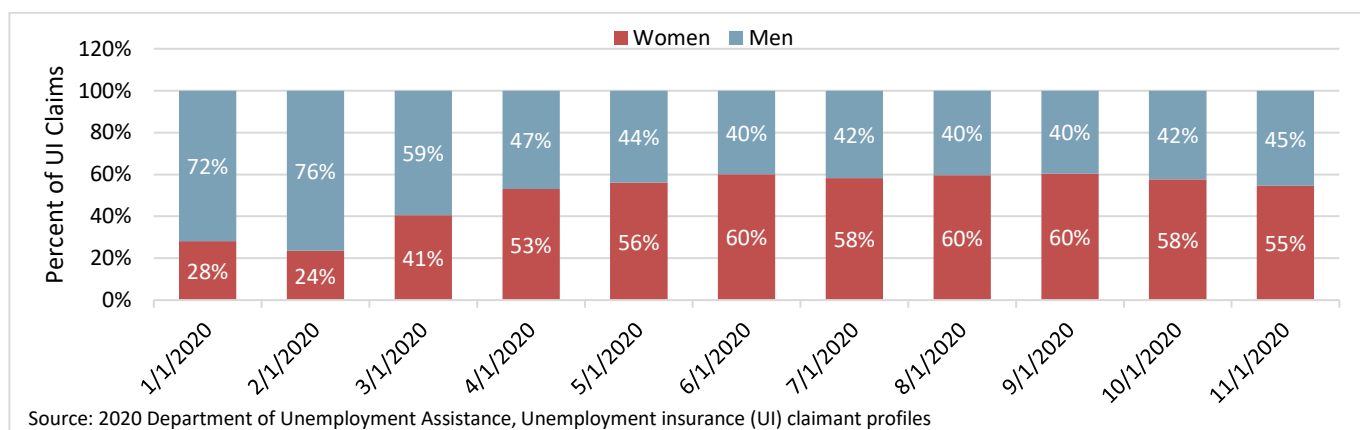


FIGURE 4: DUDLEY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS MEN VS. WOMEN



In the wake of COVID-19, the corridor will need to adapt to shifting markets and new opportunities. For example, COVID-19 has forced many malls and shopping centers to close their doors for good, creating a unique opportunity for downtown corridors like Webster-Dudley to grow. Although the circumstances are difficult, the towns of Webster and Dudley, community members and local businesses can make a major impact by working together to recover and prosper in 2021 and beyond.

Both the towns of Dudley and Webster have applied for funds to create Local Rapid Recovery Plans (LRRP) through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI), a program that is part of the Massachusetts COVID-19 relief efforts. If awarded, the planning process offers an opportunity to bring stakeholders to the table, consult economic experts, and map out a course for recovery.²

² [Partnerships for Recovery: Grant programs to aid recovery](#)

3.3 LAND USE AND PARCEL ANALYSIS

As part of the planning process, we used tax assessment data to understand the mix of residential and non-residential land use in the corridor. The most recent tax assessment data in Webster reflects collection in 2016.³ The most recent tax assessment data in Dudley reflects collection in 2020.⁴

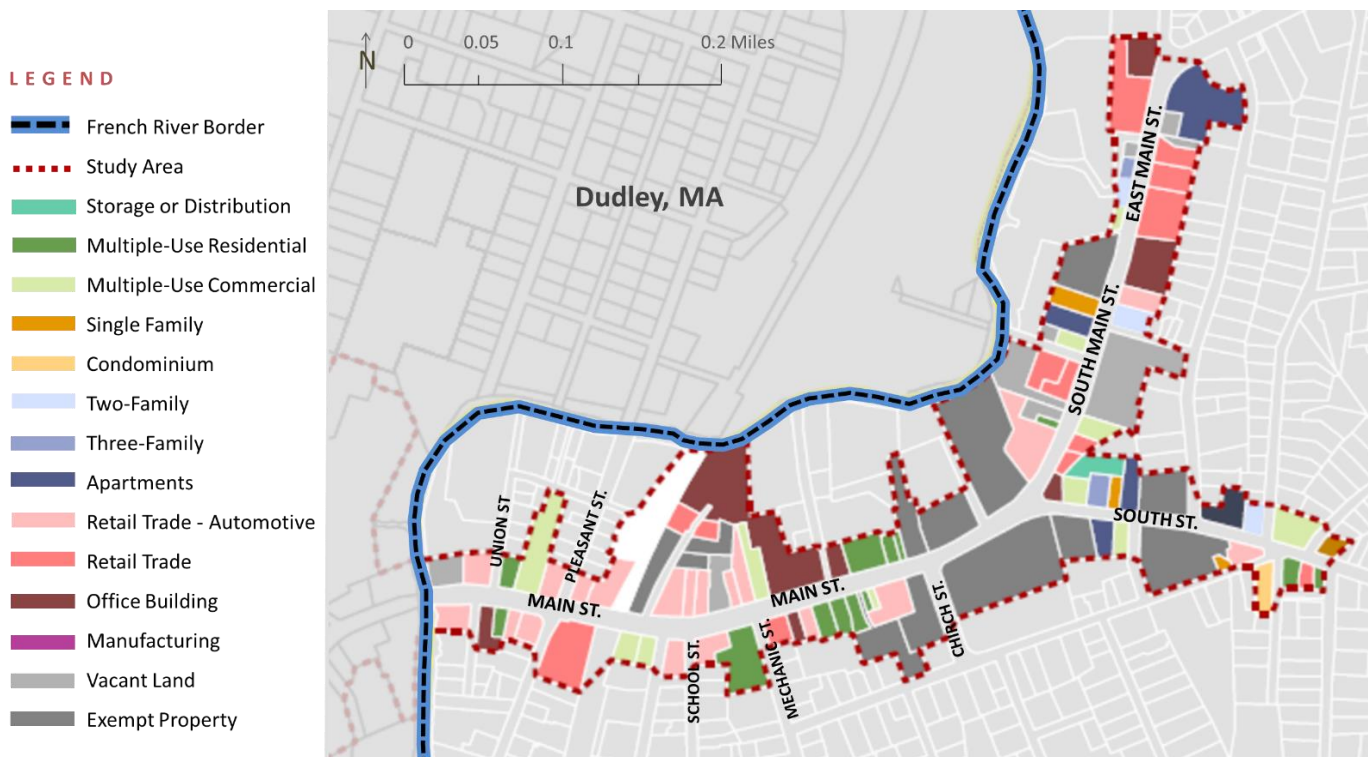
Particularly given the unknown number of small businesses that may have closed or moved as a result of COVID-19, the conditions identified in this analysis will better reflect the land-use mix present in the corridor pre-COVID-19. However, as part of the state's recovery effort, both the towns of Dudley and Webster have applied for funds to create Local Rapid Recovery Plans (LRRP). These plans can provide further insight about how the land-use mix in the corridor may have been affected by COVID-19. Map 2 shows the parcel-use mix within the defined corridor in Webster based on tax parcel data 3-digit Massachusetts standard codes.⁵

IMAGE 4: STOREFRONTS ON MAIN IN WEBSTER



Source: CMRPC

MAP 2: WEBSTER LAND-USE MIX IN THE CORRIDOR



Source: MassGIS Data Layers, Map Produced by CMRPC

³ [Massachusetts Property Type Classification Codes Non-Arm's Length Codes and Sales Report Spreadsheet Specifications](#)

⁴ [Massachusetts Interactive Property Map](#)

⁵ [Massachusetts Interactive Property Map](#)

Map 3 shows the parcel mix within the defined corridor in Dudley based on tax parcel data 3-digit Massachusetts standard use codes.

MAP 3: DUDLEY LAND-USE MIX IN THE CORRIDOR



We also analyzed the land-use mix of all parcels that fell predominantly within a ½ mile buffer around the defined corridor. This study area included **4,442 parcels**, **3,387 of these parcels were residential (Massachusetts 3-digit use codes 100 to 130)**, making up **76% of the parcels in the ½ mile buffer**. The following is a summary of the use-codes for all the parcels in the study area, and in a ½ mile buffer around the study area.

TABLE 3: ALL PARCELS BY USE CODE

	Use Code Range	Parcels in ½ Mile Buffer	% of Parcels in 1/2 Mile Buffer	Parcels in Study Area	% of Parcels in Study Area
Blank	No use code reported	50	1.10%	2	0.50%
Residential	100-130	3,387	76.20%	164	45.10%
Multiple-Use Primarily Commercial	31	32	0.70%	11	3.00%
Multiple-Use Primarily Residential	13	26	0.60%	13	3.60%
Non- Residential	130 - 460, 699, 799 and 899	760	17.10%	144	39.60%
EXEMPT PROPERTY	999	187	4.20%	30	8.20%
TOTAL:		4442	100%	364	100%

TABLE 4: NON-RESIDENTIAL PARCELS BY USE-CODE

Non-Residential Use	Number of Parcels in 1/2 Mile Buffer	Number of Parcels in Study Area
Vacant Land in a Residential Zone	482	32
Automotive, Vehicles, Sales and Service	65	22
Retail Trade	63	42
Storage Warehouses and Distribution	36	17
Vacant Land in Non-Residential Zone	30	11
Manufacturing and Processing	23	2
Office Building	21	14
Vacant Land - Industrial Property	20	2
Public Service Properties	8	2
Outdoor Recreational Properties	3	0
Utility Properties	3	0
Mining and Quarrying	2	0
Productive Land	2	0
Transient Group Quarters	1	0
Utility Properties - Communication	1	0
TOTAL:	760	144

Mixed-use development is characterized as pedestrian-friendly development that blends two or more residential, commercial, cultural, or institutional uses, as can be seen in figure 5. The variety of uses in mixed-use developments allows for people to live, work, play and shop in one place, which then becomes a destination for people from other neighborhoods. Mixed-use developments also create relative density within existing downtown areas, promoting conservation of greenspace.

Most of the historic storefronts in Webster are mixed-use, which was popular on main streets in Massachusetts through the beginning of the 19th century. Mixed-use developments, therefore, have the dual advantage of being cohesive within the existing physical and historic appearance of the corridor, as well as promoting walkability, economic development, and conservation. There are 58 mixed-use parcels in the ½ mile buffer, 24 of which are in the corridor study area itself. Of the 24 mixed use parcels in the study area, 11 are for primarily commercial use and 13 are for primarily residential use.

FIGURE 5: MIXED-USE STRUCTURE

Source: CMRPC

TABLE 5: MIXED-USE PARCELS BY USE-CODE

Multiple-Use	Number of Parcels in 1/2 Mile Buffer	Number of Parcels in Study Area
Multiple-Use Primarily Commercial	32	11
Multiple-Use Primarily Residential	26	13
TOTAL:	58	24

Tax assessors report on land-use using the Massachusetts standardized land use code; however, they also report on the style of the structure located on the property.⁶ For commercial-use parcels, this can provide additional information about the current commercial mix in a corridor. For example, a parcel classified as retail-use (use code 320-329) could have a reported *structure style* of “discount store” or “strip mall.”

Tables 5 and 6 were created by identifying all commercial-use parcels in Webster and Dudley and using the variable *structure style* to identify parcels into the general categories of Auto Related, Care Related, Industrial, Mixed-Use, Office, Food Related, Retail, and Services – this can provide more information about the current commercial mix in the corridor.

TABLE 6: CATEGORIES OF PARCEL STYLE IN DUDLEY

Categories of Parcel Style in Dudley	Number of Parcels
Car Dealer	2
Gas Mart	2
Gas Station	1
Total Auto Related:	5
Day Care Center	1
Total Care Related:	1
Light Industrial	10
Light Utility Building	1
Total Industrial Related:	11
Mixed Ret/Res	12
Mixed Ret/Office	2
Total Mixed- Use:	14
Office	8
Medical Office	1
Total Offices:	9
Fast Food	3
Bar/Tavern	2
Total Food Related:	5
Strip Store	7
Store	6
Discount Store	2
Total Retail:	15
Service/Job Shop	19
Clubhouse	2
Laundromat	2
Barbershop/Salon	1
Function Hall	1
Branch Bank	1
Pharmacy	1
Country Club	1
Elderly Housing	1
Warehouse Showroom	1
Kennel	1
Total Service Related:	31
Storage Warehouse	13
Total Storage:	13

TABLE 7: CATEGORIES OF PARCEL STYLE IN WEBSTER

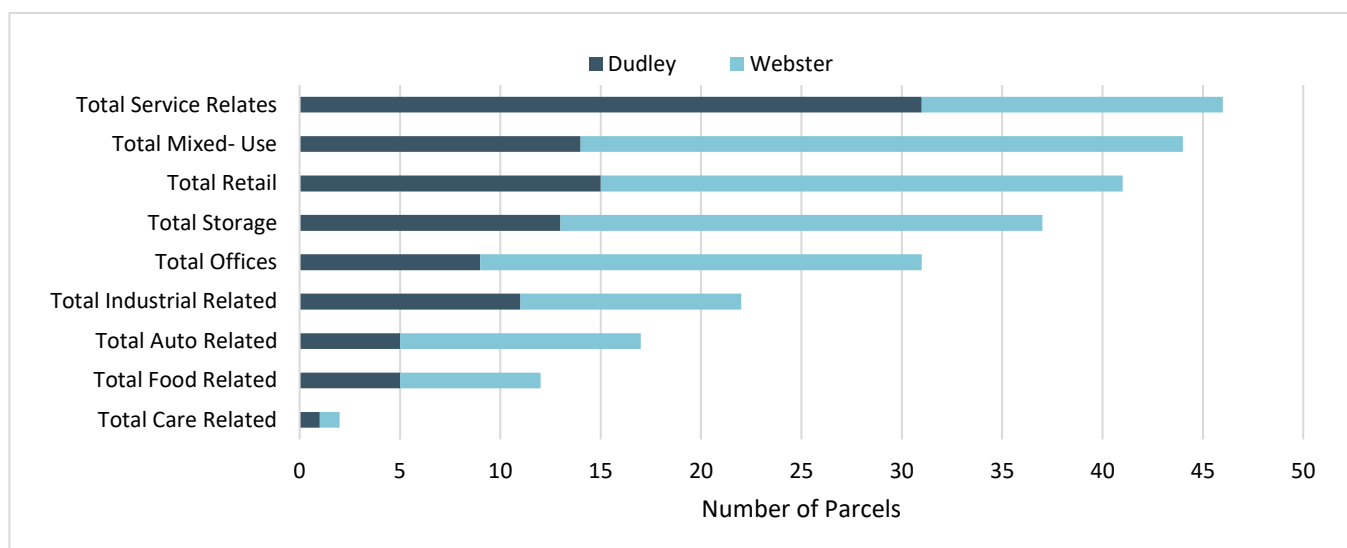
Categories of Parcel Style in Webster	Number of Parcels
Service Garage	9
Auto Sales Repair	2
Car Wash	1
Total Auto Related:	12
Nursing Home	1
Total Care Related:	1
Light Manuf.	5
Industrial	4
Rectory	1
Utility Building	1
Total Industrial Related:	11
Mixed-Apt	30
Total Mixed- Use:	30
Office Building	22
Total Offices:	22
Restaurant	7
Total Food Related:	7
Store	23
Convenient Store	3
Total Retail:	26
Club/Lodge/Hall	5
Funeral Home	4
Bank	3
Service Station	1
Pharmacy	1
Gymnasium	1
Total Service Related:	15
Storage	14
Warehouse	10
Total Storage:	24

* Note that for some of the parcels in Dudley and Webster the use-code was not 013 or 031, for mixed-use, but the *structure style* is described as mixed-use. One example of why you might see this pattern is that the primary use of a mixed-use parcel, based on the Massachusetts standard system, overrides the fact that it is a mixed-use style building.

⁶ MassGIS Data: Standardized Assessors' Parcels Attributes

Within the ½ mile buffer study area, based on reported *structure style* of commercial parcels, the most common economic use of parcels in Dudley is service related, this includes banks, gyms and job shops. In Webster, the most reported economic use was mixed-use. This trend is representative of the greater concentration of mixed-use, historic storefronts in Webster, where more stand-alone service-related businesses are on the Dudley side of the corridor.

FIGURE 6: COMMERCIAL MIX



Of the 4,442 parcels in the ½ mile study area, 3,387 are residential use code, making up 76.2% of the parcels in the buffer. Within the corridor study area, a slightly lower percentage, 45.10% of parcels are classified as residential. An additional 3.6% of parcels in the corridor are classified as mixed-use, with the primary use being residential. Among multi-family parcels, the average number of housing units per parcel was 2.1. The largest number of units on a single parcel was 24. As can be seen in table 8, most housing is concentrated in the buffer outside of the corridor itself. Denser 2- and 3-unit parcels, as well as parcels with multiple houses on one parcel, appear more often than other housing types within the corridor itself.

TABLE 8: RESIDENTIAL PARCELS BY USE-CODE

Residential Use	Number of Parcels in 1/2 Mile Buffer	Number of Parcels in Study Area	Percent of Parcels in the Study Area
Single Family	1,954	82	4.2%
Two-Family	542	43	7.9%
Three-Family	328	14	4.3%
Condominium	246	2	0.8%
Four to Eight Units	234	14	6.0%
Accessory Land with Improvement	40	4	10.0%
More than Eight Units	22	1	4.5%
Multiple Houses on one parcel	20	4	20.0%
Non-Transient Group Quarters	1	0	0.0%
TOTAL:	3,387	164	4.8%

ZONING ANALYSIS

4.1 ANALYZE MAIN STREET ZONING IN BOTH TOWNS

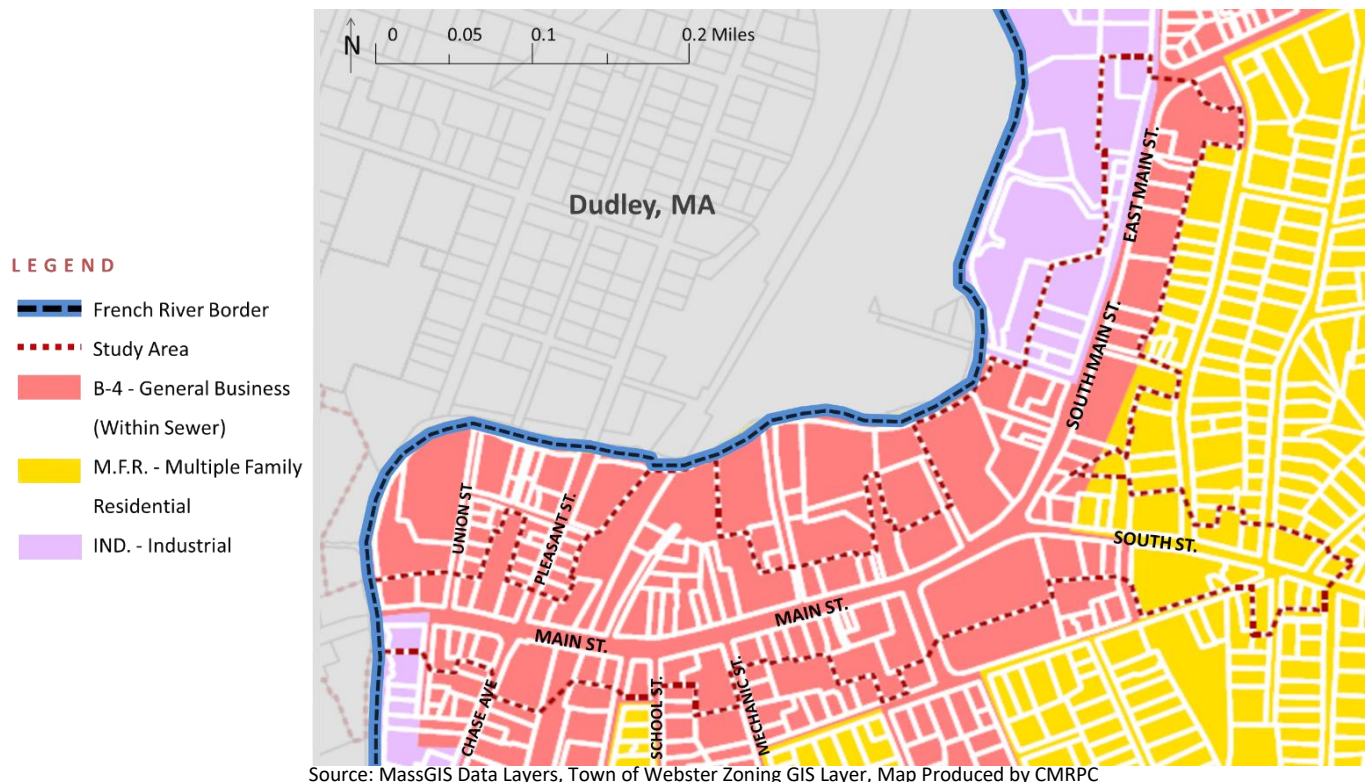
An important component in incentivizing economic growth and in creating a feeling of cohesion across the town border is zoning. Currently the two sides of the corridor differ in both land use and building form. Webster has more mixed-use, low set-back storefronts with mostly street and city parking. Dudley has more single-family parcels and more stand-alone-businesses with wider setbacks and adjacent customer parking. The Webster side of the corridor is also somewhat denser, although maintaining a small-town feel, and contains most of the historic storefronts that comprised the original downtown.

Creating the feeling that the historic town center in Webster extends into Dudley will help create a sense that the two areas are one cohesive place and draw foot, bike, and car traffic back and forth across the French River. Extending the more defined commercial area in Webster into Dudley will also create a direct connection point for students of Nichols Collage in Dudley.

Webster's zoning currently supports a more distinct walkable commercial district with surrounding residential areas. In Webster, the districts predominantly found in the study area are,

- B-4 - General Business (within Sewer),
- IND - Industrial.
- And the study area is surrounded by M.F.R – Multiple Family Residential zoning

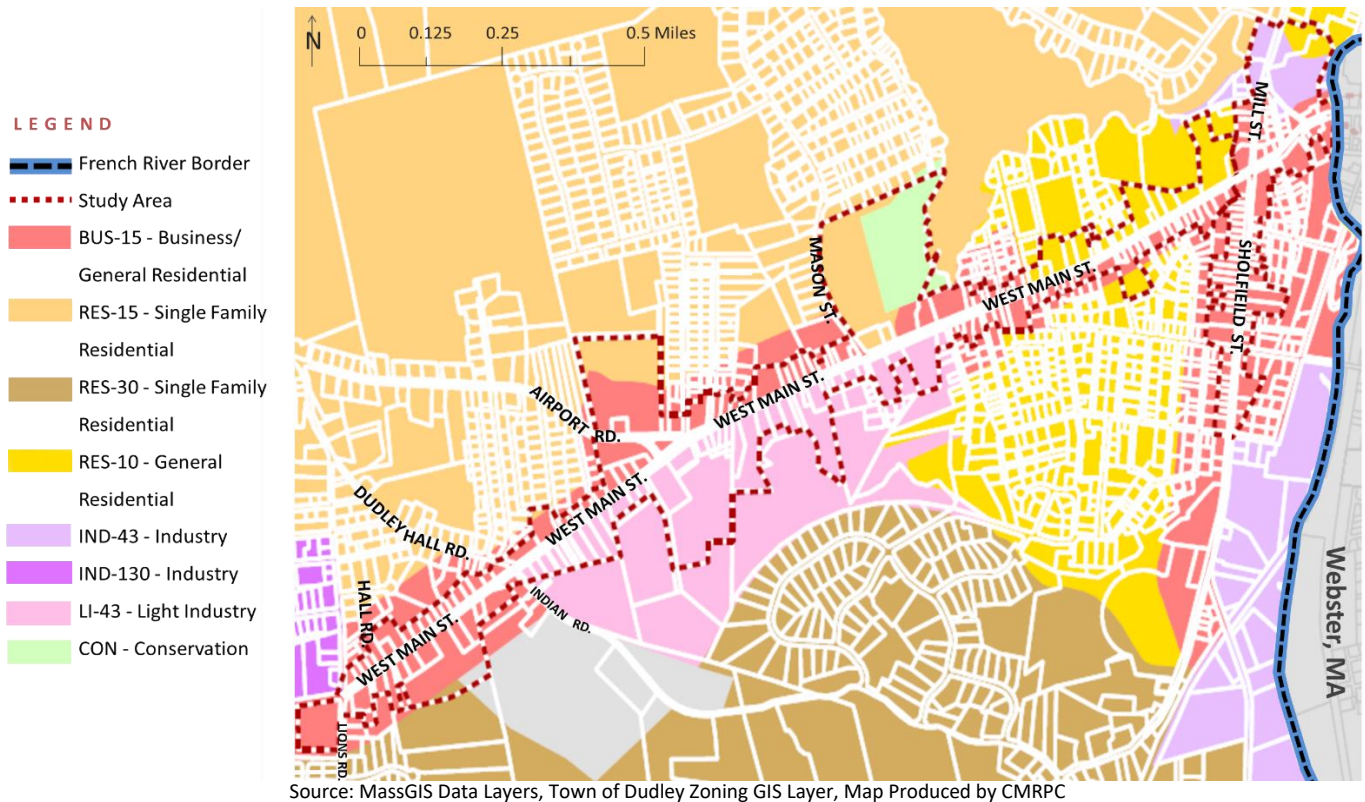
MAP 4: WEBSTER ZONING



In Dudley there are three districts predominantly found in the study area,

- RES-10 - General Residential,
- BUS-15 - Business/General, Residential
- IND-43 - Industry.
- Additionally, there are three Overlay Districts, Aquifer Protection Overlay, Mill Conversion Overlay, and the Business 15 Overlay.

MAP 5: DUDLEY ZONING



Overlay Districts in Dudley

- The Aquifer Protection Overlay prohibits various activities which would contribute to groundwater pollution.
- The Business 15 overlay was created in 2015 and brings the Business 15 zoning to West Main Street on the North side from Village Street to Pattison Avenue and on the South side from Progress Avenue to Indian Road for 500' parallel to both sides of West Main Street.
- The Mill Conversion Overlay covers the Former Steven's Linen/Toltec Property, the former Steven's Linen Bleachery property, and the former Ethan Allen property. The overlay is intended to encourage the preservation, reuse, and renovation of historic mill properties and encourage mixed-use development while preserving the character of nearby residential and commercial neighborhoods. The Mill Conversion Overlay allows a 25% reduction in parking spaces, upon approval by the Planning Board, if it can be demonstrated that two or more uses within a single development can share parking spaces. The Mill Conversion Overlay requires the production of a minimum of 10 percent of housing units be restricted to low- or moderate-income tenants.

Bringing zoning in Dudley more in line with Webster will help incentivize development that creates a feeling of continuation between the two towns. It is recommended that Dudley consider reducing front setbacks and eliminating side and rear setbacks to promote a building style more like existing historic storefronts in Webster that are set parallel to the street. It is also recommended that Dudley eliminate or greatly reduce minimum lot size for commercial properties, and eliminate maximum lot coverage, or at least substantially increase maximum lot coverage for commercial properties. This is of particular importance around West Main Street closest to Webster, to create a feeling of unity across the town border. Currently several Dudley properties in the study area have large setbacks of 30 to 60 feet, a zoning change will promote relatively denser, more walkable and bikeable future development, that visually invites customer traffic into Dudley from Webster.

Furthermore, select properties near the French River, such as 7 West Main Street, 12 West Main Street, 16 West Main Street, 17 West Main Street, and 21 West Main Street, have setbacks of under 20 feet. This kind of development could not be built under the current zoning bylaws. Allowing for shallower setbacks will not only bring zoning requirements further in line with the physical quality of the Webster side of the corridor but will also bring development incentives in line with existing structures in Dudley, built prior to the current zoning laws.

4.2 PARKING REGULATIONS REVIEW

IMAGE 5: PARKING ON MAIN IN WEBSTER



Source: CMRPC

Webster's parking requirements are similar to Dudley's but are more precise and specific to different types of uses. The following table compares Dudley and Webster parking regulations. Note that this table excludes some more specific parking regulations that Webster has in place for ease of comparison. **To accommodate future development, parking regulations in Dudley could be made more specific in line with Webster parking regulations, without a dramatic increase in parking minimums, which would allow more clarity and flexibility.**

Both districts require "adequate" off-street parking, though as the table illustrates, what qualifies as adequate can vary widely. **In general, communities should be cautious about over-prescribing parking**

minimums, especially in town or village centers. Such areas have limited land resources. Priority should be given to development types that maximize productive land uses. Parking minimums that are overly restrictive can bind the hands of potential developers and reduce productive land uses. In the case of the Main Street / West Main Street corridor, the difference in commercial parking minimums, is likely, contributing to the very different development outcomes on either side of the river.

TABLE 9: PARKING MINIMUMS BY DISTRICT

	Dudley	Webster*
One dwelling unit	2 per structure	2 per dwelling unit
Two dwelling units	2 per structure	2 per dwelling unit
Three dwelling units	1.5 per dwelling	2 per dwelling unit
Four or more dwelling units	1.5 per dwelling	1.5 per dwelling unit
Hotel, Motel	1 per sleeping room	1 per room plus 0.25 per patron for restaurants, lounges, and meeting rooms
Retail	4 per 1,000 sq ft	1 per 250 sq ft of floor area plus 1 per employee
Restaurant	0.3 per seat	0.25 per patron or 1 per 150 square feet whichever is greater
Bowling Alley	4 per alley	4 per alley, table, or court, 1 per machine or game plus 1 per employee
Industrial	0.6 per employee	0.66 per employee plus 1 for each company vehicle plus 25 spaces for visitors
Church	0.3 per seat	0.25 per seat with fixed seats or 0.25 per patron
College, University	0.5 per student	0.25 per student

*Webster's parking regulations in most cases allow for more parking than Dudley's.

4.3 AGRICULTURAL ZONING

In Dudley Agriculture / Farm is defined as, "The production, keeping or maintenance, for sale, lease or personal use, of plants and animals useful to man, including but not limited to: forages and sod crops; grains and seed crops; dairy animals and dairy products, poultry and poultry products; livestock, including beef cattle, sheep, swine, horses, ponies, mules, or goats, or any mutations or hybrids thereof, including the breeding and grazing of any or all of such animals; bees and apiary products; fur animals; trees and forest products; fruits of all kinds, including grapes, nuts and berries; vegetables; nursery, floral ornamental and greenhouse products; or land devoted to a soil conservation or forestry management program"

The primary restrictions on agriculture in Dudley, MA are on raising livestock on a parcel less than 5 acres. This is restricted in all Industrial and Light Industrial districts as well as the General Residential district. In all other districts, raising livestock on less than 5 acres of land requires a special permit. Stables or enclosures for animals must be set back 50 feet from any property line. It is unclear whether the livestock stable and

IMAGE 6: DUDLEY FARM

Source: Some Pictures submitted by users of Dudley Farms from the Town of Dudley's Gallery

enclosure set back rules apply for parcels greater than 5 acres in size. Greenhouses are not permitted in the General Residential district. Dudley became a right-to-farm community in 2016. This involved creating a by-law that encourages the pursuit of agriculture, promotes agriculture-based economic opportunities and protects farmlands within the Town of Dudley by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and local agencies.

TABLE 10: AGRICULTURAL USES BY DISTRICT

	RES-10	RES-15	RES-30	RES-43	BUS-15	IND-43	IND-130	LI-43	LI-87
Livestock Raising on Parcel Less Than 5 acres	NP	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	NP	NP	NP	NP
Other Farm	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Greenhouse	NP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Salesroom or Farm Stand on Parcel more than 5 acres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

P: A permitted use as a matter of right.

SP: A permissible use requiring a Special Use Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals

NP: A prohibited use

* Provided stables or enclosures for animals are set back greater than 50 feet from any lot lines.

4.4 ALIGNMENT WITH SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

Smart growth is an approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and community engagement. Smart Growth principles ensure that communities can build enough, quality housing to meet growth demands while still maintaining a livable, walkable, and fiscally sustainable development pattern. This section looks at the zoning along the Main Street Corridor in Webster and Dudley in terms of three key Smart Growth principles.

The Smart Growth Principles:



MIX LAND USES



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF COMPACT DESIGN



CREATE A RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES



CREATE WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS



FOSTER DISTINCTIVE, ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITIES WITH A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE



PRESERVE OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, NATURAL BEAUTY, AND CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS



DIRECT DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS EXISTING COMMUNITIES



PROVIDE A VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION CHOICES



MAKE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS PREDICTABLE, FAIR, AND COST EFFECTIVE

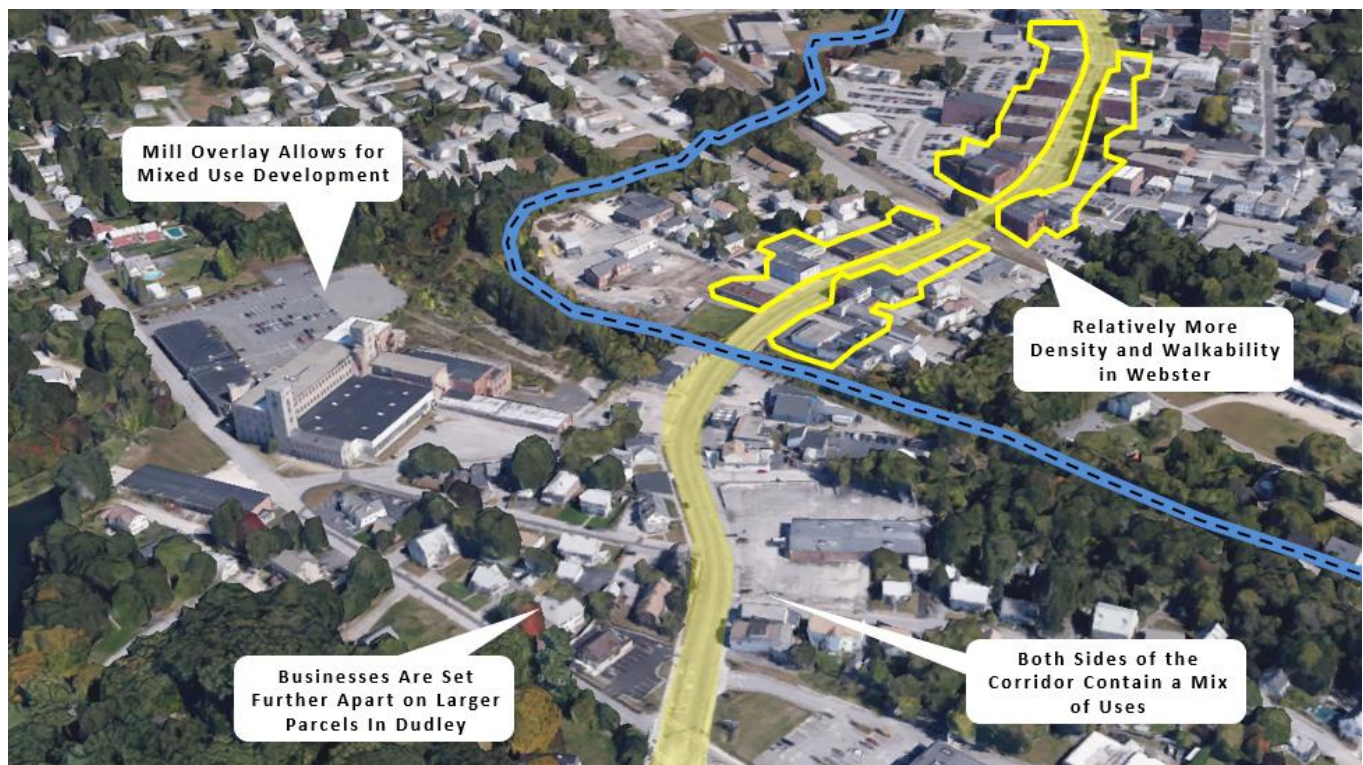


ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

MIX LAND USES

Zoning along Main Street in Webster allows for multi-family housing within the General Business District (B-4, General Business with Sewer). The B-4 District allows all the uses allowed in the Multi-Family Residential District (MFR), including the same minimum lot size. However, it does not mention the higher setback requirements or the public hearing for buildings with more than six apartments included in MFR district. This allows for a mix of uses near each other within the same district, even though the bylaws do not expressly address the question of two or more uses existing on the same lot or within the same structure, either in the affirmative or the negative. Further, a footnote to Article IV, §650-12 (footnote C) allows for “additional use[s]...substantially similar to one or more of the uses specifically authorized,” to be considered by the Zoning Board of Appeals. This should leave sufficient flexibility for mixed uses to be considered in appropriate areas. However, **it is still recommended for the bylaw to be amended to specifically allow mixed use in at least some circumstances. Such an amendment would add clarity and help encourage development.**

FIGURE 7: WEST MAIN STREET CLOSEST TO THE COMMUNITIES SHARED BORDER



Source: Google Earth Imagery, Figure Produced by CMRPC

The study area in Dudley covers a wider range of zoning regulations since the commercial corridor along West Main Street is far less dense than Main Street in Webster. Of particular interest to this study is the section of West Main Street that intersects with Schofield Avenue (Massachusetts Route 12). This is the section of West Main Street that is closest to the shared border between the communities. In addition, the parcels around this intersection have some of the most diverse mix of uses in the town. The area hosts a historic mill that the Town has been actively seeking to redevelop, a range of low to mid-density commercial parcels and some of the only multi-family housing in the community. This mix presents a great opportunity for encouraging the kind of development that could knit the border between the two towns into a cohesive, walkable commercial destination.

This being stated, the zoning in Dudley is not as favorable to mixed developments as it could be. There are three principal zoning regulations governing parcels in this district; Business General (BUS-15), which covers most parcels between the Webster-Dudley border and Route 12; General Residential (RES-10), running roughly from Route 12 to Pattison Avenue along the north side of West Main Street; and the Mill Conversion Overlay District, covering the Stevens Mill parcels. Within the BUS-15 district, most types of commercial development are allowable by right or with site-plan review authority, including apartment buildings. However, mixed uses are not expressly addressed within the BUS-15 district. Further, several provisions could have the effect of preventing mixed use developments from occurring. For example, while apartments are allowed within the BUS-15 district by right, any additional unit above one would require an additional 6,000 square feet of land area per unit. Thus, a proposed commercial and residential mixed-use development 15,000 square foot lot (the minimum in the district) would see its minimum lot area balloon by 18,000 square feet by adding only four units. Such regulations make walkable, town center scale development all but impossible.

The RES-10 district is even more restrictive. This district essentially bars the most common business uses entirely. This restricts all potential development to the south side of West Main Street, west of Route 12. Finally, the Mill Conversion Overlay District does allow a mix of uses, but it is limited to a handful of isolated sites. Redevelopment of the Stevens Mill could potentially act as a catalyst for more town center scale development along that section of West Main Street, but the provisions of the Mill Conversion Overlay will not be sufficient. Changes to the BUS-15 will be needed, at the minimum to encourage the kind of development that would make the border between the two communities a cohesive, shared town center.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF COMPACT DESIGN

Another key Smart Growth approach is to encourage compact design. While the term is often conflated with “density”, developments that are compact do not necessarily need to adopt a denser or more urban feel. Compact design simply seeks to reduce the distances between structures. This encourages walking and reduces the total amount of infrastructure a town needs to maintain. This can be accomplished in variety of ways that may or may not include reducing minimum lot sizes. For example, a community could encourage compact design by reducing minimum frontages and allowing for building to occur closer to the front lot line. Even if minimum lot sizes were maintained, such an approach would still encourage a more compact, walkable streetscape.

Current zoning in Webster’s portion of the study area allows for relatively compact developments. New construction within the Business district allows for 10-foot setbacks and heights of up to four stories. It should be noted however, that many existing buildings along Main Street have no setbacks. Thus, imposing the ten-foot setback requirement could potentially disrupt the streetscape or discourage major redevelopment of existing buildings. A best practice for historic town centers is to set your minimum standards such that any of your existing historic structures could be rebuilt in its current form should it need to be.

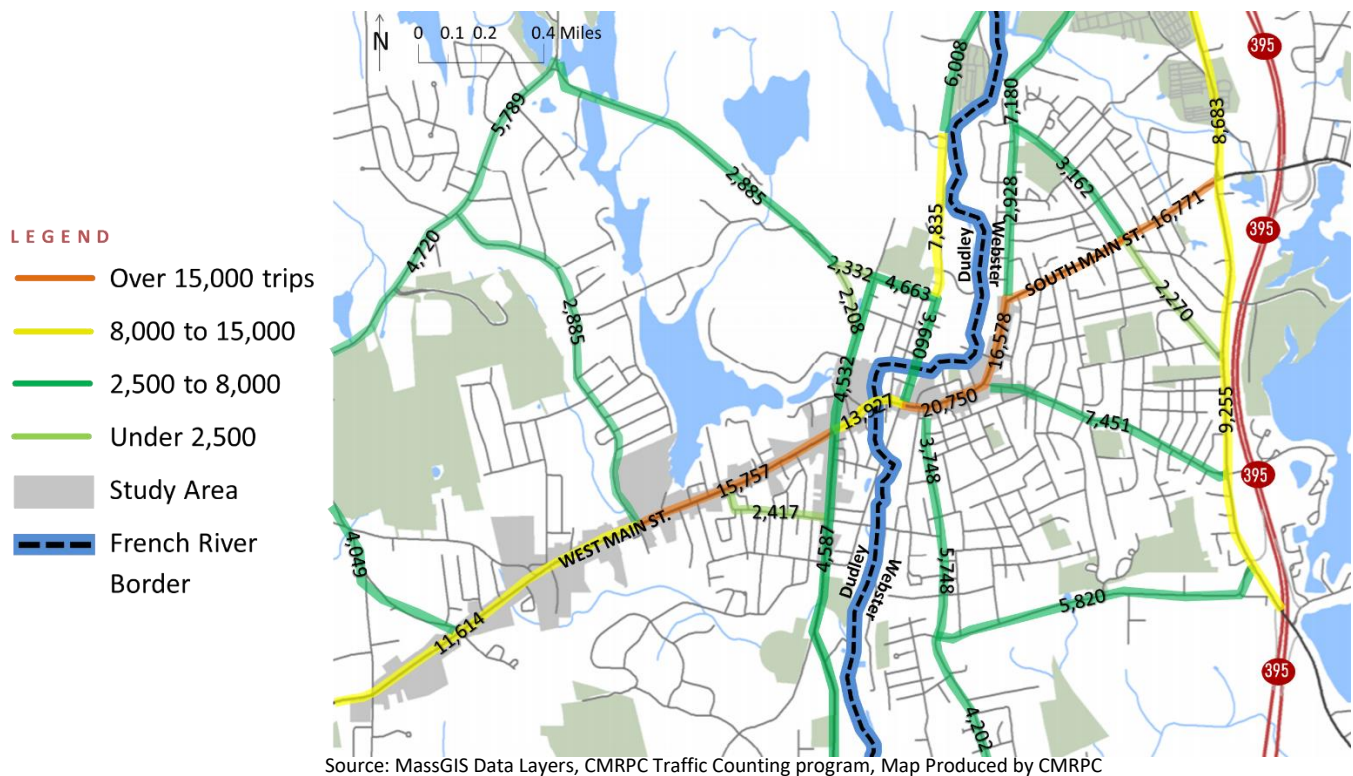
Dudley’s zoning in general is not compact. Residential 10 requires setbacks of 20 feet in the front, 10 feet on the sides, and 15 feet in the rear. The maximum lot coverage is 50 percent, and the maximum height is 45 feet, or 3 to 4 stories. Business 15, which allows for commercial or residential development, requires 20-foot front setbacks, 10-foot side setbacks, and 35-foot rear setbacks. Maximum lot coverage is extremely low for mixed use development, at 20 percent, and the maximum height is 40 feet, or 3 to 4 stories. The Mill Conversion District allows for parking minimum reductions in certain cases

TRANSPORTATION

5.1 CORRIDOR TRAFFIC COUNTS

Traffic counts can help potential and current businesses understand the customer base they have access to by investing in downtown Webster-Dudley. CMRPC's traffic counts were taken between 2014 and 2019, each number represents the number of vehicles to drive over the road in one 24-hour period. The corridor in Webster saw 20,750 vehicles in a 24-hour period and in Dudley 15,575 vehicles in a 24-hour period. This traffic provides ample visibility and potential customers within the corridor.

MAP 6: TRAFFIC COUNTS



5.2 TRAILS AND BIKE PATHS

Trails are an important way to bring recreationalists and pedestrians into downtown commercial areas. Both Webster and Dudley have engaged in successful trails programs in the past years, demonstrating a strong local commitment and interest in trails.

Passionate residents in Webster worked for many years to make the French River Greenway a reality. This trail traverses both urban and natural protected habitat. It is accessible from a river-side park directly behind businesses on Main Street where recent improvements have been made, as can be seen in figure 7.

IMAGE 7: FRENCH RIVER GREENWAY ENTRANCE



Source: CMRPC

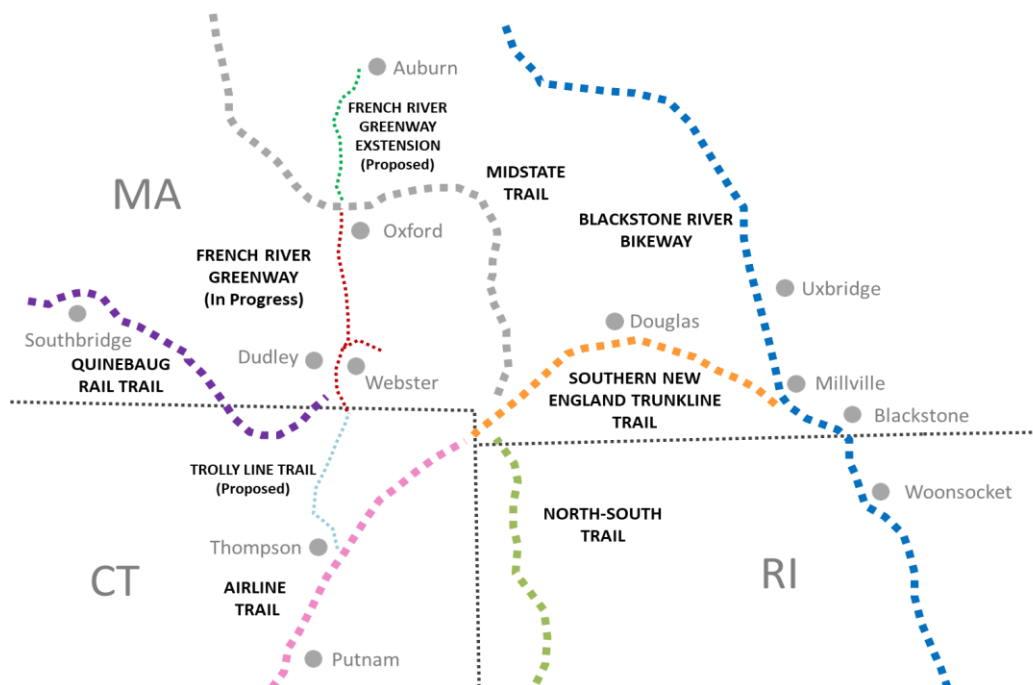
FIGURE 8: THE FRENCH RIVER GREENWAY



Source: The Town of Webster <https://www.webster-ma.gov/162/Current-Redevelopment-Projects>

Starting from the Mill Road parking lot, the Dudley Quinebaug River Bikeway (RailTrail) is a stone-dust trail that is composed of two segments, a larger segment to the west and shorter segment to the east. In particular, the eastern section of the Quinebaug River Bikeway (Dudley-Chaseville section) has potential to connect to the French River Greenway in Webster and a network of other regional trails. Both the Quinebaug River Valley Rail Trail and the French River Greenway are part of the larger Midstate Trail plan which intends to connect trails in the communities of Dudley, Oxford and Webster to a larger network that covers three states, as can be seen in figure 9.⁷

FIGURE 9: THE FRENCH RIVER GREENWAY AND QUINEBAUG RIVER VALLEY RAIL TRAIL IN CONTEXT

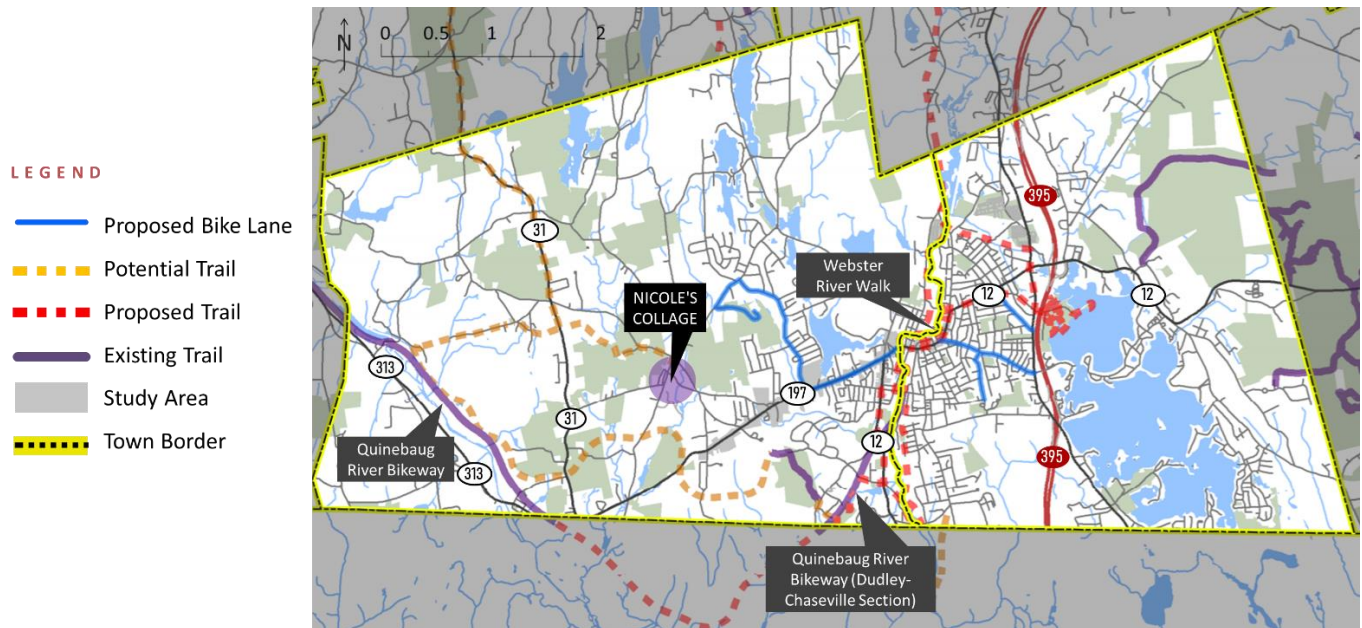


Source: French River Greenway Prospectus at the frenchrivergreenway.homestead.com

⁷ French River Greenway Prospectus

Map 7 shows how the existing and proposed bike trails can connect to a broader network of bike lanes on roadways to connect places of interest within both communities into the broader network. This map also highlights possible additional pedestrian connections that could be highlighted or improved to create a more appealing link to students at Nichols College. Physically, the study area is located only about a ½ mile from Nichols College. However, there is a need to draw students further into downtown. The black arrows represent key pedestrian connections that tie Nichols College to the downtown and the network or proposed bike paths and attractions.

MAP 7: BIKE LANES AND NICHOLS COLLEGE



Source: MassGIS Data Layers, Community Input to Map Proposed Bike Lanes, Map Produced by CMRPC

5.3 PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE



Source: MassDOT CS Portal

Both towns also have an opportunity to improve pedestrian bike and accessibility related infrastructure through the Massachusetts Complete Streets Program. A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes - walking, biking, transit, and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities. Through the complete streets program, towns have the opportunity to do a full inventory of the condition of their roads, pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Towns then enter a planning process to address safety, accessibility, and infrastructural needs based on the Complete Streets framework of shared spaces. Through this program towns can breathe new life into the built environment in downtowns and encourage a diverse range of modes of engagement with local businesses.

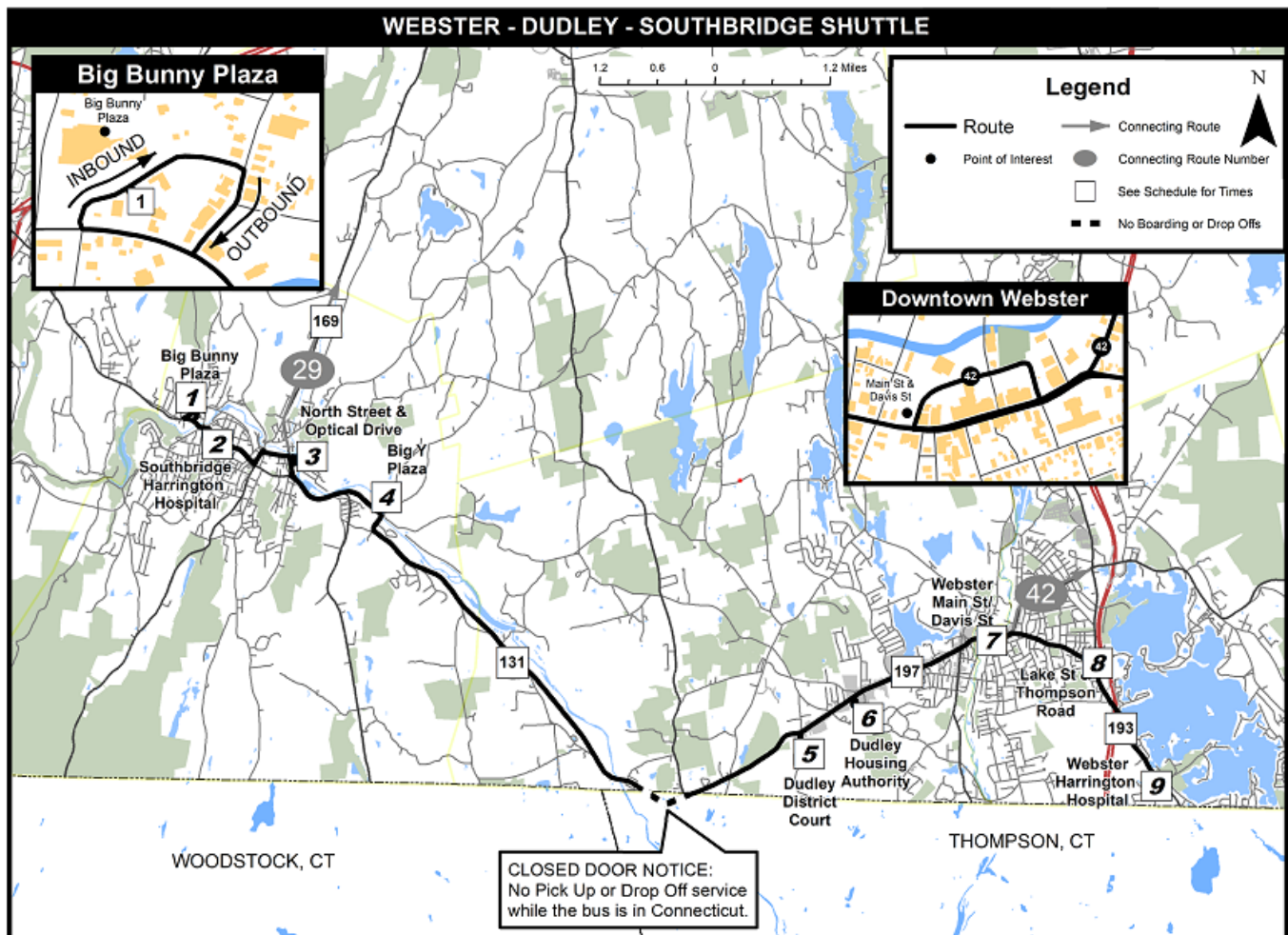
The town of Webster has completed the complete streets process and is eligible to begin applying for project funding. Dudley is entering into the complete streets process currently and will be able to begin applying for project funding in the coming years.⁸ Both towns can act strategically in how they plan and choose projects based on the recommendations in this corridor study.

⁸ [MassDOT Complete Streets Status Map](#)

5.4 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

A new WRTA shuttle service will now connect Southbridge, Dudley and Webster, creating options for transportation directly into the corridor. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) put this shuttle into effect Monday, August 3, 2020. WRTA Administrator Dennis Lipka said, “We are excited to have the opportunity to expand service to multiple businesses and destinations. It is important to give our riders access to as many destinations as possible. This new service will give riders access to a variety of potential job opportunities, educational opportunities, hospitals, and other amenities they might not normally be able to visit regularly. Riders will also have a direct connection to Worcester and the surrounding communities via WRTA Routes 29 and 42.”⁹

MAP 8: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Data provided by the WRTA, CMRPC, massDOT and EOE/MassGIS. Produced by the Central

⁹ Worcester Regional Transit Authority New Shuttle Service Connecting Southbridge, Dudley and Webster

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES MATRIX

Connected Main Street	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
Create an Inventory of existing businesses, services and non-profits located in the study area, particularly given the effects of COVID-19. Both towns can use LRRP planning grants to work towards this goal.		
Maintain an active database of contact information for property owners in the study area. Communication is key for cohesive development.		
Uniform zoning by-laws for both communities based on the recommendations made in the zoning analysis.		
Join Main Street America Program and implement in both communities. The MSA approach is a proven winner could help catapult the corridor.		
Create events that showcase both Webster and Dudley and what the communities have to offer.		
Create a sign and façade program allowing property owners to make updates to their building and business owners to update their signage.		
Market the corridor collectively locally, regionally, and statewide. Use social media, newspaper, and word of mouth. Let everyone know what your goals are and that you have the energy to make them happen.		
Walkability and Trails	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
Market completed trails to encourage tourism and trails in the making to show the big picture trail system once funded and built out.		
Create trail groups to help move these projects forward. Trails are fun outdoor projects and activities that benefit every age group.		
Solicit funding to finish Quinebaug trails. Meet with legislators, trail organizations and state agencies to put the Quinebaug trail on the map! Use crowd source funding options and social media to tell Ken's story.		
Work with the Trail network in CT to connect Quinebaug trail to the CT and RI trail systems. Show the benefit of connecting into a tri state system.		
Show connection to French River Trail in Webster to the Quinebaug trail in Dudley. This would be a wonderful follow up project to this Corridor study.		

Business Investment	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
Continue working closely with the Webster Dudley Business Alliance and the Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce to network and grow the connection of business owners in and around the study area		
Create a small business resource page that directs entrepreneurs to set up their business along the corridor		
Solicit new businesses or industries to the area that align with the majors offered at Nichols College. Thus, allowing a stronger connection between the municipalities and the College as well as sustained business growth		
Focus on the redevelopment of Stevens Mill into a mixed-use space that can spur economic growth that creates a downtown feel.		
Institutional Collaboration	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
When the Main Street America group is formed, create a subcommittee that is strictly made up of Nichols Staff/Students		
Work on building a relationship between the Economic Development Committee and the Leadership at the College. As key stakeholders, communication in this relationship could be mutually beneficial.		
Solicit new businesses or industries to the area that align with the majors offered at Nichols College. Thus, allowing a stronger connection between the municipalities and the College as well as sustained business growth		
Continue discussion between the anchor institution (Nichols College) and the Agricultural Commission to build the Agrieconomy in Dudley.		
Agricultural Investment	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
Work with the Agricultural Commission to complete an agricultural inventory of the working farms in Dudley and what crops they produce.		
Once the agricultural inventory is completed, map the locations of farm, and see how they can be tied to tourism or business development opportunities		
Work with the agricultural commission to help them grow. The Ag Comm was a dream child of the Dudley EDC and being a ally to the group would be a benefit to both communities		
Research the Agritourism and Agrirecreation industries and how each community could most benefit.		

Zoning	Who's Got this in Dudley?	Who's Got this in Webster?
<p>Amend base zoning or consider a Main Street Overlay District in Dudley to incentivize development types that creates a feeling of continuity between the two towns. It is recommended that Dudley consider reducing front setbacks and eliminating side and rear setbacks to promote a building style more like existing historic storefronts in Webster. It is also recommended that Dudley eliminate or greatly reduce minimum lot size for commercial properties, and eliminate maximum lot coverage, or at least substantially increase maximum lot coverage for commercial properties.</p>		
<p>To accommodate future development, parking regulations in Dudley could be made more specific, in line with Webster parking regulations, without a dramatic increase in parking minimums, which would allow more clarity and flexibility. In general, communities should be cautious about over-prescribing parking minimums, especially in town or village centers. Such areas have limited land resources. Priority should be given to development types that maximize productive land uses. Parking minimums that are overly restrictive can bind the hands of potential developers and reduce productive land uses. In the case of the Main Street / West Main Street corridor, the difference in commercial parking minimums, is likely, contributing to the very different development outcomes on either side of the river.</p>		
<p>In Webster's General Business District although Mixed-use is not expressly limited in, it is still recommended for the bylaw to be amended to specifically allow mixed use in at least some circumstances. Such an amendment would add clarity and help encourage development.</p>		