

Town of Dudley



Open Space, Conserved Land, and Protected Land

April 2022

Introduction

- The purpose of this report is to summarize the amount of open space, conserved land, and protected land in the Town of Dudley.
- This report details the various land designations, including Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B; land trusts; Quinebaug River Rail Trail; playgrounds and athletic fields; publicly accessible bodies of water; conservation restriction land; and land owned by Mass Audubon.
- 7 other municipalities included in this report.

Municipalities Included in This Report

Town	Total Population	Total Area (in acres)	Reason for Inclusion
Athol	11,753	21,376	Population
Bolton	5,665	12,800	Area
Charlton	13,697	28,032	Population
Dudley	11,802	14,144	N/A
Spencer	11,688	21,792	Population
Sutton	8,963	21,722	No specific reason
Upton	8,012	13,910	Area
Worcester	185,143	24,602	No specific reason

Land Trusts

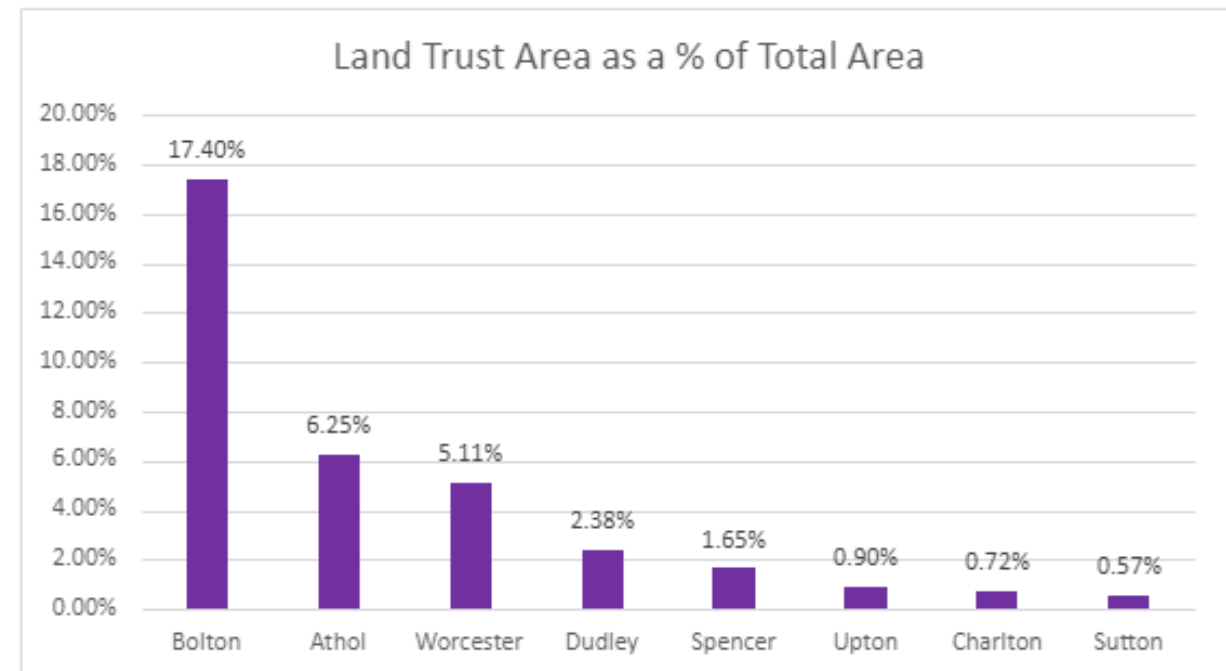
- Land trusts are organizations that acquire land with the goal of conserving and protecting the land. While each land trust has a different mission statement, the goals generally follow a similar theme.
- For example, the mission of the Dudley Conservation Land Trust is “to provide for and promote the conservation, acquisition and protection of land and open space for education, wildlife habitat, and the preservation of the rural, natural and scenic character of Dudley and surrounding communities for current and future generations.”



Land Trusts

- Dudley has **337.16 acres** of land trust land, equating to **2.38%** of the Town's total area.

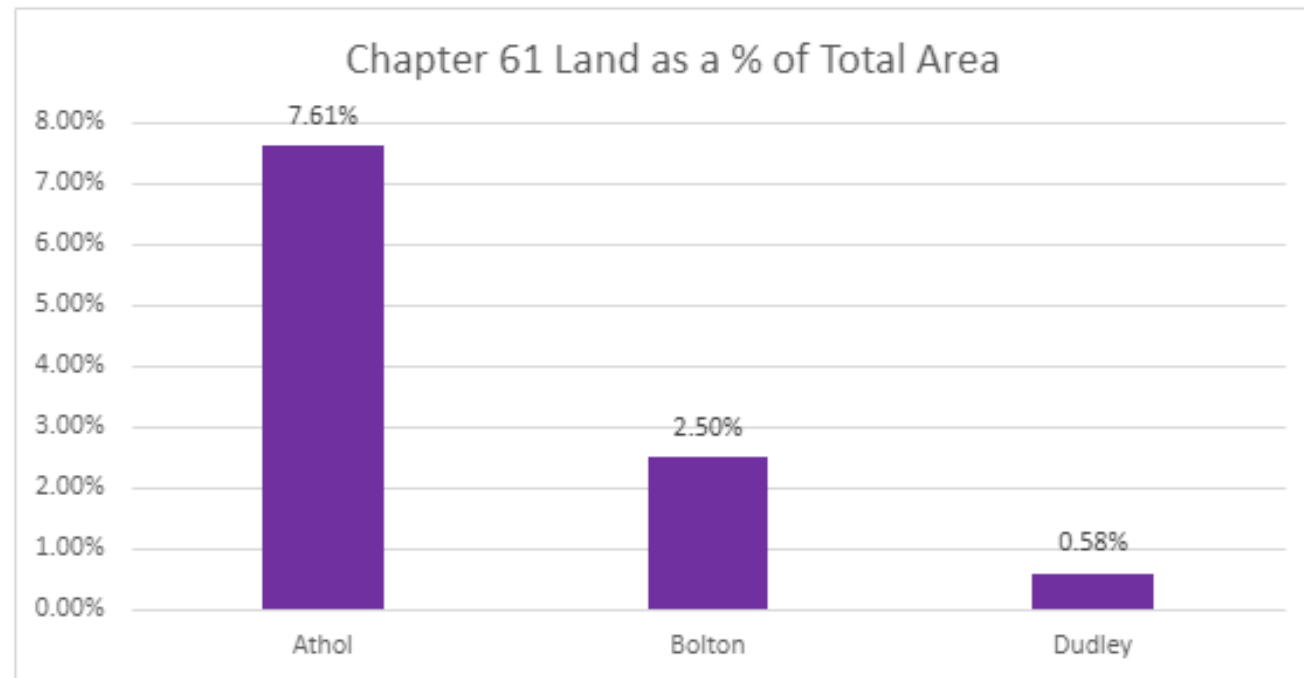
Town	Land Trust	Land Trust Area (in acres)	Land Trust as a % of Total Area
Athol	Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust	1,336	6.25%
Bolton	Bolton Conservation Land Trust	2,227	17.4%
Charlton	Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust	201.04	0.72%
Dudley	Dudley Conservation Land Trust; Opacum Land Trust	301.96 35.2	2.38%
Spencer	Greater Worcester Land Trust; Common Ground Land Trust	325 35	1.65%
Sutton	Metacomet Land Trust	123.4	0.57%
Upton	Metacomet Land Trust	124.7	0.9%
Worcester	Greater Worcester Land Trust	1,256	5.11%



Chapter 61 - Forestry

- Chapter 61 is land designated for forestry.
- MassWoods defines Chapter 61 land as applying “to land growing forest products, including wood, timber, Christmas trees, and other products produced by forest vegetation.
- Landowners receive a property tax reduction in exchange for a commitment to keep their land undeveloped and to manage it for forest products.
- Ch. 61 is a good fit for landowners interested in actively managing their forestland.”

Chapter 61 - Forestry

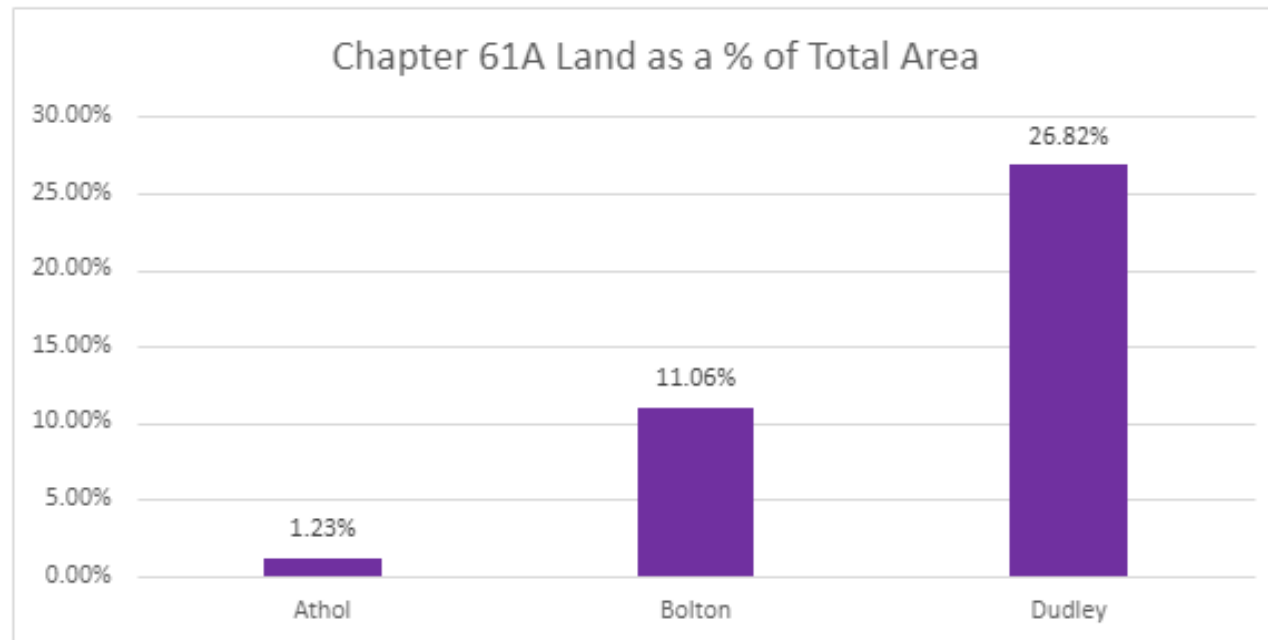


- Dudley has **81.6 acres** of Chapter 61 Land, equating to **0.58%** of the Town's total area.

Chapter 61A - Agriculture

- Chapter 61A is land designated for agricultural land use.
- MassWoods defines Chapter 61A land as land meant for “growing agricultural or horticultural products, including fruits, vegetables, ornamental shrubs, timber, animals, and maple syrup.
- Ch. 61A is a good fit for landowners engaged in agriculture on their land.”

Chapter 61A - Agriculture

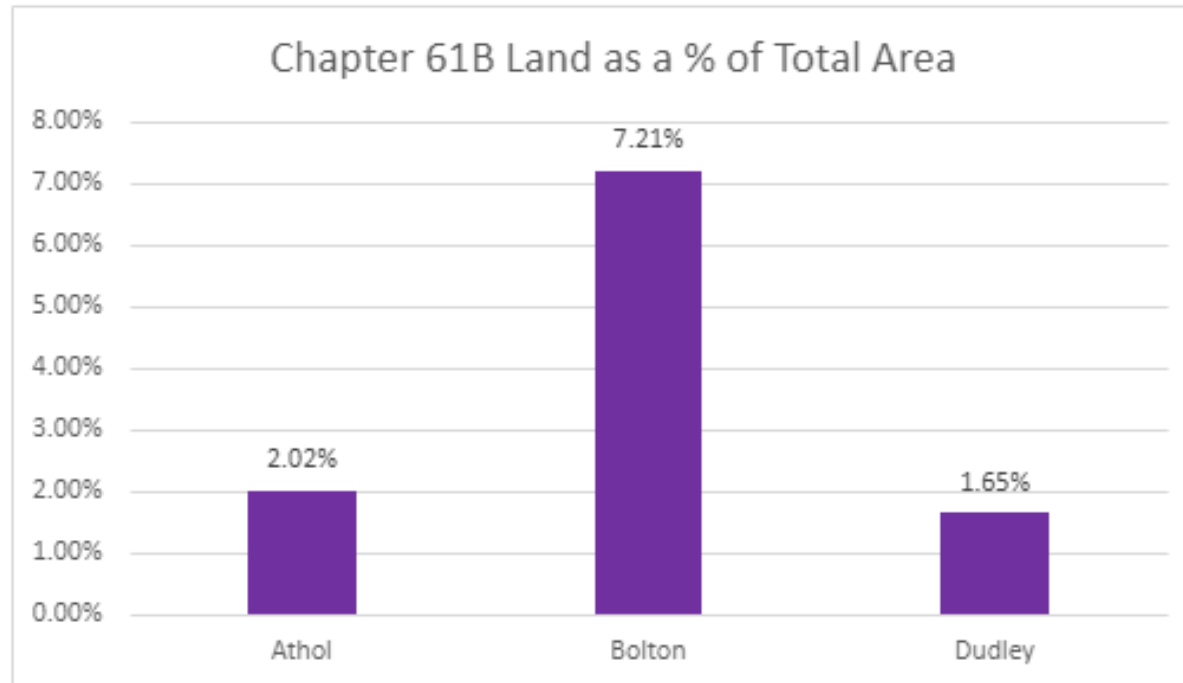


- Dudley has **3,793.71 acres** of Chapter 61A land, equating to **26.82%** of the Town's total area.

Chapter 61B – Open Space and Recreation

- Chapter 61B is land designated for open space and recreation land.
- MassWoods defines Chapter 61B land as land that is meant for “open space and/or recreation.
- Because there is no requirement for land enrolled in Ch. 61B to be managed or have a 10-year forest management plan, the Ch. 61B program is a good fit for landowners who take a passive approach to their land."

Chapter 61B - Open Space and Recreation



- Dudley has **233.91 acres** of Chapter 61B land, equating to **1.65%** of the Town's total area.

Chapters 61, 61A, 61B Property Tax Breaks

- Property tax breaks are one of the benefits of owning land under the Chapter 61 program.
- While Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B have different requirements for minimum acreage, types of eligible land, land management requirements, and withdrawal penalties, all three programs offer landowners the potential for property tax savings.
- The next two slides contain information from the tax calculators provided by MassWoods.

Chapter 61/61A Tax Calculator

Number of Acres	Per Acre Valuation	Current Use Valuation	Dudley's Per Thousand Tax Rate	Est. Current Use Tax
100	\$78.00 (Low)	\$7,800	\$11.70	\$91.26
100	\$119.00 (Average)	\$11,900	\$11.70	\$139.23
100	\$118.00 (High)	\$11,800	\$11.70	\$138.06

- The taxes calculated are meant to serve as an estimate. Chapter 61/61A land taxes are calculated using this formula:
 - Number of enrolled acres x Per acre valuation* = Chapter 61/61A valuation
 - Chapter 61/61A valuation ÷ 1,000 = Per thousand Chapter 61/61A valuation
 - Per thousand Chapter 61/61A valuation x Dudley's per thousand commercial tax rate = Estimated tax bill under Chapter 61/61A
- *"The per-acre valuation is based on the land's location (east or west of the Connecticut River) and productivity level (as determined by use category and USDA soil rating). The valuation is adjusted annually."

Chapter 61B Tax Calculator

Assessed Value	Chapter 61B Assessment	Dudley's Commercial Tax Rate	Taxes Under the Chapter 61B Program
\$30,000	\$7,500	\$11.70	\$87.75

- The taxes calculated are meant to serve as an estimate. Chapter 61B land taxes are calculated using this formula:
 - Assessment of land enrolled in Chapter 61B x 0.25 = Chapter 61B valuation
 - Chapter 61B valuation ÷ 1,000 = Per thousand Chapter 61B valuation
 - Per thousand Chapter 61B valuation x Dudley's per thousand commercial tax rate = Estimated tax bill under Chapter 61B

Quinebaug River Rail Trail

- The Rail Trail is **4.19 miles** long and covers approximately **37.38 acres**, or **0.26%** of Dudley's total land.
 - The acreage was estimated using GIS Mapping.
- The Chaseville/New Boston Road section is 1.50 miles long and spans the Dudley/Connecticut State Line to Hill Street, Webster.
- The West Side section of the Rail Trail spans 2.69 miles and includes Mill Road to Dudley/Connecticut State Line, 0.33 miles; Mill Road to West Dudley Road, 1.93 miles; and West Dudley Road to the Dudley/Southbridge Town Line, 0.43 miles.
- A kayak and canoe access point is located off of West Dudley Road.

Playgrounds and Athletic Fields

- Twelve parcels of land fit this category, including the athletic fields at the Dudley schools. GIS Mapping was used to estimate the acreage for some of these parcels. In total, there are **28.65 acres** designated as Playgrounds & Athletic Fields in Dudley, comprising **0.20%** of the total land area.
- The abbreviation “HS/MS” is used to indicate a field located on the Shepherd Hill Regional High School/Dudley Middle School campus.

Playgrounds & Athletic Fields	Total Area (in Acres)
Crawford Field	4.08
Dudley Municipal Complex Playground	0.20
Dudley Youth Soccer Field	8.83
Future Library Rock Garden	0.10
HS/MS Baseball Field + Open Field	4.55
HS/MS Courts - Tennis + Basketball	1.25
HS/MS Field	2.83
HS/MS Softball Field	1.85
HS/MS Track & Field	3.54
Mason Road School Playground	0.20
Pine Street Park	0.40
Town Beach	0.82
Totals:	28.65 acres; 0.20% of total area

Publicly Accessible Bodies of Water

- The third category of open space is Publicly Accessible Bodies of Water. While there are many bodies of water in town, not all allow public access. For kayaking and canoeing, there are three bodies of water that allow public access:
 - Merino Pond: The Dudley Beach is located behind Mason Road School and has a kayak and canoe launch.
 - Mill Pond: A kayak and canoe access point is located off of West Dudley Road.
 - Peter Pond: A kayak and canoe access point is located off of Tomahawk Drive.
- For fishing, there are approximately ten bodies of water in Dudley that are publicly accessible, including Merino Pond, Baker Pond, and Low Pond.

Conservation Restrictions

- This land is owned by the Town of Dudley and managed by the Dudley Conservation Commission.
- “Intended to remain as is, in a predominantly natural scenic and open condition for the protection of the natural habitat, watershed resources and environmental system.”
- In total, there are **125.56 acres** of Conservation Restriction land, comprising **0.89%** of Dudley’s total area.

Conservation Restriction Land	Total Area (in acres)
Ardlock Acres Conservation Area	26.5
Baker Pond Conservation Area	29.71
Hayden Pond Road Conservation Area	8.68
Perryville Estates Conservation Area	5.1
Peter Amorello, Sr. Memorial Conservation Area	17.05
Pierpont Road Conservation Area	3.52
Shepherd Hill Estates Conservation Area	23.5
Tobin Farm Estates Conservation Area	11.5
Totals:	125.56 acres; 0.89% of total area

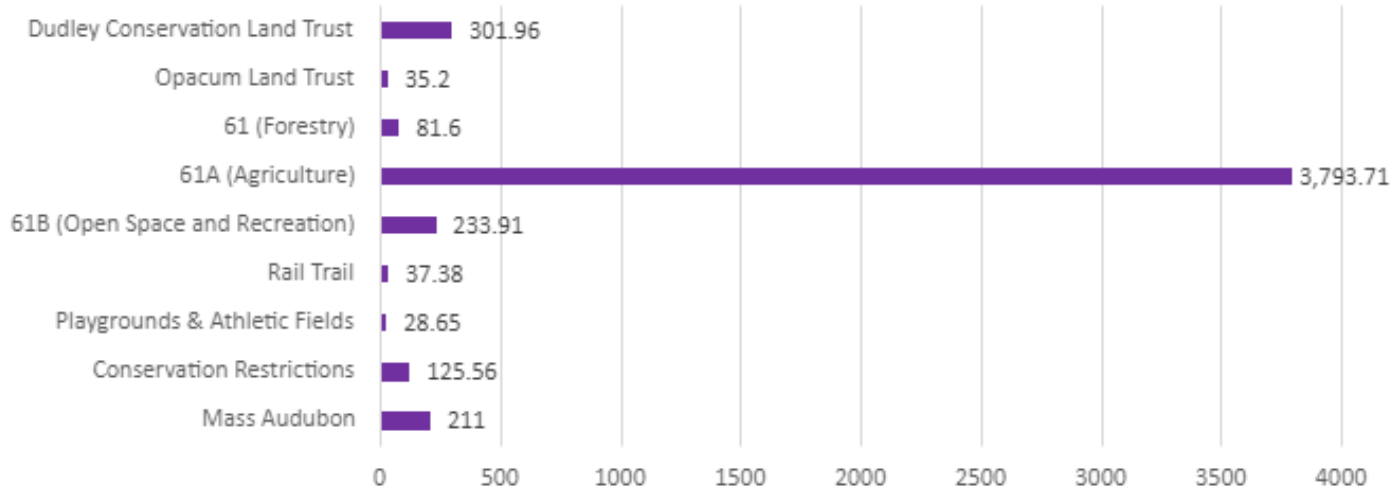
Mass Audubon Land



- The fifth category of open space is land owned by Mass Audubon. Mass Audubon “is the largest nature-based conservation organization in New England.”
- Their mission “is to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife.”
- The organization owns and conserves **211 acres** of land in Dudley, known as the Pierpont Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary.
- This land makes up **1.49%** of Dudley’s total area.

Summary of the Town of Dudley's Land

Dudley's Open Space, Conserved Land, and Protected Land



Type of Land	Total Area (in acres)	Percent of Dudley's Land
Chapter 61 (Forestry)	81.60	0.58%
Chapter 61A (Agriculture)	3,793.71	26.82%
Chapter 61B (Open Space & Recreation)	233.91	1.65%
Dudley Conservation Land Trust	301.96	2.13%
Opacum Land Trust	35.2	0.25%
Rail Trail	37.38	0.26%
Playgrounds and Athletic Fields	28.65	0.20%
Conservation Restrictions	125.56	0.89%
Mass Audubon	211	1.49%
Totals:	4,848.97 acres	34.28%

Conclusion

- After taking into consideration the comparisons to other towns, as well as analyzing the various categories of open space that Dudley has, it is clear that Dudley is considered to have a large amount of open space and protected land.
- Because Dudley is known for its “rural charm,” concerns have been raised that economic development could detract from this characteristic. With more than one-third of Dudley’s land designated as open space or protected lands, these claims are unfounded and fail to recognize the reality of Dudley’s land inventories.
- Criticizing economic development on the basis of “detracting from the rural charm of the town” hampers progress and negatively impacts the Town of Dudley. Economic development brings revenue into the Town and aids in funding the maintenance of some of the Town’s open space inventories.
- As Dudley moves forward with economic development projects, these inventories of open space, conserved land, and protected land will still support the claim that Dudley is a rural town.
- A second edition of this report is forthcoming; Chapter 61 data from the other 5 towns has been requested.