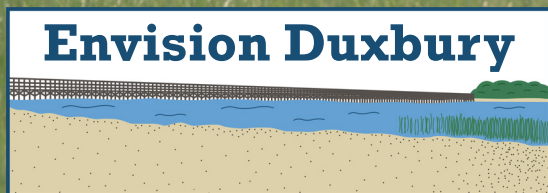


Town of Duxbury Master Plan Executive Summary

December 2019



Executive Summary

What is Envision Duxbury?

Envision Duxbury is a comprehensive master plan developed by the Town of Duxbury with the support of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and under the direction of the Duxbury Planning Director, Planning Board, and a group of dedicated local volunteers called Master Plan Ambassadors.

The vision, goals, and objectives outlined in the Master Plan are the voice of the residents of Duxbury compiled from one-on-one

conversations, community meetings, resident connections, online surveying, and meetings with boards and committees. Duxbury wrote this plan with the involvement of an estimated 1,500 participants who shared their time, expertise, and ideas through this process. This inclusive effort has documented Duxbury's plan, Duxbury's vision, and Duxbury's goals.

What is a Master Plan?

In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, cities and towns are required periodically to develop a master plan that defines municipal goals and policies relating to:

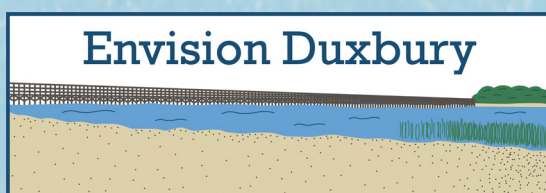
- Land Use,
- Housing,
- Economic Development,
- Natural and Cultural Resources,
- Open Space and Recreation,
- Services and Facilities,
- Transportation, and
- Master Plan Implementation.

According to State statute, each master plan should be "designed to provide a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality."

The Town of Duxbury's last master plan was completed in 1999.

As outlined in the State statute, a master plan is a strategic framework that guides the future physical and economic development of the town based on the community vision and goals. Developing a master plan is more than just researching and writing a report. It is an open, public process through which the people of Duxbury have collaborated to establish future priorities to guide conservation, preservation, growth and development over the next decade. It is a process through which town residents and business owners, and Town boards and committees, talk to each other, listen to each other, and determine a set of common goals to guide future decisions in the Town of Duxbury.

The set of topics covered by the plan is comprehensive and the plan is intended to apply to the entire geography of the Town of Duxbury.



Cover and Background Image: Bluefish River Source: MAPC

Overarching Themes

Change is Happening

Even though the Town of Duxbury has a strong legacy of conservation and preservation, the town remains in a constant process of change. These changes may be small - properties change ownership, change use, facilities age and are renewed, or priorities shift. These changes may also be big, and sometimes beyond the control of the Town - climate characteristics are changing, real estate markets are shifting, work place trends and commuter patterns shift. One measure of the type of changes that will occur over the life of this master plan document are reflected in the residential growth over the past 10 years. According to the U.S. Census in the year 2000, the number of housing units in Duxbury was 5,345 just after the 1999 Master Plan. In the following 10 years, 530 housing units were added to bring the 2010 U.S. Census figure to 5,875 housing units. The Master Plan represents an opportunity for the Town to positively shape change and proactively guide the Town's solutions to development changes, demographic trends and climate change.

Unique but Connected

Today, the Town of Duxbury enjoys the benefits of decisions made by previous generations around conservation, preservation and economic development. The town is a unique world apart, but it is still dependent on its neighbors. Residents and local businesses are dependent on the broader conditions of the subregion and metropolitan Boston for goods, services, jobs, employees, and patrons. The South Shore Chamber of Commerce identifies two items that resonate with this Master Plan and the future of Duxbury in its Regional Development Strategy. First, attract a younger workforce and be welcoming to families and second, promote new business startups and entrepreneurship. Both of these strategies relate directly to strengths and trends in Duxbury including the exemplary

school system, aging demographics, and growing percentage of the workforce choosing to work from home.

Safe Walking and Biking

Throughout this process, the community has expressed a strong desire for improved safety and convenience for walking and biking in Duxbury. Walking and biking have both grown as high demand and high benefit activities. Younger generations see walkability as a key characteristic of desirable communities and most everyone would prefer to be stuck in traffic congestion less frequently. Although solutions are not easy or without trade-offs, the goal to improve walkability and bikability in the town has been clearly articulated. This plan explores several strategies for making progress on what could be a legacy effort and gift of foresight and planning for the next generation.

Coastal Resilience

Coastal resilience and sustainability efforts must continue to be a focus of planning and investment by the town. Sea level rise puts an estimated \$12 million of commercial property at risk in Duxbury with potential impacts to coastal homes, historic properties, the shellfish industry, and natural functions of Duxbury Bay. Duxbury needs to remain in front of these issues and be a leader in climate adaptation and resilience efforts.

Stewardship and Legacy

The value of the historic and cultural assets of the town are well-known to its residents and leadership. Many aspects of this plan look to carry forward the legacy of the Town including its history, culturally significant sites, historic homes, dedication to conservation and environment, and high quality schools and municipal amenities. This stewardship applies to thousands of acres of protected lands, regional trail systems, and high quality organizations.



Image: Duxbury Bay Source: <http://newenglandboating.com/destinations/duxbury-bay>

Vision Statement

Looking forward, the Town of Duxbury continues to be a prosperous coastal community with exceptional assets. Residents of all ages and backgrounds are able to enjoy a high quality of life in Duxbury with convenient access to everything the town has to offer: beautiful beaches, an excellent school system, a thriving harbor, thousands of acres of protected habitats, conservation, and open space, vibrant businesses, cultural and recreational amenities, and attractive residential neighborhoods.

The Town and private entities proactively protect its waterfront heritage and resources to make them more resilient against the impacts of climate change. Coastal resilience protects Duxbury's rich maritime and shipbuilding history and enhances continued waterfront activity, Duxbury's multi-functional beach, and active bay, continuing to draw residents and visitors to the coast.

The network of preserved open space and conservation land in Duxbury continues to offer opportunities for recreation, enhance scenic views, and protect the Town's water supply and rare species habitats.

Duxbury Public Schools sustain excellence and the town attracts families looking to form deep roots in the community. Transparent and fiscally-responsible Town government manages growth and development in a way that maintains Duxbury's authentic character yet balances

revenues to sustain excellent public services, facilities, and infrastructure.

Hall's Corner, Snug Harbor, and Millbrook serve as the centers of local economic activity with modest mixed-use buildings with first floor retail, transportation improvements, and streetscape enhancements that create more vibrant and walkable neighborhood business districts.

The town's smaller neighborhood business districts also support successful businesses that serve residents and visitors of Duxbury in compact and walkable districts. Duxbury continues to protect its historic resources, especially working to preserve historic homes that may be at risk of being torn down and replaced. Alternative housing types have also created a greater variety of housing options for Duxbury residents, leading to more affordable options for families, seniors, and young adults while integrating with the character of the Town.

As observed throughout the Envision Duxbury Master Plan process, the vision for Duxbury in 2030 is strengthened through a community that is informed, engaged, and productively working toward a shared vision and commitment to achieving a prosperous and sustainable future.

Key Findings

Duxbury Today

The Town of Duxbury is a medium-size town whose population has almost doubled since the 1970's. At the time of the last U.S. Census in 2010, Duxbury's population was 15,059. The population is aging with the 65 plus age group experiencing the largest growth in the past 25 years, followed by those aged 35 to 64.

Duxbury is known throughout the state for its excellent public education system, and it attracts many families with children to the town. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, during the 2016-2017 school year, the school district enrollment in the Duxbury Public Schools was 3,121. This is a slight decline from ten years ago when the enrollment was 3,372 for the 2006-2007 school year.

Duxbury residents are well educated, which is illustrated by the fact that 72% of those 25 and older have completed an associates degree or higher, compared to 44% of those in Plymouth County and 49% of those Massachusetts. Nearly 60% of households in town earn more than \$100,000 annually, compared to 36% of county households and 34% of state households

The Town of Duxbury is primarily a residential community with an attractive housing stock that includes many historic homes. Single family homes account for approximately 89% of the housing stock and are predominantly owner-occupied.



Natural and Cultural Heritage

Open Space and Recreation

The Town of Duxbury has an incredible wealth of open space and recreational resources, and it is the reason that many residents are attracted to the town. Resources such as Duxbury Bay, the privately-owned Duxbury Beach, and the greenbelt of conservation land contribute significantly to the character of and quality of life in town, in addition to their ecological and recreational value. Community Survey respondents support the continued acquisition and preservation of land for protection of Duxbury's natural areas and drinking water supply, the latter being the primary rationale behind past open space planning because of the Town's dependence on groundwater. As remaining land for both preservation and development grows scarce, land acquisition should be done in a strategic manner that incorporates smart growth principles.

It is important that providing recreational opportunities does not negatively impact Duxbury's natural environment. This is often difficult and conflicts can exist between uses. Recreational opportunities that improve appropriate public access to Duxbury's waterfront and improve access for residents with disabilities should be prioritized. In terms of active recreation facilities like playgrounds and fields, residents have called both for better maintenance of existing facilities as well as the development of new facilities as funds

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become available. All future open space and recreation planning should also consider the permanent effects of climate change and long-term strategies should be developed to protect sensitive town-owned resources.

Sustainability - Energy

The Town of Duxbury has made steady improvements towards reducing municipal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and installing renewable energy sources. In 2017, Duxbury received designation as part of the Green Communities program from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources. Through the program, Duxbury has committed to reducing municipal energy use by 20% over the following 5 years through a variety of technical projects and behavioral changes. The facilities that are the highest municipal energy users are the schools, which make up 42% of total municipal energy use. However, many efforts have already been made to reduce energy use at the schools and the Duxbury Middle-High Schools is considered a Collaborative High Performance School for sustainability.

In addition to energy efficiency, the Town has taken efforts to support renewable energy generation both for municipal buildings as well as allowing access for residents to take advantage of solar. The town owns several rooftop solar arrays, as well as purchases electricity from solar and wind systems in the region. The Town also allows accessory, rooftop solar by-right in several major zones. The goals and strategies of the Master Plan look to continue the strength of these recent efforts.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Residents of Duxbury have long demonstrated their commitment to conserving and protecting the town's historic buildings and semi-rural character. The Town is fortunate to have three key organizations that are stewards of this heritage. Two are Town entities: the Historical Commission

and the Local Historic Districts Commission. The third is a non profit organization, the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society.

Since the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society was established in 1883, Duxbury has integrated land conservation, historic preservation, a commitment to enhancing the character and physical condition of the town, and a commitment to education and outreach. This long-standing commitment to preservation has allowed the town to maintain a living agricultural history. The Duxbury Bogs continue to produce cranberries, the Historic O'Neil Farm, protected with conservation restrictions through the Wildlands Trust, continues to function as a working farm, and a shellfishing industry continues to operate in the waters of Duxbury Bay. Conservation and preservation of Duxbury's historic assets, particularly continued preservation of Duxbury Beach, provides protection against the threat of sea-level rise and storm surge.

This consistent commitment to preservation has established organic clusters of historic and cultural resources. The area between Alden Street and the Bluefish River, Snug Harbor, and the area around the O'Neil Farm and Tarkiln Community Center each represents a unique combination of scenic beauty, historic value, and cultural activity. In addition, the clusters can help direct new inventory efforts as part of the upcoming historic preservation planning process. Existing partnerships among the organizations active within these clusters can be leveraged for coordinated planning and programming efforts that continue to celebrate the town's rich history and cultural heritage.

Sustainability - Climate

Climate change is a global phenomenon with direct local impacts. Duxbury routinely experiences coastal flooding and inundations, even with the relatively moderate occurrence of a lunar high tide. Climate change will likely

result in more frequent extreme weather events and projected sea level rise. The goals and strategies of this element are intended to support continuing efforts to prepare Duxbury for the impacts of climate change and to strengthen community resilience including incorporating climate resiliency into all local and regional planning efforts, creating a resilient shoreline, positioning Duxbury’s coastal economy to remain vibrant through climate change, and protecting Duxbury’s water resources from the impacts of climate change.



Social & Community Wellbeing

Transportation and Connectivity

Duxbury faces a variety of transportation challenges, primarily in the areas of safety, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and in moving projects from ideas to implementation. While the Town has historic homes, beaches, pedestrian-scaled neighborhood business districts and Town-owned forests, Duxbury could improve ways to safely and effectively connect these resources for all residents and visitors. The Town should develop a comprehensive transportation action plan that prioritizes safety in high crash areas, and that creates a multimodal network connecting residents to key destinations in the Town including schools, neighborhood business districts, and recreation areas.

Housing

The attractive coastal and historic qualities of Duxbury and the high quality of its housing stock contribute to making Duxbury a desirable place to live in the metropolitan area of Boston. The Town is close enough to benefit from the economy, opportunity, and amenities of the area, while being a distinct coastal community that has a semi-rural character. Effective policies for the conservation of land and the preservation of community character have contributed directly to the attractiveness of the Town, but are also factors contributing to a growing pattern of high housing costs which is one of the greatest challenges for the future of housing in Duxbury. The housing strategies seek to address several demographic trends in the Town – modest population and household growth and an aging population. Additional housing units are needed to accommodate continued and projected growth of the population in such a way that the attractive qualities of Duxbury are not compromised. Additional types of housing units are needed to accommodate an aging population to allow long-time residents to remain a part of the community. Duxbury’s housing stock is primarily comprised of single-family homes. Additional types of housing choices are also needed to provide a greater diversity of offerings in the Town for unit size, tenure, and affordability. The expansion of housing choices primarily focuses on alternatives to the single-family home, such as additional housing units as part of mixed-use village centers and conversion of large historic homes into multiple housing units. Lastly, housing should be seen as a positive opportunity to shape community, connectedness, and pride in Duxbury by adding activity, vitality, and support for local services and businesses.

Public Facilities and Services

The public facilities and services element of a master plan takes stock of a community's facility resources and helps to guide decisions relevant to the management of public buildings, utilities, and infrastructure in order to meet present and future needs of the community. Public facilities make it possible for municipal employees and volunteers to provide services for the public good. These facilities are also required by various mandates of state and federal government. Citizens, as taxpayers, assume the provision of basic services such as fire, public safety, education, town government and water supply. Beyond that, residents frequently convey the importance of a desire for a sense of place, membership in a community and to be cared for across the cycles of life.

Economic Development

A town's livability and identity is strongly influenced by its economic activities. For residents of Duxbury, there are three major neighborhood business districts – the Snug Harbor waterfront, Hall's Corner and Millbrook – serving both local and regional needs, that are important contributors to the town's commercial tax base. Additionally, there are five smaller districts dotted throughout town, including Cox Corner, Osborn's, Bongi's, Bennett's Corner, and the area near Duxbury Fitness. The vitality of the waterfront Washington Street corridor, a revitalized Hall's Corner, and greater integration of its history into a larger economic strategy could further diversify the town's tax base, while reinforcing Duxbury's identity as a quiet, community-focused seaside town. For a primarily residential community supporting residents in performing local home-based work would help residents to respond to converging patterns with increased traffic congestion and work place preferences for telecommuting.



Implementation

Land Use and Zoning

The land use patterns of the Town of Duxbury reach back to the initial settlement of the Town and have been thoughtfully preserved and adapted to each generations' needs while respecting the heritage of the town. The town's combination of predominantly residential uses, conservation of open space, preservation of historic resources, and clearly defined neighborhood business districts have limited the amount of disturbance to these patterns of initial settlement and define the community character. The future land use patterns should be consistent and continue the established patterns of the town while allowing investment and adaptation to respond to future needs and improve upon current conditions. The zoning regulations will continue to play a major role in guiding investment to strengthen these patterns in the town through support for preservation, improvement and enhancement in the neighborhood business districts, and through safe and sustainable residential neighborhoods.

Master Plan Goals

Natural and Cultural Heritage



Open Space and Recreation

The following goals and strategies have been adapted from the recently completed Duxbury Open Space and Recreation Plan, and modified based on public input received during the Envision Duxbury process.

Goal 1: Support the implementation and ongoing updates of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Goal 2: Protect Duxbury's water resources.

Goal 3: Preserve the unique, semi-rural character of Duxbury.

Goal 4: Provide recreational opportunities with minimal impact to the environment.



Sustainability - Energy

The following goals and strategies are intended to support continuing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy usage, and save on energy costs both at the municipal level and community wide.

Goal 1: Develop a community-wide Climate Action Plan that sets the community on a path towards becoming net-zero, including buildings, transportation, and waste sectors.

Goal 2: Support local residents and business in reducing their fossil fuel use through energy efficiency programs and access to clean energy.

Goal 3: Reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions.

Goal 4: Increase energy resilience at critical facilities and public safety buildings.



Historic and Cultural Resources

The following goals and strategies are intended to support continuing efforts to preserve and enhance Duxbury's historic character and to strengthen its cultural resources and heritage.

Goal 1: Preserve the historic character of Duxbury.

Goal 2: Develop local capacity to manage and enhance historic and cultural resources.



Sustainability - Climate

The following recommendations are adapted from Duxbury's Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan, the Duxbury Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, and public input and feedback the community forums and public meetings, presentations, and events summarized above. These recommendations are intended to integrate climate resiliency

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into all planning, development, and infrastructure improvements.

Goal 1: Incorporate climate resiliency into all local and regional planning efforts.

Goal 2. Position Duxbury's coastal economy to remain vibrant and resilient through climate change.

Goal 3. Protect Duxbury's water resources from the impacts of climate change.

Social & Community Wellbeing



Transportation and Connectivity

The following goals and strategies are intended to support continuing efforts to improve the Town's transportation networks, particularly in the efforts to create a safer and more inclusive system for the growing number of seniors in the Town and people who do not drive. The recommendations are particularly designed to help move the Town towards implementation in those areas that have had repeated recommendations, such as more pedestrian connections, improvements at Hall's Corner, and better connections to schools and neighborhood business districts.

Goal 1: Develop a town-wide multi-modal network and traffic safety prioritization plan.

Goal 2: Create walkable economic centers.

Goal 3: Expand transit options and transit supportive infrastructure.

Goal 4: Include climate resiliency and safety in developing changes to future transportation infrastructure.



Housing

The following goals and strategies include updated housing goals from the 2017 Community Survey, Duxbury Housing Needs Assessment (2014), Duxbury Community Development Plan (2014), and modifications based on public input during this master plan process.

Goal 1: Diversify housing options to support an aging population, affordability, and a more diverse population.

Goal 2: Use residential improvements to preserve and strengthen the Town's historic residential neighborhoods, and semi-rural and coastal character.

Goal 3: Use residential improvements to strengthen walkability and improve multi-modal connections.

Goal 4: Encourage independent living for seniors, people with disabilities and other special needs.

Goal 5: Integrate new housing into existing neighborhood business districts.



Public Facilities and Services

The following goals and strategies are intended to advance and sustain Duxbury's careful investment and direction of its public resources.

Goal 1: Leverage public facilities to provide professional and recreational opportunities to town residents.

Goal 2: Continue developing capacity to plan and implement long term, proactive infrastructure and facilities improvements.

Goal 3: Identify opportunities to collaborate and coordinate regionally.

Goal 4: Strengthen effective communication and collaboration within Town government and with the public.

Goal 5: Ensure that town and school facilities meet patterns of community use and departmental operations needs.



Economic Development

The following goals and strategies are intended to support continuing efforts to sustain Duxbury's local economy and provide local services and amenities for residents. Recommendations are developed with available statistical data, input from the community, and interviews with local businesses.

Goal 1: Focus on distinct neighborhood business district-based economic development.

Goal 2: Strengthen maritime businesses and industries, including tourism, research and education opportunities.

Goal 3: Strategically plan for resilience and leveraging of limited resources.

Goal 4: Assist local home-based non-store businesses.

Implementation



Land Use and Zoning

The following goals and strategies are intended to support the Community Vision for Duxbury and guide investments and improvements to align with the goals and strategies of this town-wide Master Plan primarily through zoning recommendations.

Goal 1: Continue to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and historic assets of the Town.

Goal 2: Incrementally improve nodes of current activity, such as neighborhood business districts, as walkable, amenity-rich neighborhood centers.

Goal 3: Clarify regulations and permitting to encourage appropriate investment.

Goal 4: Strengthen the sustainability and resilience of future development and redevelopment investments.

Goal 5: Focus public and private investments to strengthen existing neighborhood business districts.

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