



## Part 1: Governance in Dedham today

The Governance topic of the Master Plan incorporates key indicators of the Dedham's financial health, service delivery, resident and stakeholder surveys and diverse viewpoints from resident feedback. This section aims to outline the ways in which Dedham's local staff and government can be more effective, transparent, and accountable in the services they provide, and ensure that information on local issues and civic participation is accessible for all of Dedham's residents.

### G1.1 Strong financial health

Despite the many recent stressors caused by COVID-19, Dedham is in one of the strongest financial positions in the region. With the ability to borrow money at a low interest rate, a strong financial tax base, and untapped property tax levy, Dedham does not face many of the financial stressors of neighboring municipalities. Dedham also does not rely heavily on State Aid to finance its infrastructure and services, which means Dedham is insulated from the uncertainty of State revenues and aid. Dedham has a history of fully funded pension and benefits contributions and a AAA credit rating from Standard & Poor's. Dedham's financial position is an asset that will allow it to face future economic challenges and uncertainties.

### G1.2 Improving communication with residents

Dedham has taken creative strides to effectively communicate with residents. Town staff currently

manage Facebook and Twitter accounts that focus on individual municipal functions and broadcast Board and Commission meetings on DedhamTV. Dedham has also purchased creative tech tools such as the OpenFinance budget dashboard and the CGIS Citizen Request for resident initiated public works requests. However, there is room for improvement as these tools are not widely known and are underutilized by residents. Additional resident engagement and technology tools should be explored and implemented to effectively communicate with residents in intuitive and convenient ways. By hiring a Public Information Officer in February 2021, Dedham has already taken a major step to identify the right tools and improve communication with residents.

### G1.3 High participation rates in Town Meeting

Dedham is one of 33 Massachusetts municipalities that use the Representative Town Meeting form of government. Town meeting members are elected through local elections to represent one of seven precincts across Dedham to terms that are between 1 and 3 years. Town Meeting typically occurs in the Spring and Fall, and as needed for Special Town Meetings. In order to conduct business, Town Meeting must meet its quorum of 170 voting members. Dedham has had the luxury of very high turnout at each meeting and has never had to postpone due to the absence of a quorum. This is an indicator of a high rate of local participation and enables the government to operate as intended.

## DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

This is Version 1.0 of this summary published on 03-29-2021. It is a working document that will be updated to integrate feedback as the Master Plan progresses.



## Part 2: Community input

As part of the Master Plan process, a Community Survey was conducted in the spring of 2020 and received over 1,100 responses. A follow up Topic Area Survey received over 750 responses. Responses from both surveys related to governance are summarized here.

### G2.1 Local tax rate concerns

Local tax rates and municipal finance ranked among the most critical challenges for Dedham residents. Of those surveyed, two-thirds ranked local tax rates and municipal finance in their top 3 challenges facing Dedham. Overall one of the top three goals expressed by residents is for the town to be "fiscally responsible."

### G2.2 Diversity of staff and representatives

The population of Dedham is more diverse than composition and representation of its boards, commissions and staff. Residents surveyed voiced concerns about the demographics of Town staff and representatives on local Boards and Commissions and how they aren't reflective of the diversity of Dedham.

### G2.3 Dated and infrequent communication

Many residents shared their frustrations with finding updated information on current local issues. Many residents want to stay informed, but don't feel that they are able to access information in convenient or familiar ways or that the information they do find is outdated.

### G2.4 Siloed boards and commissions

Residents were very vocal that the Town's Boards and Commissions operate in their own silos and could operate more effectively with greater collaboration. Boards and Commissions should work together to collectively plan and address Dedham's largest challenges.

# Designing Dedham



## Topic Summary Governance



### Part 3: Draft governance goals

These draft goals have been developed based on the data about Dedham today, community surveys, and input from the public and the 16 member Master Plan Committee. The final goals will frame the strategies and actions to be defined through this master plan process to guide Town policies and decision making over the next ten years. We are soliciting input on these goals, which will be amended and updated based on feedback.

#### G3.1 Establish a comprehensive approach to centering residents in services and communications

Ensuring residents are informed and respected is critical to a high-functioning municipal government. Informed residents will be able to engage and contribute more effectively to decision-making. A customer-service orientation that ensures residents feel respected and valued also helps increase efficiency by helping to avoid potential issues, rather than reacting to them. Town documents should be more resident friendly and prioritize convenient, easily understood information that supports decision-making and is accessible to all residents. For example, Dedham's Annual Budget is not easily understood. By prioritizing clarity and presenting each department's outcomes and annual goals alongside their line-item budget, residents would have a clearer understanding of how their tax dollars are being spent, and how to be engaged productively in the process.

#### G3.2 Support investment in tech friendly government practices

Technology plays an integral role in our daily lives, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many local governments, including Dedham, have been one of the last to adopt new technology. There are many municipally focused tech tools that can improve the level of service that Dedham is able to provide. Funding to improve Information Technology (IT) staff and Fiber infrastructure would support expansion of these tech tools to remain up-to-date, cost effective, and effective with municipal service offerings.

#### G3.3 Advance workforce planning and talent management

The average age of the municipal public sector workforce

is closer to retirement as compared to the general private sector workforce. Without active recruitment and career planning, municipal government won't have the human capital needed to fulfill its obligations to the community. Over the next ten years, Dedham has an opportunity to reinvent the way it does business and the level of service it provides. It will need a renewed supply of competent employees engaged through active workforce planning, ongoing talent development, and mentorship programs to meet projected workforce challenges and to attract outstanding candidates when positions turn over.

#### G3.4 Establish and meet diversity and representation goals

The perception that the local workforce and composition of boards, committees, and Town Meeting members does not represent Dedham's population is a barrier to participation for many of Dedham's residents. By analyzing local workforce and representative demographics, Dedham can be transparent in identifying this gap. And by using an annual yield ratio study to monitor the hiring, election, and appointment processes, Dedham would be able to see exactly where additional resources are needed to attract diverse applicants. This would allow the town to set deliberate diversity goals, review progress annually, and identify specific policies or practices that might serve as obstacles to meeting the goals.

#### G3.5 Define expectations, goals, and development opportunities for boards and commissions, and encourage increased collaboration and coordination between boards

Deliberately defined expectations, communication and coordination processes, and required annual goals would enable Dedham's Boards and Commissions to more effectively operate and track accomplishments. A defined hierarchy and relationship to other Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Groups would improve effectiveness, communication, and transparency, while reducing redundancy. Residents may also be able to better direct feedback and participate in decision-making processes with these clear definitions.

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### Categorization of Town Boards and Committees

Town Management	Health & Human Services	Finance	Land Use & Zoning	Community	Education
Select Board	Board of Health	Finance & Warrant Committee	Planning Board	Cultural Council	School Committee
Bylaw Review Committee	Housing Authority	Board of Assessors	Conservation Commission	Civic Pride Committee	Board of Library Trustees
Sustainability Advisory Committee	Coalition for Alcohol & Drug Awareness	Commissioners of Trust Funds	Design Review Advisory Board	East Dedham Revitalization Committee	Youth Commission
Charter Advisory Committee	Commission on Disability	Capital Expenditures Committee	Historic Districts Commission	Public Service Recognition Committee	
Transportation Advisory Committee	Council on Aging Board		Zoning Board of Appeals	Open Space & Recreation	Town Properties
	Human Rights Commission			Parks and Recreation Commission	Building, Planning, & Construction Committee
				Open Space & Recreation Committee	Endicott Estate Commission
					School Building Rehabilitation Committee

  

Elected
Appointed
Volunteer



### Part 4: Help Design Dedham

This topic summary and the set of draft topic goals has been prepared to share draft content that is developing through the Designing Dedham 2030 Master Plan process. The draft topic goals remain a work in progress and will benefit from your feedback. Are your governance priorities for the town represented? Please send us your feedback, questions, or comments.

#### Comments

<http://designingdedham2030.org>

Or by sending an email to:

Jeremy Rosenberger, Dedham Planning Director at [rosenberger@dedham-ma.gov](mailto:rosenberger@dedham-ma.gov), or

Josh Fiala, MAPC Principal Planner at [jfiala@mapc.org](mailto:jfiala@mapc.org).

#### Additional Information

A video recording of a Master Plan Committee meeting focused on Governance is available at:

<https://bit.ly/DD-2030-Committee-01-19-2021>

#### Community Open Houses

Additionally, you are invited to attend a series of Community Open Houses that will present and discuss each of the topics.



An open house on **March 30th, 2021 at 6:30 pm** will focus on **Governance**, Community Facilities and Services, and Land Use and Zoning.

Register for this event at:

<https://bit.ly/DD2030-03-30-21>

Visit <http://designingdedham2030.org> to see summaries of each topic area and join the mailing list for updates or other opportunities to be part of the process.