



Topic Summary

Land Use and Zoning



Part 1: Land use and zoning in Dedham today

Dedham's settlement patterns have evolved over centuries and have been defined by the town's rivers and water bodies, influenced by transportation infrastructure, and continue to evolve today. The overall patterns of major squares, neighborhood centers, and commercial corridors are established, but continue to change and present opportunities for improvement. Zoning regulations provide the tools to positively shape land use patterns for future generations.

LU1.1 Multiple transit options and points of access define patterns

Rail lines have shaped Dedham's settlement patterns and Dedham benefits today from two commuter rail stops, Endicott and Dedham Corporate, on the Franklin line. Nearby Readville also provides convenient transit access and although it is in Boston, it is near enough to influence land use in Dedham. Land use patterns have historically responded to these access points and future land use improvements should strengthen orientation to transit and convenient access by all modes of travel.

LU1.2 Strong historic squares and neighborhood centers

The historic settlement patterns of the town remain and define mixed-use centers, compact areas that include a variety of uses, that provide convenient and walkable access to shops and services from many of the town's neighborhoods. These include the significant historic squares of Dedham Square and East Dedham Square and smaller neighborhood centers of Oakdale Square, Bridge Street, Sprague Street, and Bussey Street. These mixed-use nodes should be preserved and strengthened.

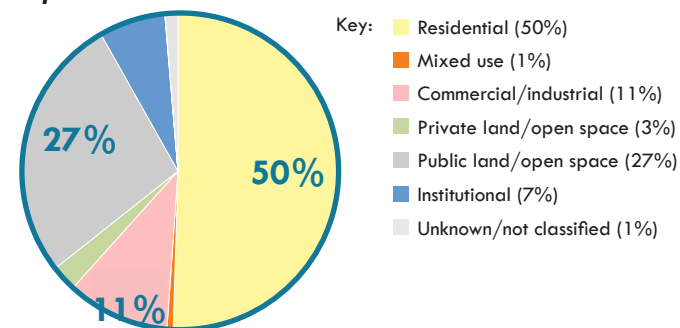
LU1.3 Central commercial corridor and convenient auto access

Convenient vehicular access is noted by many residents as a major asset of the town and for some households is the reason they live in Dedham. The town has three direct exits from Route 128/Interstate 95 allowing easy access to the surrounding region. The vehicular convenience provided by the Providence Highway crossing the center of the town attracts auto-oriented retail, commercial, and hospitality uses.

LU1.4 Predominantly residential use across the town

Residential uses are the largest land use by land area in the town representing about 50% of all uses. Public land and open space are the second largest land use with about 27% of the total land area. Much of the public land and open space is within a residential zoning district (Single Residence A, Single Residence B, or General Residence). The total land area of the town that falls within one of these residential zoning districts is about 82%. After public land and open space, commercial and industrial uses are the next largest land use with about 11% of total land area.

Comparison of Land Uses



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This is Version 1.0 of this summary published on 03-17-2021. 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 land use and zoning are summarized here.

LU2.1 Manage new growth

45% of survey participants expressed that managing growth in an appropriate and sustainable manner is most important. This placed it as the most important challenge facing the Town of Dedham in terms of land use. A particular interest in reducing the negative impacts of development and focusing on the public benefit was expressed in survey responses.

LU2.2 Improve existing use patterns

Many survey participants provided comments on the importance of improving what is already developed to make better and more efficient use of the land, with a particular focus on areas that are already developed for commercial uses. Participants expressed the need to update zoning bylaws to better reflect a long term plan for the Town.

LU2.3 Focus on natural assets

Directly related to the first two community priorities, many participants highlight the need to preserve and maintain the town's natural assets, to create additional open space where it is needed, and to expand access to natural resources such as Wigwam Pond and Mother Brook.

LU2.4 Improve walkability

In nearly all master plan topics, the need for improved pedestrian access and safety has been highlighted by participants. The land use patterns are directly related to walkability with the need to have a mix of uses and destinations within a compact area to encourage walking for daily errands. Participants state that the town should not be so car-centered and that better access for people walking and biking should be considered in all growth and improvements

LU1.5 Extensive natural resources and river access

The town's history is closely connected to the Charles and Neponset Rivers and the ingenuity of Mother Brook and Long Ditch. These natural assets should continue to be treasured features that are a center point of conservation and recreational access. Other natural resources such as Wilson Mountain and Wigwam Pond are frequently mentioned by residents for the most widely used natural asset and asset with the most unmet potential respectively.

LU1.6 Zoning regulations in need of updates and improvements

The need to comprehensively update the zoning bylaw was highlighted in the previous master plan and issues remain and have been highlighted by other recent planning efforts. Residents have mentioned zoning issues around tear-downs of neighborhood homes, regulations around accessory dwelling units, the planned residential development regulations, and reconsidering the types of future development for the Providence Highway corridor.

LU1.7 Need for data and transparent processes of communication

Recent processes relating to land use including the analysis of mixed-use development and consideration of the rail trail connection, point to the need for gathering and providing data to inform transparent processes of communication and decision-making. Connecting data and decisions to long-term goals and priorities for the town can add an effective layer of guidance.



Topic Summary

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Part 3: Draft land use and zoning goals

These draft goals have been developed based on the data about Dedham today, the community surveys, and input from the 16 member Master Plan Committee, and public. 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.

LU3.1 Align town rules and regulations with vision and goals

Comprehensively review town zoning bylaws to identify potential areas of inconsistency with the town's vision and goals. Develop proposed corrections and system of procedures to modify zoning bylaws with appropriate solutions. This may include density regulations such as floor area ratio (FAR) in neighborhoods to better match new development with the existing context.

LU3.2 Direct and manage growth more proactively in existing economic activity centers

Focus investment and growth activity in areas which have been previously developed to strengthen the patterns of use, economic vitality, and access and circulation patterns.

LU3.3 Advance preservation of natural and historic assets and make them integral town features

The conservation, preservation and access goals for natural and historic assets should be integrated into the overall land use plan and regulations.

LU3.4 Leverage investments to match town needs and priorities

As part of zoning bylaw modifications, sets of regulations, standards and guidelines should be adopted to better match private investments with town needs and priorities. This may include guidelines for connecting properties to improve access and walkability, providing access to an adjacent natural resource, or providing a modest outdoor space where a need has been identified.

LU3.5 Strengthen compact neighborhoods and local business districts to enhance walkability

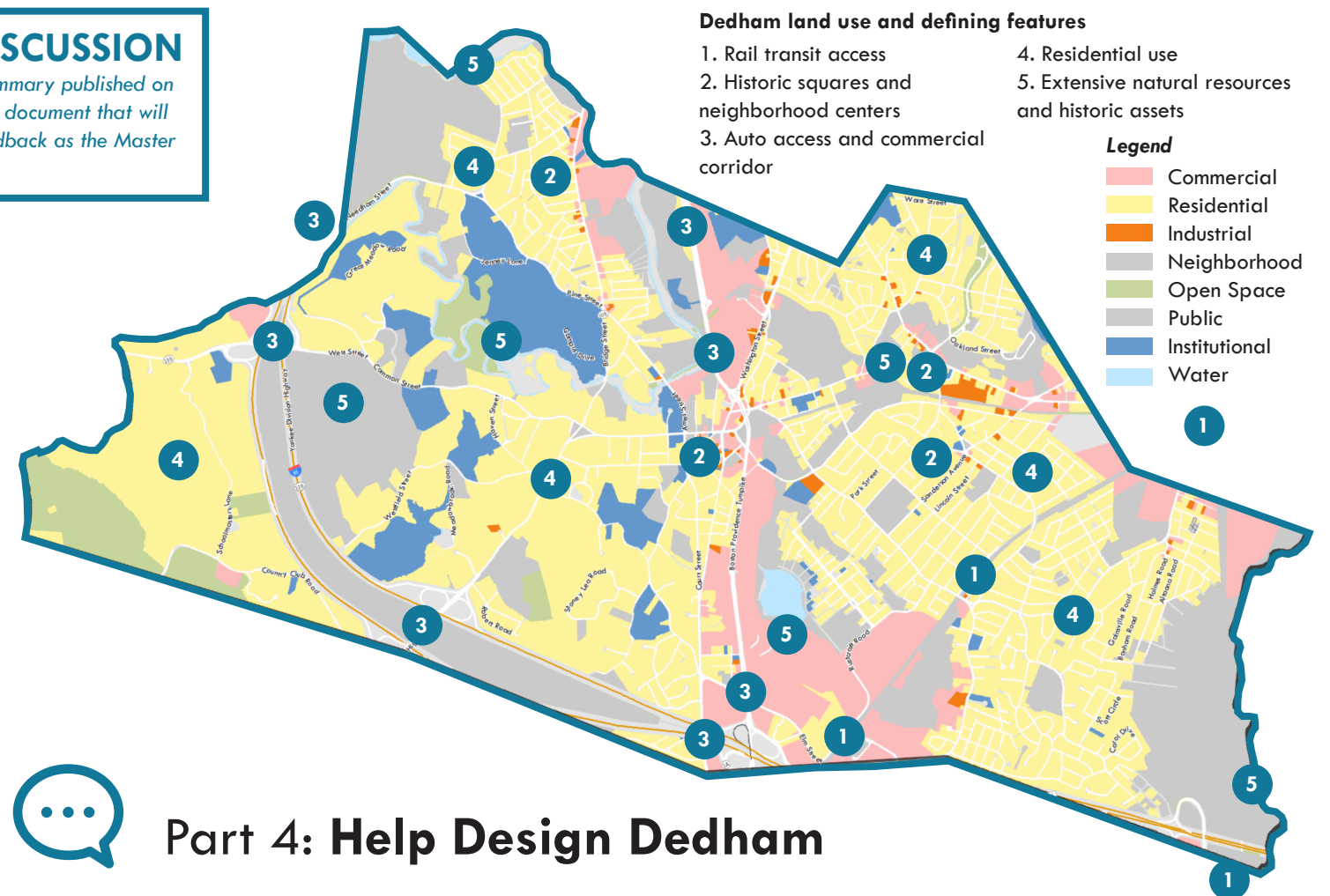
Provide district management and small business assistance to support neighborhood centers along with sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure improvements to improve non-vehicular access from surrounding neighborhoods.

LU3.6 Focus growth near transit and multimodal access

Locations with commuter rail and bus access should be strengthened with transit-oriented development that builds up the activity, density, and walkability of places with transit as a central asset. Additionally, residents express a strong desire for more safe and convenient access that does not require a car. Getting people out of cars for some trips reduced traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. Encourage the evolution of land use patterns to support safe and convenient access without a car that better connect to destinations, transit access, activity centers, and natural assets across the town. Supporting this evolution would be transformative for future generations.

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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 land use and zoning 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 jrosenberger@dedham-ma.gov, or

Josh Fiala, MAPC Principal Planner at jfiala@mapc.org.

Additional Information

A video recording of a Master Plan Committee meeting focused on Land Use and Zoning is available at:

<https://bit.ly/DD-2030-Committee-02-23-2021>

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 **Land Use and Zoning**, Governance and Community Facilities and Services.

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.