



Town of Dighton, MA

# Master Plan 2014

Prepared for the Dighton Planning Board

Prepared by 

Adopted        2015



# 1 Land Use

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## Introduction

Land use within a community is the pattern of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development, interspersed with natural features including undeveloped open spaces, forests, wetlands, water bodies, and agricultural land. The evolution of land use within a community is the product of local economic conditions and community preferences; growth and development is based on such factors as access to jobs, employment, and the availability of land for new housing or commercial development. Community preferences, expressed as land use plans and regulations, dictate the form, location, and sometimes the pace, of new development.

Land use forms the basis for master planning and determines, to a large extent, a town's need to provide public facilities and infrastructure, transportation networks and services, and protection of environmental and natural resources. As communities plan for future growth, determining how and where development should occur will identify where investments for municipal services will be needed, as well as what controls will be necessary to protect areas of the town from inappropriate development. Communities have the ability to control land use and development patterns through a variety of mechanisms, including zoning and subdivision regulations, provision of public utilities and infrastructure, and preservation of open space lands through direct acquisition or through conservation restrictions/easements.

The following sections provide an overview of the historic and current land use patterns in the Town of Dighton. The discussion includes a breakdown of the percentage of land devoted to different types of development based upon MassGIS data, a review of the current zoning regulations, and an analysis on priority areas for development and preservation. Land use goals and implementation recommendations will be advanced based on the baseline data assessments.

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## Baseline Assessments

The Town of Dighton, with a 2013 population of 7,630, is located east of Providence, Rhode Island and in close proximity to the cities of Fall River to the south and Taunton to

the north in Southeastern Massachusetts. Located in the heart of Bristol County, the Town of Dighton has limited access to the regional transportation infrastructure. While there are no four-lane highways in Dighton, the Town has two secondary (two lane) state highways, Route 44 (E-W) which afford the Town access to Providence and Taunton, and Route 138 (N-S), which is the roadway that provides access to Route 44 into Taunton and Route 24. The Town is considered to be within the South Coast Rail Corridor although the closest anticipated rail station will be located in Taunton. By virtue of its location, Dighton is considered a remote town within Bristol County.

### ***Historic Land Use***

At one time, Dighton was a town of small, independent, largely self-sufficient farms whose produce was transported by trucking and via the Old Colony/New Haven Railroad which passed through the Town between Fall River and Boston. Since WWII, individual new home construction in the 1950s and 1960s was succeeded by the subdivision of former farmland, which led to significant low density residential development, as was the case with many similar communities, beginning in the 1970s. This development pattern continued during the housing boom of the 1980s and then declined with the economic recession in the 1990s.

This pattern of growth is reflected in the historic land use data from MassGIS. As shown in Table X-1, 11.5 percent of Dighton's land was dedicated to agricultural use in 1971, which declined to less than 10 percent by 1999. Low density residential land kept a steady growth rate from 6.2 percent of the total area in town in 1971 to over 10 percent in 1999. Medium density residential land expanded slowly from 323 acres (2.3 percent) in 1971 to 479 acres (3.4 percent) in 1999. Other higher density residential uses started to appear in the 1980s and increased slightly by 1999.

In addition, Dighton's commercial development experienced moderate growth from 32 acres in 1971 to 49 acres in 1999. Industrial uses in town more than doubled during this time, from 115 acres or 0.8 percent in 1971 to 243 acres or 1.7 percent in 1999. With increased development, Dighton has seen a significant decrease in natural and undisturbed land between 1971 and 1999, which was reduced by 523 acres from over 72 percent of the Town's total area to 68.4 percent.

**Table 1-1 Historic Land Use Pattern, 1971-1999**

	1971		1985		1999	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
<b>Agriculture</b>	1,628	11.5%	1,531	10.8%	1,370	9.7%
<b>Open Undeveloped Land</b>	687	4.9%	718	5.1%	615	4.3%
<b>Commercial</b>	32	0.2%	37	0.3%	49	0.3%
<b>Industrial/Transportation/Mining</b>	115	0.8%	210	1.5%	243	1.7%
<b>Higher Density Residential</b>	-	-	4	0.03%	14	0.1%
<b>Medium Density Residential</b>	323	2.3%	400	2.8%	479	3.4%
<b>Low Density Residential</b>	884	6.2%	1,100	7.8%	1,443	10.2%
<b>Urban Open /Institutional/Recreation</b>	231	1.6%	239	1.7%	216	1.5%
<b>Natural Land /Undisturbed Vegetation</b>	10,212	72.1%	9,879	69.8%	9,689	68.4%
<b>Water</b>	48	0.3%	43	0.3%	43	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	14,161	100.0%	14,161	100.0%	14,161	100.0%

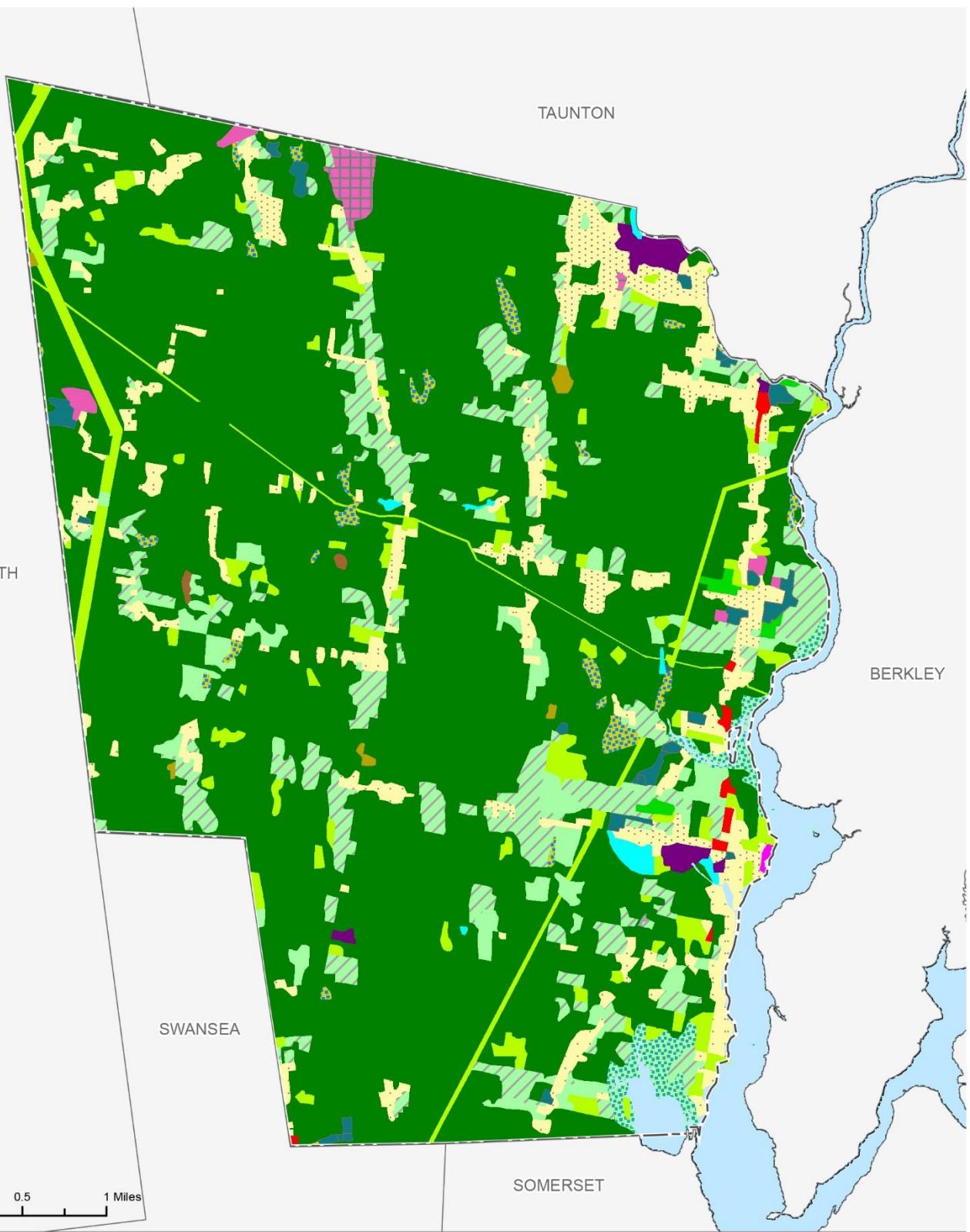
Source: MassGIS

Note: As defined by MassGIS, Higher Density Residential included multi-family and single-family housing on smaller than 1/4 acre lots; Medium Density Residential included single family housing on 1/4-1/2 acre lots; Low Density Residential included single family housing on larger than 1/2 acre lots.

**Table 1-2 Historic Land Use Change, 1971-1999**

	1971-1985 Change	1985-1999 Change	1971-1999 Change
<b>Agriculture</b>	-6.0%	-10.5%	-15.9%
<b>Open Undeveloped Land</b>	4.5%	-14.4%	-10.5%
<b>Commercial</b>	15.1%	32.3%	52.3%
<b>Industrial/Transportation/Mining</b>	82.6%	15.7%	111.3%
<b>Higher Density Residential</b>	-	214.5%	-
<b>Medium Density Residential</b>	23.8%	19.9%	48.4%
<b>Low Density Residential</b>	24.4%	31.2%	63.2%
<b>Urban Open/Institutional/Recreation</b>	3.3%	-9.4%	-6.4%
<b>Natural Land/Undisturbed Vegetation</b>	-3.3%	-1.9%	-5.1%
<b>Water</b>	-11.1%	0.0%	-11.1%

Source: MassGIS



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

1971 Land Use, Dighton, MA

#### Land Use Type

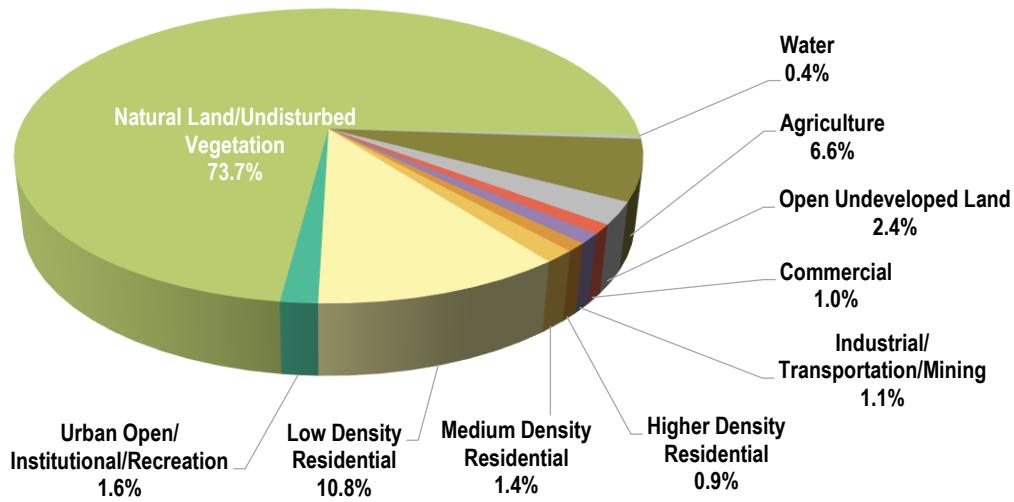
Crop Land	Mining	Water-Based Recreation	Low Density Residential	Urban Open
Pasture	Open Land	Multi-Family Residential	Salt Water Wetland	Transportation
Forest	Participation Recreation	High Density Residential	Commercial	Waste Disposal
Non-Forested Wetland	Spectator Recreation	Medium Density Residential	Industrial	Water
				Woody Perennial

## Current Land Use

According to the latest land use data available from MassGIS (see Figure 1-1), nearly three quarters of the Town was classified as natural and undisturbed land in 2005.<sup>1</sup> Agricultural land further declined to 6.6 percent while 1.6 percent of the Town's land was identified as urban open, institutional, and recreation uses.

Residential land combined accounted for 13.1 percent of the total land area in town, of which low density residential housing on lots larger than  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre took up nearly 11 percent. Higher density residential, which includes duplexes, apartment buildings and condominium complexes, and housing on smaller than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre lots as defined by MassGIS, increased substantially compared to 1999 and comprised almost 1 percent of the Town in 2005. These residential uses were primarily concentrated along Route 138 up to the Three Mile River area, although they are scattered along other streets as well. Medium density residential, including housing on  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre lots, comprised 1.4 percent of Dighton, mostly in areas located in the northeast and northwest corners of town and around the intersection of Main Street and Somerset Avenue.

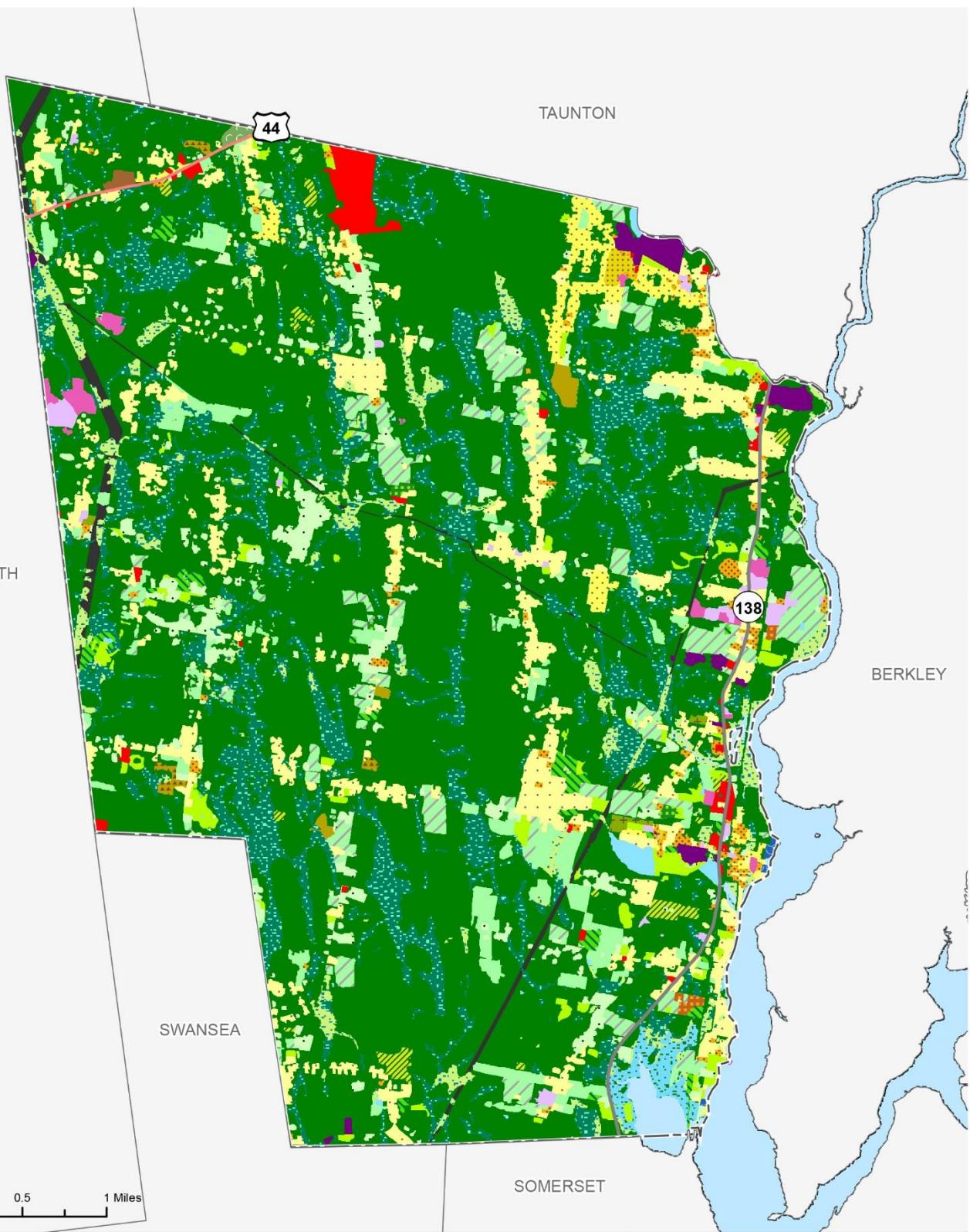
**Figure 1-1 2005 Land Use Pattern, Dighton, MA<sup>2</sup>**



Source: MassGIS

<sup>1</sup> Note: The amount of land designated as natural and undisturbed land increased from prior analyses due to evolved image interpretation, more detailed resource definitions and better data collection.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Due to evolved image interpretation and data production methods, as well as changes in land use categories, 2005 land use data is not completely comparable to land use data from 1971, 1985, and 1999.



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

2005 Land Use, Dighton, MA

**Land Use Type**

Forest	Salt Water Wetland	Pasture	Marina	Transitional	Mining
Brushland/Successional	Saltwater Sandy Beach	Cemetery	Multi-Family Residential	Urban Public/Institutional	Waste Disposal
Open Land	Cranberry Bog	Golf Course	High Density Residential	Commercial	Junkyard
Water	Orchard	Participation Recreation	Medium Density Residential	Industrial	
Forested Wetland	Nursery	Spectator Recreation	Low Density Residential	Transportation	
Non-Forested Wetland	Cropland	Water-Based Recreation	Very Low Density Residential	Powerline/Utility	

Commercial land accounted for 1 percent of the total area and was primarily located near the north boundary on Williams Street where the Manheim site is located as well as along Route 138 near the center of town. Additionally, 1.1 percent of the land was identified as having industrial, transportation, and mining uses with most of the industrial uses along Route 138 up to the Three Mile River area (see Figure 1-1).

The Town of Dighton today still has a primarily rural landscape with large tracks of croplands, forests, and wetlands. Residential uses line the streets throughout town while commercial and industrial uses are interspersed with other uses along major roadway corridors such as Route 138. Currently there are two industrial sites in Dighton that present both challenges and opportunities in terms of land use and redevelopment. One is the Zeneca site located in the south end of town on Main Street with land along Muddy Cove Brook from Elm Street east to County Street. The now vacant and increasingly overgrown site used to be occupied by a number of industries including Anchor Color and Gum Works, which was succeeded by Arnold, Hoffman and Company and was eventually purchased by Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., of England. The industries used to play a major role in supporting the Main Street businesses with local employees frequenting coffee shops, restaurants, and purchasing groceries at the nearby market. The site ceased operation in the early 2000s due to transportation and environmental challenges and has undergone major brownfield remediation. Potable water is now obtainable from all but two of numerous test wells on the site.

Another industrial location is the Mt. Hope Finishing Company site on the Three Mile River in North Dighton, which was a mill complex bought from the former Arkwright Cotton Company. The company once was the largest cloth finishing companies in the area before it left Dighton due to the post-war recession. It built Mt. Hope Village complete with churches, a hospital, pharmacy, dairy, a full modern utility infrastructure, a roadway network, and mill houses for its many employees. Mount Hope Finishing Co. moved its location from North Dighton to Butner, N.C. in 1951, to join the larger cotton industry in the South. The plant at the Dighton site was converted to house the Raytheon Company in 1958, which continued to provide jobs for several hundred residents. Currently the site houses several manufacturing businesses and warehouses.

As industry waned in the post-war era, Dightonians in the 1960s used to prosper through a proliferation of independent small businesses, many conducted in homes. Along Somerset Avenue (Route 138), for example, various small businesses such as food shops, hairdresser, landscape service, and a gift shop etc. could be found from Elm Street north to the site of Dighton High School/Town Offices, all conducted at the residences of their owners. However, the conduct of this type of business activity at residences was

outlawed under the provisions of the 1969 zoning bylaw, although home occupations (more typically home offices) are allowed if certain conditions are met.

## Zoning Overview

Modern zoning began in the early 1900's in response to the location of potentially incompatible and noxious land uses next to commercial and residential areas. The zoning bylaw has evolved over the years as a means to limit the types of land uses that could locate in a particular area of the municipality, resulting in a separation of uses. Ideally, the Master Plan is the blueprint for the Town and the zoning bylaw is the regulation that implements the plan. Typically, a zoning bylaw regulates land use by:

- Specifying and distinguishing different land use types;
- Creating development standards for the size and shape of lots and the buildings erected on those lots;
- Addressing lots, buildings and uses that pre-dated the adoption of the zoning bylaw (non-conformities);
- Establishing criteria for the evaluation of permit applications for new buildings;
- Establishing procedures for permitting uses not specifically allowed by right;
- Defining terms that have specific meanings under the bylaw; and,
- Creating a map that displays the geographic extent of each zoning district.

Dighton's zoning bylaw was first adopted in 1969 and has been sporadically updated over the years, most recently in 2000. At present time, the zoning bylaw is considered "outdated" and does not incorporate many of the newer smart growth tools and techniques utilized by municipalities throughout Massachusetts. As a result, future development in Dighton is not targeted for specific areas that may be most appropriate, which can be a barrier to local economic growth. Similarly, areas where future development should be discouraged, such as agricultural land or sensitive natural resources, may not be effectively protected. As expressed by many residents and town officials during the first Master Plan Public Forum held on January 29, 2014, the current zoning bylaw has prevented mixed uses in town and therefore made it impossible to create a vibrant village center.

While a comprehensive zoning diagnostic will need to be conducted to assess what changes are needed to update the existing zoning bylaw, the following section offers an overview of the zoning districts and the key provisions of the bylaw.

Dighton has established four general zoning districts as follows:

- Residence
- Business
- Open Recreation and Conservation
- Industrial

Additionally, the following overlay districts were also created:

- Flood Hazard Overlay District to minimize inappropriate development within designated floodplain areas.
- Water Resource Protection District is designed to protect municipal wells and recharge areas.
- Industrial Overlay District was established to allow more flexible use of a portion of the Industrial District in an effort to encourage the reuse of vacant or underutilized industrial sites.
- Medical Overlay District, which establishes controls specifically for medical-related uses at locations where such uses currently exist or would be appropriate based on accessibility and locational considerations.

Notable provisions in the zoning bylaw include:

- The Town allows accessory apartments
- Phased growth has been instituted so as not to unduly strain the Town's ability to provide public facilities and services
- Shared parking is permitted in certain circumstances
- Environmental performance standards and landscaping requirements have been adopted, although they should be updated
- Conservation subdivisions are allowed with the issuance of a special permit
- The Town allows large-scale or small-scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic installations
- Site plan review is required for most projects aside from the construction of single-family housing.

### ***Land Use Priority Areas***

In 2008, as part of the South Coast Rail project, three Regional Planning Agencies including the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), worked with local residents, business owners, officials, and organizations to designate the areas that were most important for development or preservation in each community within the South Coast Rail project region. In 2013, a follow-up report presented the updated Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) for each of the towns, including Dighton. The updates took into account new data that became available since the original report as well as new municipal

priorities. The “Five-Year Update” presented an opportunity to confirm choices made during the 2008 process, to revise previous designations, and to make new choices that acknowledged new conditions.<sup>3</sup>

The following is a summary of the designated sites based on the 2013 analysis. More detail will be provided in the Economic Development chapter for the Priority Development Areas and in the Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources chapter for the Priority Preservation Areas.

#### Priority Development Areas

##### **1. Maxaldan Corporation Complex and Dighton Industries**

These two sites are roughly within Industrial and Business Zoning District along Route 138. The purposes of these designations are to promote industrial, commercial, or mixed-use redevelopment of the underutilized industrial site. Any future development should acknowledge its proximity to the natural and scenic resources of the Three Mile and Taunton Rivers and enhance public recreational access to these areas.

##### **2. Zeneca Property**

The purpose of this designation is to promote industrial, commercial, or mixed use redevelopment of the previously disturbed footprint of the industrial site. Any future redevelopment should acknowledge its proximity to the Muddy Cove PPA and enhance public recreational access to the Cove.

##### **3. Manheim Site**

This site includes selected disturbed parcels that contain the Manheim Auto auction facility. The purpose is to promote light industrial or commercial redevelopment of the previously disturbed footprint of this underutilized site.

##### **4. Route 44 Business Corridor**

The site boundaries correspond to the Business Zoning District along Route 44 excluding areas within the Surface Water Protection Area PPA and the Segregansett Aquifer PPA. This site is primarily for mixed-use, commercial and infill redevelopment.

##### **5. Route 138 Business District**

The site is roughly within the Business Zoning District north of Main Street along Route 138, excluding areas within the Pidges Swamp, Muddy Cove Brook, and Sunken Brook BioMap 2 Corridor PPA. The site is designated for business redevelopment.

<sup>3</sup> South Coast Rail Corridor Plan Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas – Dighton, SRPEDD, 2013

**6. Dighton Power and Advanced Loose Leaf**

The site includes selected parcels containing these facilities excluding the environmentally sensitive areas mentioned above for the Route 138 Business District and is designated for industrial redevelopment.

**Priority Protection Areas**

**1. Pidges Swamp, Muddy Cove Brook, and Sunken Brook BioMap 2 Corridor**

This represents one larger consolidated area when compared with the 2008 designation. The purpose of the designation is to protect the swamp, brooks and their associated habitats.

**2. Three Mile River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)**

This area is designated for the protection of the Three Mile River.

**3. Town Forest**

The Town Forest is a significant piece of open space and is located within the Open Recreation and Conservation Zoning District.

**4. Maple Swamp**

This area is also located within the Open Recreation and Conservation Zoning District and is identified for preservatuion of the swamp and its habitat.

**5. Zone A Surface Water Protection Areas**

This designation is made to ensure preservation of the Town's public drinking water sources.

**6. Aquifer Overlay District**

This designation is also made to protect the Town's public drinking water sources and it falls within the Aquifer Overlay Zoning District.

**7. Segregansett River Aquifer**

This designation is also made to protect the Town's public drinking water sources and it falls within the Aquifer Overlay Zoning District.

**8. Waterfront Protection Area**

This area is designated to protect the waterfront of the Segregansett River, including the Bristol County Agricultural School and the aquifer that underlies the area.

**9. Horton Farm**

Horton Farm is to be preserved because of its active agricultural operations and to preserve prime farmland.

**10. Muddy Cove**

Muddy Cove is designated to maintain public access to the Cove.

**11. Broad Cove**

This area is ecologically valuable and may contain archaeological resources as well.

## 12. Council Oak

This site is an important cultural and historic resource.

### Combined Priority Areas

Two areas were designated as combined priority areas – Shaw’s Boatyard and Main Street. Shaw’s Boatyard is important to the Town as an active boatyard use while emphasizing the need to protect the Taunton River and its associated natural resources. The goal is to promote limited, context-sensitive development of the boatyard. The redevelopment of Main Street is important to the Town because of the potential redevelopment opportunities and the desire to establish a village center that maintains the historic character of the area.

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## Goals

- Goal 1.** Undertake a comprehensive review of the zoning bylaw and incorporate new smart growth zoning tools and techniques.
- Goal 2.** Preserve Dighton’s rural character and agricultural heritage that makes the Town special.
- Goal 3.** Establish a vibrant village center that provides town residents with places to live, work, and shop locally.
- Goal 4.** Encourage the reuse and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings and land in Dighton to increase the Town’s economic vitality.

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## Recommendations

- The Dighton Zoning Bylaw has not been revised and updated in a comprehensive manner in many years. Consequently, it is out-of-date, difficult to use, and does not include the types of smart growth tools and techniques that have been employed by numerous other communities in Massachusetts and around the country. Land use and development has changed substantially over the years and it is important for the Town to “keep up with the times”. Additionally, if the zoning regulations are not updated to reflect desired land use policy, some land could be at risk to inappropriate development or it can be concentrated in areas where the infrastructure is insufficient to support the new growth.

The Town should conduct a thorough review and comprehensive update of the zoning bylaw that addresses issues including format of the bylaw to make it more user-friendly, land uses, dimensional regulations, parking requirements, supplemental development regulations (landscaping, stormwater management, etc.), and potential new provisions that incorporate smart growth tools designed to steer development where appropriate and preserve natural resources.

- The Town should prepare a redevelopment plan and strategy for the Route 138 Business Corridor to create a central business or village center area. As part of the zoning update process, the Town should amend the zoning bylaw to designate this area around the intersection of Somerset Avenue (Route 138) and Center Street as a new Mixed Use or Village Center Zoning District. The zoning should encourage more mixed use development, small-scaled multi-family residential, and local retail and service businesses such as shops, offices and restaurants.

The Town is in the process of drafting a new Mixed Use Overlay District for this area. Its purpose is to encourage interaction among activities in the area, enhance business vitality, promote efficient use of land and buildings, reduce traffic, ensure compatibility between residential and commercial uses, and encourage building design that is harmonious with the existing structures in the area.

- Incorporate open space residential design (OSRD), which is an updated version of conservation subdivisions, as a by-right residential land use to encourage the preservation of open space while creating a new option for single-family residential development. OSRD can be an effective tool for open space preservation for smaller project sites and its use would be encouraged by streamlining the permitting process for developers. This is more effective than increasing lot size as a means to reduce the overall impacts of development while preserving more contiguous tracts of land for open space. Some communities require OSRD for all subdivisions as the default, and would only allow conventional subdivisions with a special permit.
- Consider establishing zoning incentives to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of existing properties, particularly vacant or underutilized industrial buildings such as the Zeneca property and other priority development areas. Such incentives could include density bonuses, expedited review, or flexibility in the uses to be allowed on the site.

- Consider changes to the zoning bylaw that would allow tourism/recreational uses in key areas along the Taunton River in an effort to attract businesses connected with boating and fishing in the river. Such uses can include lodging such as bed and breakfasts and inns, restaurants, and retail services related to waterfront recreation.

# 2 Housing

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## Introduction

Over the past 30 years Dighton's population has grown by 1,734 or 32.3 percent from 5,352 in 1980 to 7,086 in 2010 with more than half of this growth occurring over the last 10 years. As this growth continues Dighton will face the ongoing challenge of addressing increasing housing needs including affordable housing. Although home prices have declined more than 37 percent since 2007, housing activity and home prices have rebounded due to a combination of historically low interest rates, higher employment and first-time home buyer opportunities. With the improved economy, there has been renewed interest from developers building new housing and in comprehensive permits to create affordable housing opportunities. As such, Dighton anticipates significant development and improvement towards the Town's affordable housing target in the near future.

The Housing Element of the Master Plan will review the current housing conditions and trends in Dighton, assess the housing needs and examine the issues of housing affordability. The Town of Dighton has recently completed its Housing Production Plan in 2013 and significant components of that plan have been included in this chapter.

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## Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment presents an overview of the current housing situation in the Town of Dighton, providing the context within which a responsive set of strategies can be developed to address the Town's housing needs.

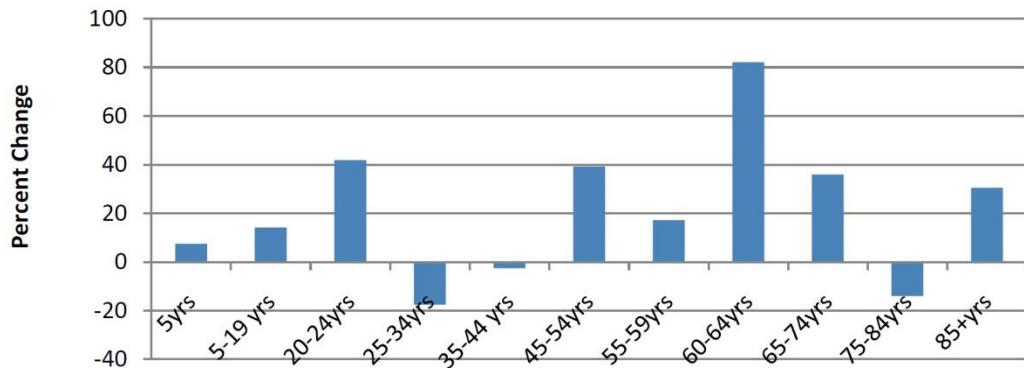
Table 2-1 summarized demographic and housing characteristics in Dighton and compares this information with Bristol County and the state.

### *Population*

From 2000 to 2010 Dighton's population increased by 911 or 14.7 percent, which has put substantial pressure on local services and has caused local leaders to reflect on how to

better plan for continued growth as Dighton's population is projected to be up to 7,444 by 2020 and has the potential to be above 30,000 at full build-out.

**Figure 2-1 Population Change by Age Group, 2000-2010**



Source: US Census Bureau

**Table 2-1 Summary of Key Demographic and Housing Characteristics, 2011**

Characteristics	Dighton	Bristol County	Massachusetts
Total Population	7,086	548,285	6,547,629
% less than 19 years	28.0%	18.1%	24.8%
% 20 to 34 years	13.5%	18.4%	20.2%
% 35 to 44 years	15.8%	-	-
% 45 to 54 years	17.8%	15.8%	15.5%
% 55 to 64 years	11.8%	-	-
% 65 years or more	13.2%	14.2%	13.8%
Median age	40.9 years	39.8 years	39.1 years
% Non-family households	23.3%	32.9%	36.4%
Average household size	2.91 persons	2.54 persons	2.49 persons
Median income	\$85,284	\$55,813	\$65,981
Individuals in poverty	3.5%	11.3%	10.7%
% earning less than \$25,000	14.9%	24.5%	20.0%
% earning more than \$100,000	40.2%	24.6%	31.1%
% Occupied housing	100%	91.5%	90.1%
% Owner-occupied	89.9%	64.0%	63.6%
% Renter-occupied	10.1%	36.0%	36.4%
% in single-family detached structures	85.1%	52.8%	52.4%
Median Value	\$336,200	\$296,400	\$343,500

Source: U.S. Census and ACS 2007-2011

In comparison to Bristol County and state in general, Dighton's population tends to be slightly older with a median age of 40.9 years as opposed to 39.8 years for the county and 39.1 years for Massachusetts. The Town also has a larger portion of school-age children with 28 percent of the total population under 19 years of age. However the age group representing 20 to 34 years of age makes up 13.5 percent of the population, which is lower compared to the state and county, and dropped significantly since the 2000 Census. The escalating costs of homeownership are likely

creating barriers for this age group and making it increasingly difficult for those who were raised in Dighton to raise their own families locally. In addition, Dighton has a somewhat higher percentage of those between 45 and 54 years of age who are entering the prime of their earning potential and are more able to afford the higher cost of housing. For individuals 65 years of age or older, the Town has a smaller portion compared to the county and the state.

In terms of income level, the median income of Dighton residents per 2011 census data was significantly higher than that of the state and county, \$ 85,284 in Dighton opposed to \$ 65,981 and \$55,813 for the state and county respectively. The percentage of those earning less than \$25,000 annually in Dighton was lower than the county and state and Dighton has a lower percentage of individuals living in poverty as well.

### ***Changing Town Population Profile and Changing Needs***

*The demographic profile of Dighton has changed from 2000 to 2010 in ways that indicate that various segments of the Town's population have needs that should be addressed, particularly for:*

- ✓ *The young adult professional population, young families and other young work-aged adults that need some incentives or opportunities to continue to reside in the town.*
- ✓ *The growing population approaching retirement, as well as those 65 years and over who are already in retirement.*

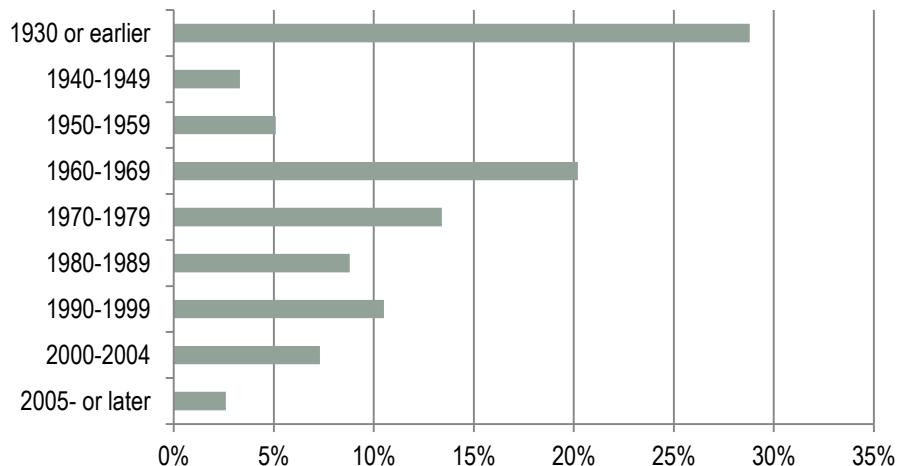
### ***Housing Supply and Housing Market***

Dighton's housing stock increased by 106 or 4.6 percent between 2000 and 2010. At full build-out the number of housing units in Dighton is expected to increase 8,414 and student population is projected to increase from 1,734 in 2000 to an additional 4,695 students.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Projection by Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

The 2011 American Community Survey indicated 2,031 units or 85.1 percent of all housing units were single-family detached, which is considerably higher than the 52.8 percent level for Bristol County and the 52.4 percent level for the state as a whole. Dighton has a very small number of mobile homes or trailers, only 7 units in 2010. About 57 percent of Dighton's housing stock was built before 1970.

**Figure 2-2 Year Homes Built Pre 1939 - 2011**



Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2007-2011

From a financial standpoint, the 2011 median housing prices provides a comparison of the Dighton housing market to that of Bristol County and the state, with varying housing market values, \$336,400 for Dighton, \$296,400 for the county and \$343,500 for the state. Recent sales data from the Multiple Listing Service for single-family homes in Dighton indicated that there were few listing for single-family homes under \$200,000 with the exception of condominiums that would be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) most recent data on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, Dighton has 2,586<sup>2</sup> year-round housing units, of which 110 were counted as affordable, representing 4.3 percent of the year-round housing stock.

<sup>2</sup> DHCD bases the Subsidized Housing Inventory on the 2010 U.S. Census data. See <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/hd/shi/shiinventory.pdf> for the inventory as of April 30, 2013.

## ***Housing Occupancy and Household Characteristics***

All of the 2,386<sup>3</sup> housing units in Dighton were occupied in 2011, of which 2,144 or 89.1 percent were owner-occupied while the remaining 242 units were rental units. This represents a significantly higher level of owner-occupancy than that for both the county and the state.

**Table 2-2 Household Characteristics: Dighton 2000-2011**

	2000		2011		2000-2011
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	% Change
Total Households	2,201	100	2,386	100	8.4
Family households:	1,718	78.1	1,901	79.7	10.7
With own children under 18 yrs.	823	37.4	672	28.2	-18.3
Married-couple family:	1,419	64.5	1,514	63.5	6.6
With own children under 18 yrs.	681	30.9	620	26.0	-8.9
Female householder, no husband	217	9.9	294	12.3	35.4
With own children under 18 yrs.	112	5.1	39	1.6	-65.1
Nonfamily households	483	21.9	485	20.3	0.41
Householder living alone	414	18.8	410	17.2	-0.96
Householder 65+ yrs. and over	213	9.7	236	9.9	10.7
Average household size	2.78	-	2.91	-	-
Average family size	3.17	-	3.34	-	-

**Source:** US Census-ACS 2007-2011 Estimates

Dighton had a lower proportion of non-family households, 23.3 percent versus 36.4 percent for the state and 32.9 percent for the county. This correlates to the higher number of families with children in Dighton and higher median household size of 2.91 persons as opposed to 2.54 for the county and 2.49 persons statewide.

<sup>3</sup> These figures are based on the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2007 – 2011 estimates.

### ***Summary of Dighton's Current Housing Status***

- ✓ *Dighton's housing is comprised of mostly detached single-family structures, condominiums are relatively new. The town's housing stock is older with nearly 30% of the existing housing structures built after 1980.*
- ✓ *The majority of housing units in Dighton are owner-occupied. The vacancy rate for rental was higher than that of owner-occupied units in 2010.*
- ✓ *From 2000 to 2012 Dighton issued more building permits than three of its neighboring communities but less than Taunton, Rehoboth and Swansea.*
- ✓ *Although the gap or difference between the median sales price and the cost affordable to households with family income equivalent to the area median has been eliminated over the past few years, median sale prices are rising and as the real estate market recovers housing cost will again outpace increases in family incomes.*



**Residential Neighborhood in Dighton**

## ***Housing Needs and Challenges***

Due to the rising costs of homeownership, including escalating costs associated with taxes, insurance and utilities, some residents are finding it increasingly difficult to afford to remain in Dighton. Children who grew up in town are now facing the possibility that they may not be able to return to raise their own families locally. Long-term residents, especially the elderly, are finding that they are less able to maintain their homes and keep up with increased expenses, but are unable to find alternative housing that better meets their current lifestyles. Families are finding it more difficult to “buy up”, purchasing larger homes as their families grow.

Dighton’s housing needs are primarily affected by the following factors:

### **1. Households with limited incomes**

Despite increasing household income, there still remains a population living in Dighton with very limited financial means. For example, in 2011 there were 355 or 14.9 percent households earning less than \$25,000 in income and of these 248 individuals has earnings below the poverty level. Given the high cost of housing, more subsidized rental housing is necessary to make living in Dighton affordable, particular to residents who have very limited financial means. In addition, there is also a need to produce housing that is accessible for those earning above 80 percent of the median income but still shut out of the private housing market.

### **2. Gaps in affordability and access to affordable housing**

Housing prices have increased by 40 percent since 2000 and there are few homes for less than \$200,000 in the private housing market that would be affordable to low-and-moderate income households. The gaps in affordability and access to affordable housing ask for a wider range of affordable housing options including first-time homeownership, particularly for younger households entering the job market and forming their own families.

### **3. Disabilities and special needs**

There were 938 individuals who claimed some type of disability in 2010 and 481 of them, or more than 60 percent, were identified as seniors age 65 and over. The Town’s senior population is also growing. In light of this trend, some amount of new housing should be built that is adaptable or accessible to the disabled, including seniors, and supportive services should be integrated into housing for this population as well.

#### 4. Housing conditions

About 57 percent of Dighton's housing stock was built before 1970, and it is likely that some units will have building and sanitary code violations as well as lead paint and potential septic problems and thus need improvement. There is a need for programs that support necessary home improvements, including de-leading and septic repairs for units occupied by low- and moderate- income households, particularly the elderly living on fixed incomes.

##### ***What is Affordable Housing under Chapter 40B?***

- ✓ *Housing must be part of a “subsidized” development built by a public agency, non profit or limited dividend corporation.*
- ✓ *At least 25% of the units in the development must be income restricted to households with incomes at or below 80% of area median income and have rents or sales prices restricted to affordable levels. Restrictions must run at least 15 years for rehabilitation, 30 years for new construction and in perpetuity for new homeownership.*
- ✓ *Development must be subjected to a regulatory agreement and monitored by a public agency or non-profit organization.*
- ✓ *Project sponsors must meet affirmative marketing requirements.*

Despite the commitment to producing affordable housing in Dighton, there are a number of challenges and constraints for the Town and developers to build enough housing to meet the state's 10 percent affordable housing standards:

##### 1. Zoning

As in most communities, a zoning bylaw is enacted to control the use of land including patterns of housing development. Dighton's Zoning Bylaw, like most localities in Massachusetts, embraces large-lot zoning of 35,000 square feet and other restrictive minimum area requirements. While this zoning was put in place to slow development, preserve the Town's rural character and accommodate septic systems in compliance with Title V requirements, the zoning maintains lower housing densities that could constrain the construction of affordable housing and promote sprawl.

##### 2. Infrastructure

Most of Dighton is served by municipal water. Those remaining areas rely on the use of private wells. Sewer service is limited, concentrated around the town center area and to

the north. In other areas of town, properties must rely on septic systems, if special treatment facilities are not integrated into new development. In those areas of town without sewer service in particular, new housing production must carefully comply with Title V standards and be sensitive to water quality issues, which while essential, contribute to higher development costs. It will be important for the Town to grow at a pace that will not place undue burdens on local infrastructure, especially local services, expanding services where appropriate.

### 3. Environmental Concerns

Most residents are aware of the Town's natural wealth and are concerned about conserving it, including the Taunton River, Segregansett River and the Three Mile River, wetlands, vernal pools, forest and other habitats. While regulations to protect the environment are important and essential, they present challenges to development by reducing the amount of buildable land and increasing the time and cost of developing new housing.

### 4. Public Transportation

Public transportation in Dighton is limited. Commuter rail stations are planned for two locations in neighboring Taunton. There is some public transportation service provided by the Greater Attleboro/Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) via a single route along Route 44 and Warner Boulevard servicing primarily the Dighton industries area. It should be noted that 2011 census data (ACS) indicated that about 94 percent of employed residents used a car as a means to travel to work and 75 percent of households had two or more cars.

### 5. School Enrollment

Enrollment figures from the Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District indicate small decreases in the number of school-age children. From 2010, school enrollment numbers for the District show a total of 3,097 students from kindergarten through high school (1,277 were Dighton residents). The total dropped slightly in 2013 to 2,930 for the District and 1,166 for Dighton residents.<sup>4</sup>

### 6. Availability of subsidized funds

Federal and state financial resources to subsidize affordable housing preservation and production as well as rental assistance has suffered significant budget cuts, making

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Antonellis, Business Administrator, Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District, August 21,2014.

funding more limited and extremely competitive. Communities through the Commonwealth are finding it increasingly difficult to secure necessary funding and must be creative in determining how to finance project and secure resources.

## 7. Community Perceptions

Affordable housing, subsidized housing, low-income housing, Section 8, etc. – these terms can conjure imagines of potential neglect, plunging property values, increased crime, and even tensions concerning class and race. On the other hand, with increased real estate prices, community perceptions have been tilting towards the realization that affordable housing is needed in the community. More people are recognizing that the kindergarten teacher, their grown children, or the elderly neighbor may not be able to afford to live or remain in the community. It is this growing awareness, impending 40B developments, and some appreciation that affordable housing can be well designed and integrated into the community, which are spurring communities such as Dighton to take a more proactive stance in support of affordable initiatives.<sup>5</sup>

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## Community Preservation Act

In 2010, the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which in Dighton adds a one percent surcharge to the property tax bills. The Town established the Dighton Community Preservation Committee (DCPC) and prepared a Community Preservation Plan in 2012. This provides the Town with a funding source for community housing activities consistent with that plan.

Community housing created using CPA should meet the Chapter 40B criteria that allows for the units to be counted on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. CPA funds can be used for the acquisition, creation, preservation and support of community housing. If CPA funds were used to create the housing, the Town can use additional CPA funds to rehabilitate or restore that housing.

The DCPC Community Preservation Plan highlighted several recommendations, which are discussed in more detail below:

- Explore creation of a municipal affordable housing trust

<sup>5</sup> Dighton Housing Production Plan, prepared for the Dighton Planning Board by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), February 2014, pp. 7-8

- Support public and private efforts to create affordable housing for low-income Dighton residents
- Conduct a feasibility analysis to identify town-owned parcels that may be developed to create affordable housing units
- Rehabilitate town-owned buildings to create affordable housing opportunities
- Provide opportunities for elderly and disabled persons to rehabilitate their homes in exchange for a deed restriction

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## Goals

**Goal 1.** Meet local needs across the full range of housing options, ownership/ rental and housing types at all income levels promoting the stability of individuals and families in Dighton.

**Goal 2.** Add housing stock compatible with the Town's rural qualities and sensitive natural resources.

**Goal 3.** Preserve the existing housing stock including units that are affordable.

**Goal 4.** Pro-actively pursue new affordable housing opportunities to meet the 10 percent state affordable housing goal.

**Goal 5.** Promote smart growth development.

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## Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are based on the February 2014 Housing Production Plan, the housing needs assessment and housing goals above. Over the next five years, the Town of Dighton will continue to maintain the housing production goals established for the 2009 to 2013 Housing Production Plan. Annual production goals of 0.50 percent of the community's year-round housing stock translates into 13 units per year, or 1.0 percent (26 units) over two years, meaning that Dighton will now have to produce at least 13 units affordable units annually to meet the housing production goals. CPA funding can be a valuable tool in helping to implement some of these recommendations.

The strategies are grouped according to the type of action proposed – Building Local Capacity, Planning and Regulatory Reforms, Housing Production, and Housing Preservation. More specific details can be found in the Housing Production Plan.

## **1. Local Capacity Building**

In order to achieve the housing goals, it will be important for the Town of Dighton to build its capacity to promote affordable housing activities. This activity includes gaining access to greater resources – financial and technical – as well as building local political support, continuing to develop partnership with public and private developers and lenders, and creating and augmenting local organizations and systems that will support new housing production.

- Encourage training for board and committee members**

Promote opportunities for town boards and committee members to take advantage of ongoing training and educational programs related to affordable housing.

- Secure professional support**

If funding is available hire the necessary professional support to effectively coordinate the implementation of various components of the updated Housing Production Plan.

- Create a municipal Affordable Housing Trust**

Establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust to create a Housing Trust Fund dedicated to promoting affordable housing and as a permanent municipal entity for overseeing the implementation of the updated Housing Production Plan.

- Access housing resources**

Reach out to private, public and nonprofit entities to secure additional housing resources – technical and financial – in support of efforts to produce affordable housing.

## **2. Planning and Regulatory Strategies**

The Town of Dighton should consider the following planning and zoning related strategies to provide appropriate incentives and guidance to promote the creation of additional affordable units:

- Develop a Comprehensive Permit Policy**

Adopt a Comprehensive Permit Policy to provide the developer with information on the Town's expectation regarding comprehensive permit applications and provide the developer with greater predictability on what the Town is willing to

approve in order for the Town to create new affordable units that meet development criteria, local needs and housing production goals.

- **Incentivize Conservation Subdivision Bylaw**

As described in the land use chapter, Open Space Residential Design is an updated form of the Town's Conservation Subdivision Bylaw. As a way to incentivize such subdivisions could be allowed by right and density bonus incentives can be offered if affordable units are provided as part of the development.

- **Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw**

Adopt inclusionary zoning to ensure that any new residential development in Dighton provides a percentage of affordable units or cash in lieu of units. This bylaw applies to development that typically meet local zoning requirements, but most communities have determined it appropriate to incorporate density bonuses in their inclusionary bylaw. Many of the communities that have inclusionary zoning in place are reaping the rewards of these actions through the creation of actual affordable units and/or cash contributions to the locality for investment in affordable housing production. Most of the bylaws include mandated percentages of units that must be affordable, typically 10 percent to 20 percent and density bonuses. Some have allowed the development of affordable housing off-site and/or cash in lieu of actual units.

- **Promote Mixed-use Development**

Promote mixed-use residential and commercial development through changes in the Zoning Bylaw, directing such development to places in town that already allow commercial uses and are better suited to higher density development and requiring some amount of affordability.

- **Adopt a Duplex Development Bylaw**

Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow duplex or two-family dwellings if at least one of the units is affordable and can be counted as part of the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

- **Allow Starter Housing on Nonconforming Lots**

Explore zoning options for promoting starter homes on lots that do not meet minimum area or dimensional requirements but might still be suitable for the development of starter housing. Prepare and adopt a Zoning Bylaw to enable these lots to be developed under specific criteria.

- **Allow a Wider Range of Housing Types**

Promote greater housing diversity by allowing a broader mix of dwelling types based on specific conditions and in appropriate locations.

### 3. Housing Production Strategies

To accomplish the housing goals, it will be essential for the Town of Dighton to reach out to the development community and sources of public and private financing to secure the necessary technical and financial resources to create actual affordable units. While some of the units produced may rely on the participation of existing homeowners, most of the production will require joint ventures with developers – for profit and non-profit – to create affordable housing.

- **Make publicly-owned land available for affordable housing**

Convey suitable Town-owned properties to developers for some amount of affordable housing based on identified local terms and conditions.

- **Support private development in line with local guidelines**

Reach out to local developers who have been active in producing affordable housing to discuss the Town's interest in promoting these units, possible areas and opportunities for new development, local guidelines and priorities for new development, and prospects for working together in the future.

- **Convert existing housing to long-term affordability**

Explore various program models for converting existing housing units that have long-term affordability restrictions and prepare an implementation plan that outlines program procedures and the respective roles and responsibilities of various municipal staff person and boards and committees.

- **Encourage adaptive reuse**

Encourage the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized or obsolete property into mixed or residential use.

### 4. Housing Preservation

The town should also make efforts to refer eligible homeowners to existing programs that can address the deferred home maintenance needs of the lower income residents, including seniors.

- **Help qualifying homeowner's access housing assistance**

Disseminate information and make referrals to local, regional and state programs that provide technical and financial assistance to help qualifying property owners make necessary home improvements including building code violations, septic repairs, handicapped accessibility improvements, lead paint removal and weatherization.

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DIGHTON

MASTER PLAN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

August 2014

## **Federal Disclaimer, Title VI and Nondiscrimination Notice of Rights of Beneficiaries, Spanish and Portuguese Requests for Translation**

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SRPEDD  
Lilia Cabral  
Title VI / Nondiscrimination Coordinator  
88 Broadway  
Taunton, MA 02780  
(508) 824-1367

MCAD  
One Ashburton Place, 6th Floor  
Boston, MA 02109  
(617) 994-6000  
TTY: (617) 994-6196

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SCR TA Project: *Town of Dighton Economic Development Element of Master Plan 2015*

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# Section I: Economic Development FINAL DRAFT

## I.0 Economic Profile

### Introduction

The Town of Dighton is a small, mixed rural and suburban community located in Bristol County, Southeastern Massachusetts bordered by Taunton on the north, Taunton River and Berkley on the east, Somerset and Swansea on the south and Rehoboth on the west. Dighton is about 40 miles south of Boston and 13 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. Although access to Dighton is limited via Routes 138 and 44 the region offers excellent highway facilities and access. Principle highways include Interstate 495, Route 24 as well as Route 6 providing access to Boston, Cape Cod and Providence, RI.

Dighton named in honor of Frances Dighton, the wife of Richard Williams a local elder was incorporated in 1712 and initial began as a farming community in the late 1670's. Due to its proximity to the Taunton River it later became a port of entry attracting shipbuilding, manufacturing industries, cotton mills and farming. Today, Dighton is primarily a residential suburb retaining much of its small town rural character. Many of the farms have been sold for housing development and there are several industries providing employment opportunities including Manheim, Advanced Looseleaf Technologies, Draka and Dighton Power among others.

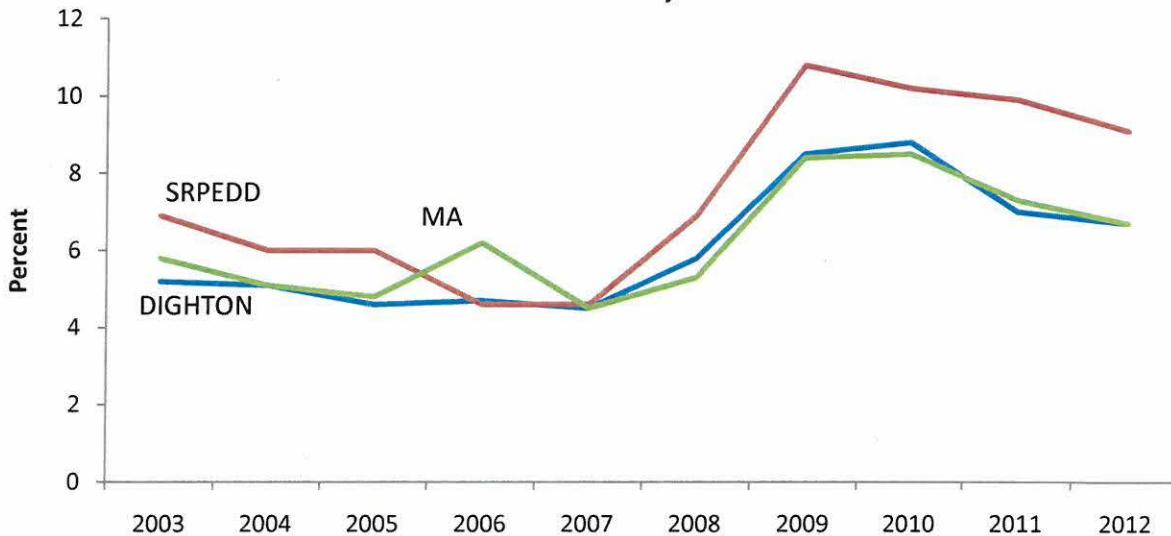
### A. Labor Force and Employment

Dighton Unemployment Rates Compared to SRPEDD and MA 2004 -2012										
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>
SRPEDD	6.0%	6.0%	4.6%	4.6%	6.9%	10.8%	10.2%	9.9%	9.1%	9.5%
MA	5.1%	4.8%	6.2%	4.5%	5.3%	8.4%	8.5%	7.3%	6.7%	7.1%

Source: MA EOLWD

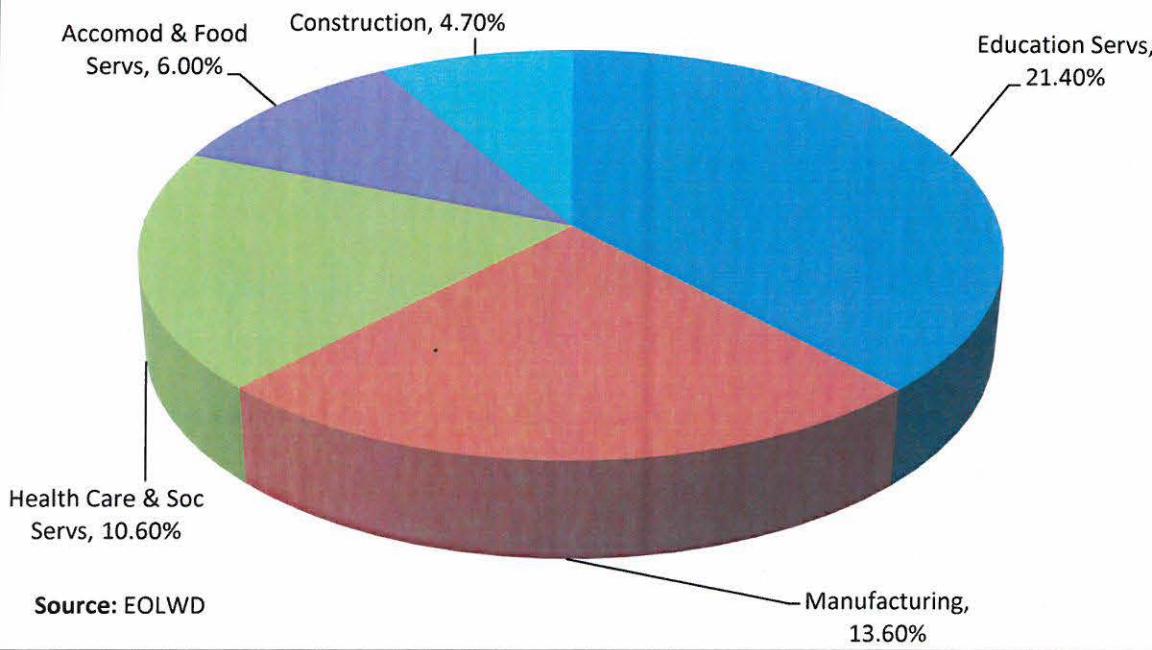
**Table I-1** provides comparative unemployment rates for Dighton, SRPEDD and Massachusetts from 2004 to 2013. Overall Dighton experienced a lower unemployment rate than Massachusetts and SRPEDD with about 6.2% verse 6.4% and 7.8% respectively. Dighton's lowest rate was identified in 2007 with 4.5% and highest rate in 2010 with 8.8%. These rates were comparable to the statewide rates for the same period but slightly higher than 8.5% in 2010. Over the last few years unemployment rates have improved in Dighton and statewide with rates fairly stable verse regional rates also improving but over 2.0% higher.

**Fig I-1. Dighton Unemployment Rates Compared to SRPEDD and MA, 2004-2013**



Data compiled by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) for 2012 identifies Dighton's leading industry sectors by employment including educational services (21.4%), manufacturing (13.6%), health care and social assistance services (10.6%), accommodation and food services (6.0) and construction (4.7%). **Figure 1.2** below, provides an illustration of this data.

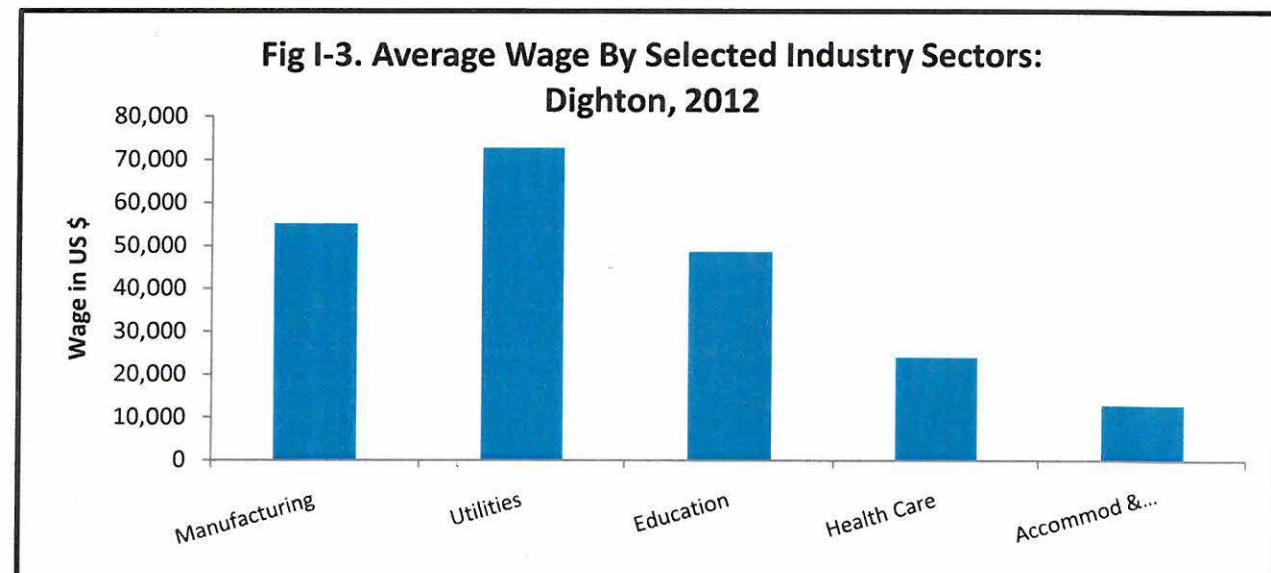
**Fig I-2. Employment By Industry: Dighton 2012**



**Table I-2** provides data on the average annual wage by industry for Dighton including the number of establishments and the number of employees. Utilities are identified with the highest average wage of \$72,800, followed by manufacturing with \$55,224 and educational services providing an annual average wage of \$48,672. Although the utility industry provides good wages employment is low compared to educational services and manufacturing. Both accommodation and food services, and health care and social assistance services represent leading employment industries in Dighton but offer some of the lowest wages with \$12,948 and \$24,076 respectively.

Table I-2. Average Wage By Industry: Dighton 2012			
Industry	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees	Average Annual Wage
All Industries	166	1,782	\$38,012
Construction	31	85	\$48,256
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>\$55,224</b>
<b>Utilities</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>\$72,800</b>
Retail Trade	15	54	\$25,844
Transportation and Warehousing	9	77	\$42,172
Finance and Insurance	5	24	\$34,788
Professional and Technical Services	10	36	\$36,920
Administrative and Waste Services	11	36	\$32,396
<b>Educational Services</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>\$48,672</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance Services	13	189	\$24,076
Accommodation and Food Services	7	107	\$12,948
Other Services, Ex Public Adm	20	33	\$17,888

Source: EOLWD-NAICS



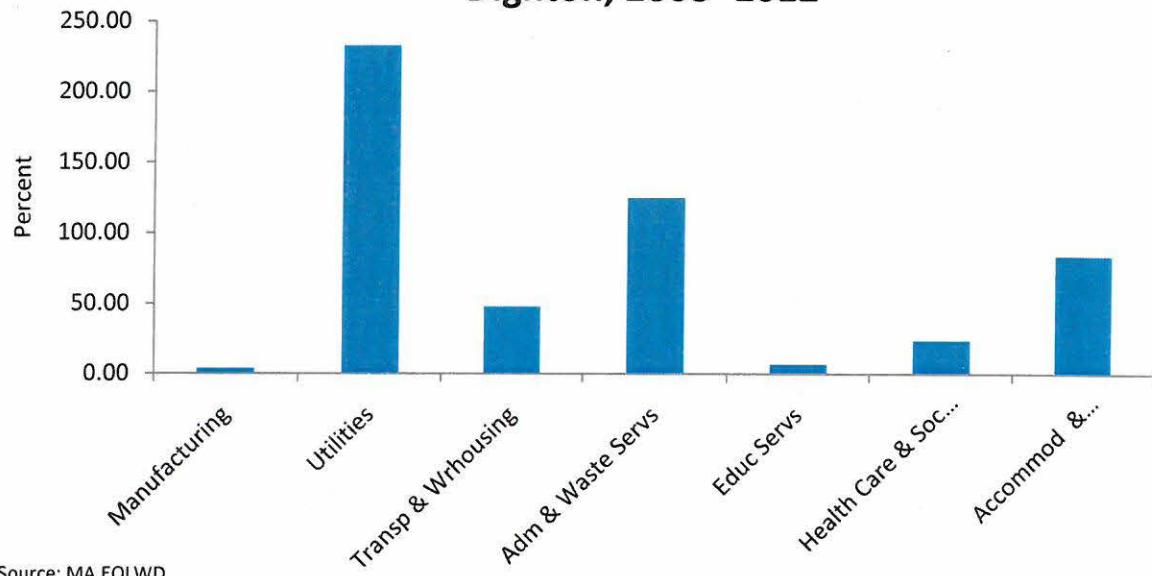
A review of employment growth by industry presented in **Table I-3** identifies that over the last five years from 2008 to 2012 Dighton experienced employment increases in about 75% of all

	Table I-3. Employment by Industry, Dighton 2008 – 2012														
	Total Bus	Ave. Wage	Const	Man	Utility	Ret	Trans & Ware	F&I	Prof & Tech	Adm Wast	ED	Health Care & Social Ser	Acmd & Food Ser	Other	
2008	163	\$37,024	116	236		54	52	28	51	16	356	152	58	20	
2009	161	\$37,700	108	205	12	55	48	27	40	19	349	164	71	23	
2010	164	\$37,336	85	244	39	57	64	24	30	36	381	161	75	28	
2011	173	\$37,648	75	247	50	45	66	24	32	36	384	171	93	35	
2012	166	\$38,012	85	244	40	54	77	24	36	36	382	189	107	33	
% Chg	1.8%	2.6%	(26.7%)	3.5%	233%	0	48%	(14.2%)	(29.4%)	125%	7.3%	24.3%	84.4%	65%	

Source: EOLWD

industry sectors. Although the total employment numbers are small, employment in utilities and administrative and waste services experienced the highest growth with 233% and 125% respectively. Perhaps more significant is the growth of 84.4% in accommodation and food service, 65% in other services and 24.3% in health care and social assistance. In addition, growth occurred in transportation and warehousing, educational services and manufacturing identified with 48%, 7.3% and 3.5% respectively.

**Fig I-4. Percent Growth in Selected Industry Sectors:  
Dighton, 2008- 2012**



Source: MA EOLWD

## B. Educational Attainment

The US Census under the American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2012 identifies educational attainment levels for Dighton and surrounding communities in **Table I-4**.

<b>Table I-4. Educational Attainment 2012</b> <b>Dighton and Surrounding Communities</b>		
	% High School Education	% College Education
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>90.3%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>
Berkley	87.0%	24.4%
Rehoboth	93.1%	35.4%
Somerset	83.9%	27.3%
Swansea	87.3%	22.2%
Taunton	81.2%	19.2%
Bristol County	81.3%	25.2%
MA	89.1%	39.0%

**Source:** American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2012

Out of five surrounding communities Dighton ranked second with 90.3 % of persons over the age of 25 with a high school education and 33.2% with a college education behind Rehoboth with 93.1% and 35.4% educational attainment levels. Among the communities, Taunton was identified with the lowest education attainment levels with high school education at 81.2% and college education at 19.2%. In comparing Dighton to Bristol County, Dighton outperformed Bristol County as a whole while falling behind the state college education attainment level of 39.0%.

## C. Employment Base

The jobs-to-labor force ratio is an indicator of whether a community is a net importer or exporter of employment. If a community has a ratio of less than one (1) it is represented as a net exporter of employment, if a community has a ratio of greater than one (1) it is a net importer of employment. In Dighton's case, as shown in **Table I-5**, the ratio for 2010 was .66 indicating the Town as an exporter of employment. In other words, there are more residents in the labor force than there are jobs in Dighton. A review of the journey-to-work data from 2000 to 2010 by the Census Transportation Planning Program (CTPP) identifies a slight increase in the ratio from .65 to .66, perhaps signaling a trend. First, the data reveals that in 2010 fewer residents were leaving Dighton to find employment and second, there was an increase in the amount of people coming to Dighton for employment (see **Table I-6**).

**Table I-5.**  
**Jobs to Labor Force Ratio**

	2000	2010
Dighton Jobs	1,518	1,554
Dighton Labor Force (emp)	2,340	2,340
Job/Labor Force Ratio	.65	.66

Source: CTPP

Further review of the 2010 data on journey-to-work suggests that there is a large portion of Dighton residents working outside town are either employed in the higher income “white collar” professions and/or are employed in higher wage/ higher skilled “blue collar” manufacturing or other industries (i.e. professional and technical services, medical devices, electrical equipment, other instruments or products.

**Table I-6. Place of Work and Place of Residence**

Place of work Dighton Residence by City & town					Place of residence of person employed in Dighton by City & Town				
City & Town	2000	%	2010	%	City & Town	2000	%	2010	%
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>Dighton</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>29.2%</b>
Acushnet	8		X		Acushnet	11		12	
<b>Attleboro</b>	<b>88</b>		<b>113</b>		<b>Attleboro</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>129</b>	
Berkley	17		X		<b>Berkley</b>	<b>34</b>		<b>83</b>	
Carver	X		X		Carver	5		X	
Dartmouth	63		61		Dartmouth	41		17	
Fairhaven	21		10		Fairhaven	X		X	
<b>Fall River</b>	<b>275</b>		<b>211</b>		<b>Fall River</b>	<b>251</b>		<b>281</b>	
Freetown	50		68		Freetown	42		60	
Lakeville	47		X		Lakeville	6		X	
Mansfield	51		21		Mansfield	4		16	
Marion	X		X		Marion	18		X	
Mattapoisett	X		X		Mattapoisett	8		X	
Middleboro	8		69		Middleboro	25		31	
New Bedford	118		48		New Bedford	60		51	
North Attleboro	45		10		North Attleboro	36		X	
Norton	48		42		Norton	X		13	
Plainville	X		X		Plainville	X		X	
Raynham	67		94		Raynham	41		31	
<b>Rehoboth</b>	<b>76</b>		<b>123</b>		<b>Rehoboth</b>	<b>70</b>		<b>35</b>	
Rochester	X		X		Rochester	29		X	
Seekonk	87		77		Seekonk	X		X	
<b>Somerset</b>	<b>97</b>		<b>157</b>		<b>Somerset</b>	<b>94</b>		<b>79</b>	
Swansea	81		87		Swansea	22		50	
<b>Taunton</b>	<b>701</b>		<b>697</b>		<b>Taunton</b>	<b>313</b>		<b>203</b>	
Wareham	X		X		Wareham	10		X	
Westport	29		X		Westport	26		11	
Total	2,340		2,340		Total	1,518		1,554	

Source: Journey to Work: CTPP: 2000,2006-2010

The employment numbers indicate about 43% of Dighton residents are working in the region cities (Attleboro, Fall River and Taunton) that host regional employment centers including business and industrial parks and central downtown business districts.

This premise can be supported by several indicators e.g. median household, median family and per capita incomes, educational attainment levels, building permits and residential sale prices.

#### D. Commercial Space

**Table I-7** presents data provided by the Dighton Assessor's office that identifies in January 2014 the town had more than 1.1 million square feet of commercial and industrial space.

Table I-7. Commercial and Industrial Space: Dighton						
	Winthrop Street (Rte 44)	Williams Street	Somerset Ave, Main St, County St (Rte 138)	Spring & Mount Hope Streets	Miscellaneous areas	Total Sq. Ft.
Retail	6,030		46,583		1,869	54,482
Office		6,096	6,540	1,997	5,700	20,333
Industrial			326,930	411,870	47,554	786,354
Multiple-Use	2,920	4,332	1,309		16,854	25,415
Automotive, Sales and Service	4,640	79,033	17,649		6,360	107,682
Warehouse & Distribution	5,400	13,040	53,601		15,164	87,205
Other Commercial			11,128		7,851	18,979
Total Sq. Ft.	18,990	102,501	463,740	413,867	101,352	1,100,450
<b>Source:</b> Dighton Assessors						

The space was compiled by classification including 786,354 sq. ft. of industrial, 107,682 in automotive, sales and service, 87,205 sq. ft. in warehousing and transportation followed by 54,482 sq. ft. of retail, 24,415 sq. ft. classified as multiple use (primarily residential including ground floor retail with residential above) and 20,333 sq. ft. in office, the remainder consisted of 18,979 sq. ft. in other commercial space.

The table further indicates that the areas along the Route 138 Corridor (Somerset Ave, Main and County Streets) and on Mount Hope Street and Spring Street provides the large concentration of space, comprising 877,607 sq. ft. or nearly 80% of the town-wide total, industrial space in both these areas dominate. In addition, the Route 138 Corridor contains a significant amount of the town's retail and warehouse and distribution space providing 46,583 sq. ft. and 53,601 sq. ft. respectively. Another area providing significant commercial space is Williams Street which is dominated by 79,000 sq. ft of automotive space followed by 13,000 sq. ft. in warehousing and distribution space.

In **Table I-8** the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) maintains a list of city and town largest employers. Relative to Dighton, there were over 20 industries identified.

**Table I-8**  
**Dighton Largest Employers:**

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b># of (FT) Employees</b>	<b>Industry</b>
1. Manheim (AKA) New England New Auto Auction	123 Williams St	95	Auto WHL
2. Advanced Looseleaf Tech	1424 Somerset Ave	35	Office Supply Mfg
3. Armin Innovative Products	1424 Somerset Ave	35	Printing
4. Farrell Backlund Insurance	1209 Somerset Ave		Brokers/Agents
5. Zatec LLC	620 Spring St	40	Chemical Mfg
6. Boston Sash & Millwork	667 Spring St	18	Architect/Metal Mfg
7. Dighton Nursing Center	907 Center St		Nursing Care Facility
8. Draka Cableteq USA	22 Warner Blvd	25	Spring/Wire Mfg
9. OE Inc	620 Spring St	39	Automotive Services
10. Pavao Construction	1892 County St	Not available	General Construction
11. Taunton Stove Co Inc	490 Somerset Ave	25	Metal Mfg
12. Georgio's Steak House	1881 County St	15	Restaurant
13. Lin's Propane Trucks (Tri Corp)	2281 Cedar St	10	Household Goods
14. Dighton Power	1450 Somerset Ave	15	Utility
16. Aqauria LLC	170 Aquaria Dr	8	Water supply
17. Iron Mountain Data Information	2281 Cedar St	Not available	Warehousing/Storage
18. Silvia Farms	707-744 Middle St	10	Agriculture
19. Treviicos Corp	1938 Winthrop St	3	Heavy Equip WHL
20. CO-OP	455 Somerset Ave	275	Disability Services CTR
21. Dighton Animal Hospital	2424 Winthrop St	16	Veterinarian

Source: EOLWD 2014

Private industries and businesses ranged from manufacturing, retail, service, warehouse and distribution and utilities. The employment number for industries are only given in a range, as such SRPEDD, were possible, contacted industries to obtain more specific data on actual employment numbers (See list below.) Some of the largest employers identified include: CO-OP, 275 employees (non-profit serving individuals with disabilities); Manheim, 95 employees auto wholesale followed by Zatec (chemical manufacturing and OE automotive services) both with about 40 employees (see attached list for details).

#### E. Regional Role

Dighton's economic strength within the region is indicated by comparing its major industry sectors of health care and social services, manufacturing and accommodation and food services relative to those of the five adjacent municipalities presented in **Tables I-9 to I-11**. Taunton clearly leads the area in all three sectors having the greatest number of businesses and employees and the highest dollar amounts of sales and payroll although in manufacturing most of the data for these indicator was not available.

**Table I-9**  
**Manufacturing Activity, Dighton Area**

	Establishments	Sales (000)	Payroll (000)	Employees
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>9</b>	-	-	<b>233</b>
Berkley	3	-	-	23
Rehoboth	7	-	-	84
Somerset	8	-	-	459
Swansea	13	-	-	154
Taunton	71	1,388,485	386,588	5,292

Source: Economic Census, 2007

Both manufacturing and retail represent major drivers of the local economy. Dighton ranks third manufacturing with the number of establishments and employees after Taunton and Somerset. With the exception of Taunton additional data on payroll and sales are not available.

**Table I-10**  
**Health Care and Social Services Activity, Dighton Area**

	Establishments	Sales (000)	Payroll (000)	Employees
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6,398</b>	<b>3,236</b>	<b>127</b>
Berkley	1	-	-	-
Rehoboth	11	5,955	2,506	93
Somerset	34	46,558	22,236	900
Swansea	37	46,358	20,465	649
Taunton	140	348,699	161,927	3,845

Source: Economic Census, 2007

Although Dighton had more employees than Rehoboth in health care and social services it tied in fourth with Rehoboth for the number of establishments but sales and payroll were greater in Dighton. Taunton, Somerset and Swansea all out-paced Dighton in this sector.

In accommodation and food service Dighton rank in fifth slightly ahead of Berkley with a greater number of establishments and employees but lower than Berkley compared to sales and payroll. Rehoboth was ahead of Dighton in fourth with more than double these numbers.

Table I-11 Accommodation and Food Services Activity, Dighton Area				
	Establishments	Sales (000)	Payroll (000)	Employees
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3,532</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>75</b>
Berkley	7	5,682	1,417	74
Rehoboth	19	7,358	1,810	144
Somerset	36	24,465	7,569	652
Swansea	40	34,875	10,953	819
Taunton	111	90,826	27,429	2,130

Source: Economic Census, 2007

## F. Tax Base

Table I-12. Dighton Tax Base 2014		
Tax Classification	Assessed Valuation	Percentage of Total Valuation
Residential	\$690,067,968	85.5%
Commercial	\$ 29,381,924	3.6%
Industrial	\$ 37,260,584	4.6%
Personnel Property	\$ 50,856,500	6.2%
Total	\$807,566,976	100%

Source: Mass DOR, Municipal Data Bank

Dighton's tax base identified in **Table I-12** primarily consists of residential, with homeowners providing over 85% of the total tax revenues. Combined, commercial and industrial property taxes account for over 8.0% followed by personnel property (e.g. automobile excise tax) at over 6.0%.

**Note:** Tax exempt properties including public facilities, religious institutions and public open space comprise \$95,566,976 or 11.8% in assessed valuation. Chapter lands included under commercial classification are primarily used for agricultural purposes and are taxed at less than full value; these properties account for \$XXXX in total valuation.

Total tax revenue (FY 2014) from commercial/industrial/personal property uses comprises about 24.0% of the tax levy raised by local property taxes. Dighton is able to tax its commercial/industrial properties at a higher rate, reducing some of the tax burden for homeowners.

The total tax levy per capita (FY 2014) is \$1,968 or 5.7% of the per capita income in Dighton (based on ACS 2012 per capita income of \$34,440).

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue reports that the 2012 per capita Equalized Valuation (EQV) for Dighton is \$127,541.

Table I-13. Dighton Tax Revenue (2014)			
Tax Classification	Tax Rate	Tax Levy	% of Total Tax Levy
Residential	\$15.23	\$10,509,735	75.7%
Commercial	\$28.71	\$843,555	6.0%
Industrial	\$28.71	\$1,069,751	7.7%
Personnel Property	\$28.71	\$1,460,090	10.5%
Total		\$13,883,131	100%

Source: Mass DOR Municipal Data Bank

**Table I-14** compares Dighton's tax base with five neighboring communities, three including Dighton, Swansea and Taunton have a split tax rate (residential and non residential properties are taxed at different rates). Compared to Swansea and Taunton, Dighton residential rate of \$15.23/\$1000 valuation is higher than Taunton's \$14.61 and Swansea's \$12.84. Additionally, Dighton had the highest residential rate when compared to the two communities of Berkley and Rehoboth that maintain a flat tax rate of \$12.81 and \$12.44 respectively. Dighton's Commercial/Industrial/Personal (CIP) property rate of \$28.71/\$1000 was identified with the second highest rate behind Taunton's \$31.19 but higher than Swansea's rate of \$23.44.

Table I-14. Comparison of Tax Base: Dighton and Neighboring Communities 2014					
Avg. Residential Tax Bill	% of Total Assessed Valuation			Tax Rate Res/CIP	Avg. Residential Assessed Value
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial		
Dighton \$4,078	85.5	3.6	4.6	\$15.23/28.71	\$267,768
Berkley \$3,947	95.1	2.2	.46	\$12.81	\$308,083
Rehoboth \$4,058	91.4	4.5	.98	\$12.44	\$326,175
Somerset NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Swansea \$3,181	82.9	13.1	8.4	\$12.84/\$23.44	\$247,721
Taunton \$3,327	78.0	13.9	4.3	\$14.61/\$31.19	\$227,706
Region Avg 3,562	83.0	-	-	\$12.24	\$273,920
Statewide Avg \$5,039	-	-	-	-	\$356,720

Source: Mass DOR, Municipal Data Bank

In terms of the average residential tax bill Dighton had the highest tax bill of the five neighboring communities with \$4,078 compared to Rehoboth with \$4,058, Berkley with \$3,947 followed by Taunton and Swansea with \$3,327 and \$3,181 respectively. Dighton was identified with the third highest average residential assessed value of \$267,768 behind Rehoboth with the highest value of \$326,175 and Berkley's \$308,083 followed by Swansea with \$247,721 and Taunton with the lowest assessed value of \$227,706.

#### G. Competitive Regional Position

The Mass Department of Revenue's (DOR) most recent data for 2013 presented in **Table I-15** identified Dighton with the third highest percentage CIP valuation. Dighton is one of four neighboring communities which have tax classification (split tax rate) i.e. they tax their commercial property at a higher rate than residential.

Table I-15. Valuation, Tax Rates and Shifts For Commercial, Industrial and Personal (CIP) Property (FY 2013)			
	CIP as % of Total Valuation	Actual CIP Shift	Actual CIP Tax Rate
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>14.17%</b>	<b>1.670%</b>	<b>\$26.29</b>
Berkley	4.65%	1.00%	\$11.68
Rehoboth	8.53%	1.00%	\$11.75
Somerset	29.43%	1.62%	\$29.97
Swansea	15.78%	1.675%	\$23.05
Taunton	22.03%	1.75%	\$30.58

Source: Mass DOR, Municipal Data Bank

This CIP shift above the residential tax levy which is greater than 1.00 noted <sup>Avg.</sup> below, is the third lowest shift after Somerset. In addition, Dighton's commercial tax rate of \$26.29 is the third lowest out the four neighboring communities.

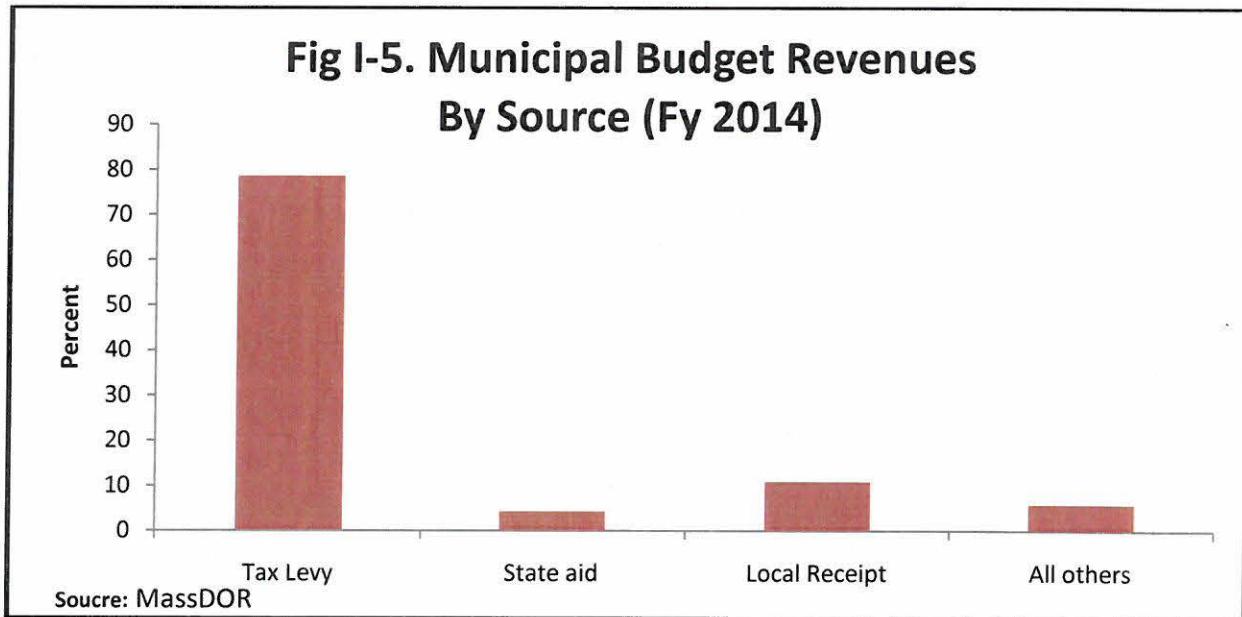
Table I-16. Municipal Budget Revenues By Source (FY 2014)				
Municipality	Tax Levy	State Aid	Local Receipts	All Others
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>78.63%</b>	<b>4.37%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>
Berkley	52.09%	30.84%	5.09%	11.97%
Rehoboth	77.71%	4.97%	10.63%	6.70%
Somerset	67.80%	10.66%	14.69%	6.85%
Swansea	69.99%	20.44%	8.93%	0.63%
Taunton	39.95%	28.67%	20.04%	11.94%

Source: Mass DOR Municipal Data Bank

Above, **Table I-16** presents 2014 municipal budget revenues by source for Dighton and its surrounding neighbors. The total taxes for Dighton account for about 79.0% of the total

municipal budget which represents the highest percentage of the five surrounding communities followed by Rehoboth with about 78.0% and Swansea with 70.0%.

Relative to local receipt Dighton has the third highest with 11.0%. Taunton is identified with highest at 20% and Berkley the lowest with 5.0%. Dighton has the lowest in state aid with 4.37% verse Berkley, the highest with 30.8% and Taunton with 28.6%. Dighton's relatively higher per capita income and equalized valuation per capita account for this variance.



# Section I.I: Needs Assessment DRAFT-DRAFT

## 1.1 Economic Development Needs

Five (5), priority economic development needs have been identified and are summarized below. These priorities should be addressed if the town wishes to facilitate economic growth for the community. The following section highlights the needs and identifies recommended opportunities that should be pursued.

### **Organize. Establish an Economic Development Committee**

- BOS appoint members to form the committee
- Committee develops a mission statement, purpose or vision
- Identify a set of goals and objectives:
  - Facilitate job creation and retention;
  - Attract private investment;
  - Review and recommendation zoning consistent with vision and strategy for economic development;
  - Secure funding for planning and implementation of Dighton's economic development plan and initiatives;
  - Increase local tax revenues;
  - Other

### **Provide Economic Development Incentives**

- Tax increment financing (TIF) under the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)
- Chapter 43D Expedited Streamlined Permitting
- Funding opportunities for projects supporting economic development i.e. roadways, water, sewer etc
- Brownfield funds for site assessment and remediation

### **Review and Prioritize Town Economic Development Areas**

- Route 44 Business Corridor
- Manheim Site
- Dighton Industries
- Maxaldan Complex
- Dighton Power
- Advanced Loose Leaf
- Route 138 Business Corridor
- Zeneca Property

## **Market Town of Dighton**

- Develop a marketing strategy/plan highlighting Dighton as “business friendly”
- Inventory of development areas; vacant and underutilized sites
- Incentives
- Services
- Assets: Taunton River/rural character/schools/open space

## **Partner with Regional Entities, Local Businesses and Property Owners**

- Appoint representative to Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce
- Appoint a delegate to SRPEDD’s Regional Economic Development Committee
- Involve local business owners and others interested in economic development with the Dighton Economic Development Committee

### **1. Establish an Economic Development Committee**

The Town of Dighton through the Board of Selectmen should appoint a Dighton Economic Development Committee. The Committee should comprise residents from business and industry, major property owners, finance, real estate, education and other residents interested in economic development and improving the community’s overall quality of life. Initially the Committee should develop a mission state or statement of purpose and an outline of goals and objectives consistent with the mission and any relevant planning documents prepared by the town including Master Plan, designated priority development areas and economic target areas designations. Below are some recommendations on goals to consider.

- Facilitate job creation and retention;
- Target vacant and underutilized land and properties for redevelopment
- Continuously review town by-laws, regulations and zoning districts for consistency with town’s economic development goals, and to make any applicable recommendations to improve permitting, licensing and regulatory functions to the appropriate board or commission;
- Promote and advocate for streamlining of the towns regulatory processes as related to commercial and industrial development;
- Encourage and support new business seeking to locate in Dighton and existing businesses seeking to remain or expand in Dighton;
- Stimulate private investment
- Work with BOS and Planning Board on staffing and organizational support for economic development committee;
- Increase tax revenues;
- Work with staff to identify and obtain any federal and/or state funding resources to further economic development initiatives and opportunities, and
- Develop a long range economic development plan for the Town of Dighton.

## 2. Provide Economic Development Incentives

The promotion and attraction of economic development requires a public-private partnership, generally some sort of public investment i.e. infrastructure improvements and or other incentives to attract and support private sector development. Construction of new infrastructure or expansion can facilitate economic development including roadways, water and sewer improvements. Incentives include a number of tax benefits which the state has made available to municipalities, regulatory reforms of permitting, and organization/staffing to support the planning, funding and permitting of economic development activities.

A review of a broad range of economic development tools utilized by neighboring communities as shown in **Table I-17** illustrates that for the town to capitalize and attract economic opportunities it will need to provide a range of infrastructure and incentives. Other than Taunton, Dighton and its neighbors (Berkley, Rehoboth, Somerset and Swansea) do not have the necessary tools to foster appropriate economic growth. Where possible, Dighton should consider collaborating with Taunton, its neighbor on potential redevelopment opportunities along Route 44 or in North Dighton at Dighton Industries which could generate benefits for both communities. Taunton was the lead community under the ETA designation (including Dighton) and has experienced planning, community and economic development staff.

### Infrastructure Improvements

**Table I-17.**  
**Dighton Indices of Competitiveness for Commercial and Industrial Development**

	Dighton	Berkley	Rehoboth	Somerset	Swansea	Taunton
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>						
Direct Rail Connection (includes commuter rail and freight rail)	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes (in planning)
Interstate Hgwy. Connection	No	24	195	No	195	495/24
Public water	Partial	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public sewer	Partial	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Telecom	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>INCENTIVES</b>						
Tax Increment Financing	Yes (ETA)	Yes (ETA)	No	Yes	No	Yes (ETA)
43D Streamlined Permitting	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Economic Development Planner						
EDC /IDC	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Training/Labor Retention	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (TDC)
Industrial Park	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Source:</b> SRPEDD						

The Town of Dighton has good regional access to I-495 connecting north-south to Boston Worcester, Cape Cod and islands; I-195 connecting east-west to Cape Cod, Islands and Providence RI and Rte 24 serving Fall River, New Bedford and Attleboro through the minor arterials of Route 138 and Route 44. In addition, Dighton has access to and is located between two (2) primary commercial corridors of Routes 6 and 44. Furthermore, proposed commuter rail stations to Taunton and to a lesser extent Fall River will be located near Dighton increasing its regional connections.

Local infrastructure is limited with water and sewer primarily in North Dighton at Dighton Industries and Maxaldan Corporation Complex in addition to a portion along Route 138. In the areas of Manheim property, Route 44 Business Corridor and Route 138 Business District infrastructure is lacking and will be needed in order to improve these areas for development. Issues of water, sewer roadway construction and improvements as well as potential brownfields site assistance may need to be addressed.

Dighton Industries and Manheim redevelopment alternatives which will be discussed later are cases in point. The revitalization of these areas could happen with a concerted effort by the Town to work with the private sector in planning and in obtaining funding to support the cost for needed infrastructure and other assistance. There are several agencies that should be able to assist with this effort including Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, Department of Housing and Community Development, Mass Office of Business Development, MassDevelopment and SRPEDD.

## **Incentives**

To attract the appropriate or desired economic growth Dighton will not only need to develop and improve its infrastructure but must address the need for providing development incentives. These incentives can take a variety of forms including staff support, regulatory reforms, coordination with the business community and financial incentives. All of these tools are needed and require a range of resources from both the public and private sector. The town has already taken the first step in the planning process partnering with Taunton and other neighboring communities under the Greater Taunton Economic Target Area (ETA) Designation in 1994. If properly managed, this incentive has proven to be a useful tool for communities to attract and retain businesses. In addition, Chapter 43D Expedited Streamlined Permitting should be considered to stimulate and attract development by permitting economic development projects within 180 days on designated priority development sites.

**The Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)** is administered by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) which is comprised of eleven (11) members, with the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Housing and Community Development acting as co-chairs of the Council. The EACC is a public/private entity meant to administer the EDIP and to establish designated 1) Economic Target areas (ETAs), 2) Economic Opportunity Area (EOAs) and 3) Certified Projects - the three steps under the EDIP.

1. An **Economic Target Area (ETA)** is comprised of three or more contiguous census tracts, in one or more municipalities, meeting one of nine statutory criteria for economic need. In 1994 Dighton partnered with the lead community of Taunton and two other communities including Berkley and Norton to establish the Greater Taunton ETA Designation.
2. An **Economic Opportunity Area (EOA)** is one or more distressed areas and/or specific sites within an ETA which are selected by the individual communities and meet one of four statutory criteria designation of an EOA permits the community to negotiate special property tax assessments (STAs) or tax increment financing (TIF) incentives for attracting new business development or encouraging expansion opportunities for existing business. Dighton has four (4) designated EOAs including Beckwith area (Dighton Power advanced Loose leaf, Main Street (includes Zeneca), Mount Hope Complex (Dighton Industries) and Northern Route 138 properties (Maxaldan).
3. A **Certified Project** represent a business or industry that is either expanding an existing operation, relocating, or building new facilities which provide new permanent jobs within an EOA. Applications are submitted to the community for approval. Certified project receive the following benefits:
  - Up to 10% state investment tax credit (ITC) for qualifying, tangible, depreciable investments
  - 10% abandoned building tax deduction when renovating an abandon building (minimum vacancy of 75% for last two years)
  - A municipal tax incentive, either Special Tax Assessment or Tax Increment Financing

The Town of Dighton has approved one certified project for Dighton Power Associates under a 10 year tax increment financing agreement executed in 1995. Energy Management constructed a \$50 million gas powered cogeneration electric production plant, creating 15 new jobs, 125 temporary construction jobs and generating \$500,000 in annual tax revenues.

#### **Economic Target Area Designation**

As previously mentioned Dighton is designated as an ETA under the Greater Taunton ETA designation received in 1994. The state legislature established the Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) in 1993 which is designed to assist communities with economic development including stimulating job creation in targeted areas, encourage existing business expansion and attract new business development. There are over 40 ETAs throughout the state containing about 175 municipalities which meet one of the eleven statutory criteria for eligibility including income, unemployment,

commercial vacancy rate, job loss, household income (See Map I-1 ETAs in the Dighton Region).

**Special Tax Assessment (STA)** covers the existing and new value of real estate owned or leased by the Certified Project candidate. The first year, the tax is zero percent (0%) of the assessed value of the real estate. In year two, 25% of the assessed is added, in year 3, 50%, year 4, 75% and year 5 and following, 100% of the assessed value is taxed. Generally, STAs cover a 5 year period.

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** allows municipalities to provide flexible targeted incentives to enhance job opportunities and development. The municipality and the certified project candidate decide on a property tax exemption based on the added value through improvements and new construction for a period of five to twenty years or anything in between. Exemptions may range from 5% to 100%. Allocation percentages are determined by the municipality and certified project candidate. EACC has final approval on TIF. Currently Dighton has granted only one TIF for Dighton Power which expired in 2005.

**Chapter 43D Expedited Streamlined Permitting** is an economic development incentive tool that allows municipalities to offer 180 day local permitting process on locally designated priority development sites targeted for economic development and housing production. The program established in 2006 is administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development under the Interagency Permitting Board. Currently, the 43d process has been adopted in over 85 municipalities containing over 180 sites. Within the region several communities are utilizing this incentive including Carver, Freetown, Lakeville, Middleboro, North Attleborough, Raynham and the four central cities (Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton).

Priority development sites (PDS) or areas must be appropriately zoned for commercial, industrial, residential or mixed-use and support at least 50,000 SF of building space. Sites are locally designated and approved. These sites or areas can be vacant land, vacant and/or underutilized buildings, including brownfield sites.

The program is a Local Option approved by Town Meeting vote. Below are the procedures for adopting 43D.

**Procedures:**

1. Town meeting vote to accept provisions (see obligations) of Chapter 43D and to designate qualifying parcel/area as a priority development site. Prior to Town Meeting, municipality needs to obtain the property owner's permission on designation. Town will need to prepare a small application for the Interagency Permitting Board to approve designation.

2. Interagency Permitting Board has 60 calendar days to issue a decision on designation(s).
3. Upon Interagency approval the Town has 30 days to Opt-In
4. Then 120 days Phase-in activities begins, starting the day after acceptance (day 31)
5. The 180 days for permitting decision starts the day after 120 day phase-in period (day 121)

***Obligations of Opt-In:***

1. Must identify a qualifying parcel(s)/area(s) as priority development site (PDS) and obtain owner's permission secured before Town Meeting.
2. Within 120 days of opt-in town must:
  - a. Appoint single point of contact (usually Town Planner);
  - b. Amend local rules, regulations, bylaws, to meet the 180-day permit timeline;
  - c. Make available the information and requirement for the permits;
  - d. Establish a procedure for identifying permits and,
  - e. Establish procedure for determining completeness.

***Benefits:***

- Standardizes the permitting process;
- Provides developers predictability in permitting process; a "yes" or "no" decision on priority development sites within 180 days;
- Provides greater opportunity for communities to secure funding for planning and infrastructure associated with economic development and,
- Free marketing and visibility of designated site(s) through Mass Econ- Site Finder Service.

**3. Review and Prioritize Economic Development Areas**

The Town of Dighton has designated several areas or sites as priorities for economic development including priority development areas and economic target areas. In order for the Dighton to effectively develop or redevelop these areas the town will need to re-examine their zoning by-laws and provide recommendations (if required) to the Planning Board on proposed revisions consistent with local economic development plans and strategies. The zoning should be consistent, it should encourage and enable the appropriate types, uses, scale and location of economic development desired by the Town in order to implement the economic development plan including: stimulate private investment and development, create employment opportunities and generate new revenues.

Below are eight (8) areas /sites designated by Dighton for economic development. Each area has been identified and reviewed including potential redevelopment opportunities and zoning considerations as appropriate. SRPEDD has also prioritized and highlighted in **bold**, those areas currently considered that represent the best potential for reuse and

redevelopment. More detail on the areas is provided under 1.1-1: Redevelopment Strategies, Actions and Preliminary Concept Plans.

A. **Route 44 Business Corridor** - The area extends along Route 44 between Rehoboth and Taunton, contains about 54 acres and is zoned business. The business district contains a number of conflicts on parcels throughout the area with split zoning (business and residential zoning). The table of uses should be reviewed to ensure consistency with desired development. In addition the town should consider extending the district boundary, review buffering, landscaping and sign by-laws to reduce impacts on adjacent residential use, including site plan review. There may be possible commercial or mixed-use redevelopment opportunities on the Treviso site, as well as other areas along corridor, if sewer were extended from Taunton – long range potential.

B. **Manheim Site** – Pictured on the right is the Auto Auction property located on Williams Street off Route 44 that contains about 162 acres and is zoned industrial. This is a significant underutilized, industrial property. Dighton should proactively plan for future development and infrastructure extension of sewer. Town to consider zoning review and revisions for consistency pending any future development plan (See strategy and preliminary concept plan).



C. **Dighton Industries** – This area is located in North Dighton, is zoned industrial and consists of about 38 acres. Currently, the complex contains various commercial activities, including warehousing, distribution, light manufacturing, assembly and other uses. Commercial or mixed-use redevelopment has potential. Consult DEP for



*Dighton ED*

potential use limitations on the vacant 34-acre site viewed in the photo above.

Potential may exist to reuse some of the facilities located on portion Spring Street for retail, service, business and other neighborhood shopping activities. Dighton should initiate discussions on possible redevelopment/reuse opportunities with property owners. The zoning bylaw for industrial district should be reviewed to ensure consistency with any redevelopment. In addition there are other opportunities to address community development within the neighborhood (housing rehab, infrastructure, open space and common revitalization and other aesthetics). See strategy and preliminary concept plan.

D. Maxaldan Corporation Complex – This site (former Prince House facility) contains

about 74 acres, located on Route 138 Somerset Avenue. Currently the complex serves warehousing, light manufacturing, assembly and service industries. Opportunities for long range reuse potential exist for current activities in addition to the manufacture and assembly of medical devices and instruments, electrical components or medical services, health



care and/or office uses. Similar to Advanced Looseleaf site the town should, if necessary, review and revise use table for the district to address any future reuse potential.

E. Dighton Power and F. Advanced LooseLeaf Technologies – These are two (2) contiguous sites located on Route 138 (Somerset Avenue). Dighton Power is an existing gas powered cogeneration electric production facility and Advanced LooseLeaf is a manufacturer of Loose Leaf products and packaging, combined these sites represent about 18 acres. Reuse is limited on the Dighton Power site as the facility itself is surrounded by open space and recreation land and only the foot print of the complex would be available for any future reuse. Any future reuse of the Advanced Looseleaf Technologies property would likely remain as light manufacturing, assembly, warehousing and distribution and /or office potential. Town should review table of uses to address future reuse opportunities in the zoning district.

**G. Route 138 Business Corridor** – The area is located at the intersection of County Street/ Main Street. The area offers commercial and mixed-use redevelopment opportunities along the RTE 138 corridor including underutilized land, vacant businesses and offers potential access to Taunton River for recreation and other potential activities. A number of redevelopment opportunities exist to improve the image and vitality of area. Dighton should consider preparing a redevelopment plan for this area as well as review zoning and the table of uses allowed. This would address consistency with any future redevelopment plan and future reuse along this segment of the corridor (See strategy and preliminary concept plan).



**H. Zeneca Property** – This is an industrial, remediated brownfield site with development limitations. The property is located at the intersection of Main Street and County Street (Route 138) and covers about 71-acres. There may be opportunities for redevelopment which could be linked to adjacent redevelopment initiatives recommended for the Rte 138 Business area (See strategy and preliminary concept plan).



4. **Market Town**

Dighton should consider enhancing the town web site and develop a page for economic development. This part of the town's web site should identify the entity charged with promotion and attraction of economic development i.e., Economic Development Committee or other organizational type including committee members and contact information. Other information may include mission statement; general goals and objectives; incentives (EDIP-ETA and EOA), economic development plans documents and or reports i.e. SCR 5-year Update and master plan. EDC could create an inventory of proposed target areas and development sites consisting of address, map and lot, acreage, utility, zoning, ownership, etc., including a map series. This information is already developed under 5 year update. Additional information to consider may be developing a listing of the largest employers with address, numbers of employees, product or service and contact information.

The Town could solicit the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School, graphic arts department with a challenge project to design a pamphlet promoting Dighton as a "business-friendly" community and encouraging economic development. Pamphlet designed as a 1 sheet, doubled sided foldout containing three panels back-to-back, highlighting information on town, location, assets and opportunities. In addition the town could solicit assistance from the business community with development of marketing material. Publication would be distributed to Town Hall, post office, library, selected businesses or members of the business association and regional chamber of commerce for public consumption.

5. **Communicate and Partner with Regional Entities, Local Businesses and Property Owners**

Once the economic development committee is established, someone from the committee should be appointed by the Board of Selectmen to represent the town on SRPEDD's Regional Economic Strategy Committee (RESC). The appointment should be someone interested in economic development, perhaps a representative from the EDC or have some vested interest in promoting and attracting economic growth, through existing business expansions or new development facilitated through dialogue with property owners, commercial agents and private developers or business. Local business owner or retired business owner, commercial real estate representative or other individuals interested in promoting economic development for Dighton. In addition, to an RESC representative, there should also be a representative or a local business owner who is a member of the chamber of commerce who can network with others and promote Dighton's business friendly environment and identify potential opportunities.

At the local level, the Economic Development Committee, appointed by the Board of Selectmen advocates for appropriate local economic development, provides recommendations to Board of Selectmen, on town-wide economic development

policies, reviews zoning by-laws and provides recommendations to the Planning Board and others involved in permitting and/or licensing for consistency with economic development plans, strategies and redevelopment of priority sites. In addition, the EDC represents the conduit between the local business community and town government, facilitating communication and establishing a dialogue to assist business and industry with needs, services and concerns. The EDC further assists with communication between private property owners, the commercial real estate market and private developers on economic development opportunities and potential incentives.

### 1.1-2. Redevelopment Strategies, Actions and Preliminary Concept Plans

SRPEDD has reviewed seven areas/sites the town designated as priorities for development under the South Coast Rail Priority development and priority protection areas process conducted in 2008 and more recently updated in 2013. Many of the locations overlap with ETA/EOA designations established in the mid-late 90's. Below four (4) of the areas or sites are identified which represent the best potential for development and where Dighton EDC should initially focus their attention to pursue economic development opportunities including: Manheim site, Dighton Industries, Route 138 Business Corridor and Zeneca.

Using information from Dighton's SCR PDA-PPA report and ETA/EOA documents as well as other information, SRPEDD has prepared a general redevelopment/reuse strategy, identified actions and next steps and, developed a preliminary concept plan for each of the four locations.

#### 1. Manheim Site:

- a. **Redevelopment-Reuse Strategy:** Dighton should consider initiating a preliminary study to evaluate potential future redevelopment of 162 acre Manheim site. The

town should be proactively planning for potential options or alternatives to anticipate redevelopment of the site. The site has good access, transit, water is available and sewer could be extended to the site from the Rte 44 corridor at Burt Street (within a ¼ mile). Potential economic



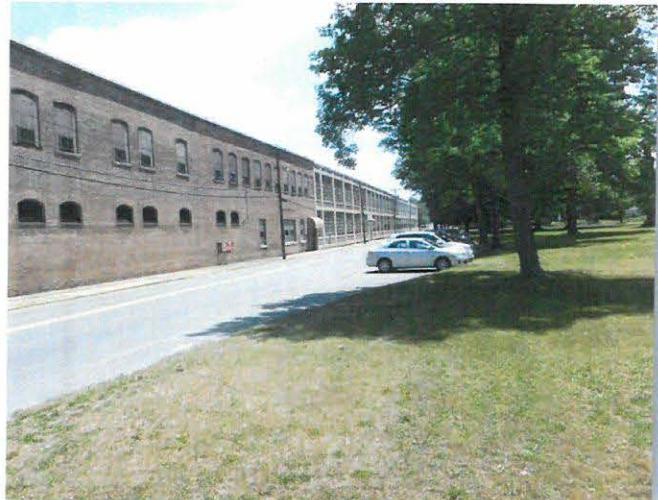
*Dighton ED*

development opportunities range from industrial and commercial development (light manufacturing, assembly, warehouse, distribution, office, other uses include office, business or technology park) to mixed-use including residential. The property could be redeveloped with a combination of uses separated by the town-owned green space acting as a buffer in the center (*Above: photo of Manheim, NE Auto Auction site*).

- b. Action and Next Steps:
  - Secure municipal support and consensus;
  - Review possible funding strategies to conduct study – MassDevelopment, DHCD, local and/or some combination thereof, and
  - Notify and engage property owner, New England Auto Auction to determine interest and participation in conducting “planning exercise”.
- c. Preliminary Concept Plan:  
See attached concept plan for Manheim Site.

2. Dighton Industries:

- a. Redevelopment-Reuse Strategy: Dighton should consider potential mixed-use redevelopment opportunities for Dighton Industries specifically the facility that fronts Spring Street may have the potential to allow (*right*) for street level retail shops, services and other activities. In addition, investigate the potential for redevelopment of the demolished portion of the Dighton Industries property.



The Spring Street area could be the subject of a potential community development project including housing rehabilitation, street and sidewalk improvement, way finding signage and passive open space or recreational opportunities. Spring Street offers direct access via Warner Boulevard to the RTE 44 commercial corridor. A small, niche retail and service destination could be an appealing attraction supported by a newly redeveloped town common.

b. Actions and Next Steps:

- Secure municipal support and consensus for potential redevelopment;
- Initiate dialogue with DEP on the feasibility of redevelopment, property likely has use limitations but needs to be confirmed;
- Initiate conversation with property owner to determine future plans and interest in any redevelopment/reuse including mixed-use of existing facility;
- If owner is interested in redevelopment consider designating site under 43D expedited streamlined permitting providing incentives to attract redevelopment opportunities;
- Discuss possible development of a North Dighton Commons entailing the consolidation of town-owned land with Dighton Industries land between Spring Street and Park Street. Redeveloping this green space could be a catalyst for Community Development Funding under DHCD and stimulate possible private investment and reuse potential within the area, and
- Review Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) grant opportunities (*Above: photo of Dighton Industries*).



c. Preliminary Concept Plan: See attached concept plan for Dighton Industries.

3. Route 138 Business Corridor:

A. Redevelopment-Reuse Strategy: The town should consider developing a redevelopment plan/strategy for this segment of Route 138 as the central business or village area that would include sewer line extension. The study should evaluate appropriate commercial (shops, restaurants, retail and service businesses) and



mixed-use opportunities including residential uses, bike path from Sweets Knoll to Somerset, pedestrian linkages from redevelopment area to adjacent residential areas and destination on the Taunton River (*Above: photo of vacant parcel on RTE 138*).

There are several properties within the area that contain vacant built space as well as vacant and underutilized land including two (2) key properties that need to be evaluated for potential rezoning to business. In addition, the town should investigate the potential of relocating the DPW facility enabling the sale of that property to allow potential redevelopment, stimulate private investment and improve the image of the corridor (*Below: photo of vacant built space in Rte 138 Business District*).

b. Actions and Next Steps:

- Secure municipal support and consensus for initiating redevelopment strategy;
- Review and develop cost estimate to extend sewer to designated area;
- Evaluate options for relocating DPW facility (Note: Funding is available to conduct a feasibility analysis/study to determine redevelopment potential of site);
- Evaluate two key parcels for rezoning from residential to business;
- Initiate discussions with property owners, businesses and residents to determine interest and participation in redevelopment;
- Engage key property owners in redevelopment;
- Initiate discussions with other groups: local, regional, and state to compliment efforts with redevelopment strategy (i.e. bike path);
- Secure legislative support redevelopment initiative;
- Review and identify potential funding sources for D/E and construction of sewer line as well as other infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, streetlights, street trees, banners and other amenities);
- Initiate discussions with MassDOT on sewer extension and improvements along identified segment of Rte 138, and



- Consider designation of key sites/properties under 43D expedited streamlined permitting to provide development incentives.
- c. Preliminary Concept Plan: See attached concept plan for RTE 138 Business District.

4. Zeneca Property:

- a. **Redevelopment-Reuse Strategy:** Potential may exist for commercial redevelopment on the 14-acre portion of the site fronting Main Street the 28 acre to the rear and 65 acre site on the western side are both reserved indicated unusable. Ideally, any use should be environmentally appropriate to the site, as well as support and compliment activities in the Rte 138 Business area. In the past there had been a proposal to redevelop the site for aquaculture but never materialized (*Above: photo of Zeneca Property on Main Street*).



b. Actions and Next Steps:

- Secure municipal support and consensus for redevelopment;
- Initiate discussions with Mass DEP on uses for potential redevelopment. It is likely there are use limitations on property. Specifically, the 14-acre site identified as Map 84, Lot 1 perhaps the only available portion of the site that could support economic development opportunities. Could be limited opportunities on adjacent 65-acre site identified as Map 106, Lot 0 including the Muddy Cove Reservoir;
- Town should initiate discussions with Irenaeus (Ernie) Yurchuk, North American Realty Advisory Services on potential redevelopment options. North American is the real estate marketing agent for Zeneca;
- Consider designating site under 43D expedited streamlined permitting to incentivize redevelopment.

c. Preliminary Concept Plan: See attached concept plan for Zeneca Property

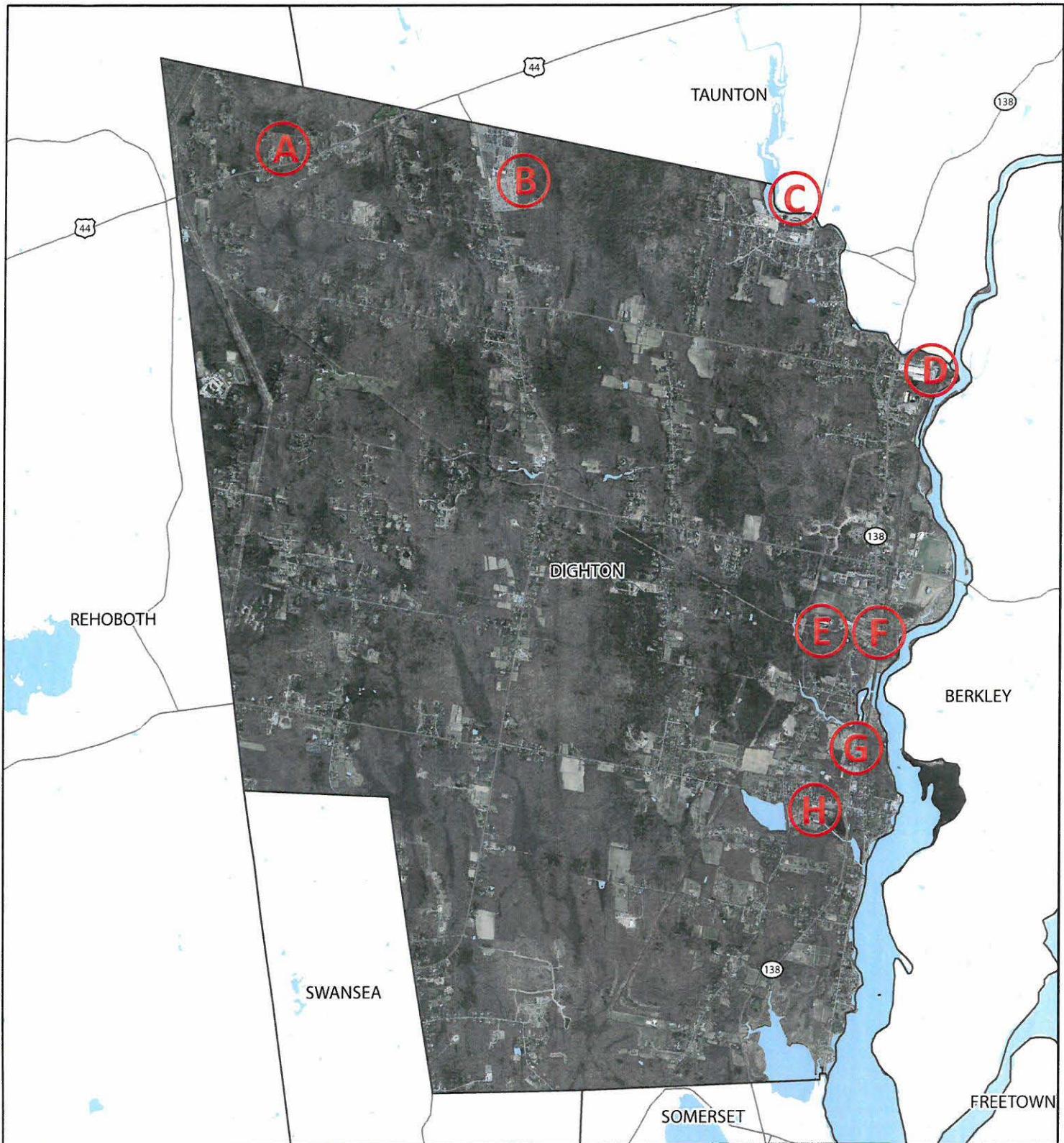


Figure 1-6 Dighton Development Areas

1 mile

A. Route 44 Business Corridor  
 B. Manheim Site  
 C. Dighton Industries  
 D. Maxaldan Corporation Complex

E. Dighton Power  
 F. Advanced Loose Leaf Technologies  
 G. Route 138 Business Corridor  
 H. Zeneca Property

Parcels  
 Water  
 Municipal Boundaries

Interstates  
 Arterials and Collectors  
 Local Roads

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Economic Profile: Highlights

### Regional access is good.

- ✓ 40 miles south of Boston, 13 miles east of Providence
- ✓ North/south direct access limited to Route 138 and Route 24 in Taunton
- ✓ East/west access Route 138 and Route 44
- ✓ Commuter rail access may soon be established in adjacent Taunton

### Dighton residents depend on employment outside of town.

The number of jobs has increased slightly in Dighton but economic base is still relatively undeveloped. There are not enough jobs to employ everyone in resident labor force (1.5 residents in labor force for every job).

**Table I-1: Jobs to Labor Force Ratio**

	2000	2010
Dighton Jobs	1,518	1,554
Dighton Labor Force (emp)	2,340	2,340
Job/Labor Force Ratio	.65	.66

Source: CTPP

- ✓ Over the last 10 yrs, from 2003-2012 (available) Dighton has experienced a decline in employment, losing about 191 jobs or 19/yr. Sectors that lost employment were construction, finance and insurance, professional and technical.
- ✓ Annual average unemployment in 2013 was 6.5%. Current rate for January 2014 is 7.9% vs. Jan 2013 rate of 7.4%
- ✓ Between 2003 and 2012, the number of business establishments in Dighton increased by 21 from 145 in 2003 to 166 in 2012. During this period there was stable growth and from 2011 to 2012 Dighton experienced a loss of about 7 businesses (173 to 166).

### Resident occupations in lower paying service, sales and office dominate higher paying construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing jobs.

Below Dighton in comparison to the state as a whole has a slightly lower portion of its residents in service , sales and office than some of the higher paying management, business, construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing. In order to improve the town's economic base it will need to increase the proportion residents into some of the higher wage professions.

**Table I-2: Occupation: Dighton vs Mass, 2012**

Occupation	Town of Dighton	MA
Management, business, science	42.3%	43.2%
Service	16.9%	17.0%
Sales and office	22.6%	23.8%
Natural resources, construction, maintenance	9.6%	7.1%
Production, transportation, material moving	8.6%	8.9%
Total	100%	100%

Source: US Census-ACS 2008-2012

**Educational Services with the third highest annual wage is a major leader in Dighton's job growth.**

**Table I-3: Employment and Average Wage by Industry in Dighton, 2012**

Industry	# of Employees	% of total	Avg. Annual Wage
Construction	85	4.6	\$48,256
Manufacturing	247	13.8	\$63,492
Utilities	40	2.2	\$72,800
Retail Trade	54	3.0	\$25,844
Transportation and Warehousing	77	4.3	\$41,172
Finance and Insurance	24	1.3	\$34,788
Professional and Technical	36	2.0	\$36,920
Administration and Waste	36	2.0	\$32,396
Educational Services	382	21.4	\$48,672
Health Care and Social Assistance	189	10.6	\$24,076
Accommodation and Food Services	107	6.0	\$12,948
Other Services Ex Public Adm.	33	1.8	\$17,888

Source: EO Labor and Workforce Development 2012

- ✓ Although manufacturing is struggling, this industry provides the town with both high wage rates and employment.
- ✓ Health care and social assistance and accommodation and food service offer the lowest wage rates and represent about 17.0% of Dighton overall employment.
- ✓ Utilities sector in Dighton offers the highest average rate however employment in this sector is among the lowest at 2.2% of the town total.

**Table I-4: Commuting to Work, 2012**

	Dighton		Mass	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Car, truck or van drive alone	3,047	85.1	2,333,063	72.2
Car, truck or van carpooled	297	8.3	262,844	8.1
Public transportation (including taxi cab)	25	.7	295,729	9.2
Walked	0	0	153,159	4.7
Other	70	2.0	50,637	1.6
Worked at home	140	3.9	136,387	4.2
Total workers ( 16 yrs and over)	3,579	3,579	3,231,819	3,231,819
Mean travel time	28.3	X	27.7	X

Source: US Census ACS 2008-2012

- ✓ In 2010, 19.3 % of Dighton residents worked in Dighton, 29.7% worked in neighboring Taunton. Additionally, there were 9.0% working in Fall River and another 6.7% in Somerset. Rehoboth also had 5.0% of Dighton residents in their workforce.
- ✓ Dighton provides over a 1,000 jobs or 43.4% of the labor force to the regions cities including Taunton, Fall River and Attleboro.
- ✓ The average commute time to work for Dighton residence is 28.3 minutes, slightly higher than the statewide average of 27.7 minutes. The overwhelming majority of Dighton residents drive alone to work. More than 6.0% of Dighton residents do not drive to their place of employment.
- ✓ A comparison of the overall average annual wage in Dighton to the median household income indicated in 2012 that the median household income was \$85,070 while the average annual wage was \$38,012. This shows that a large percentage of residents either commuted to other communities to find better wages or has more than one household member in the workforce.
- ✓ Dighton's median household income in 2012 (\$85,070) was more than \$18,000 higher than the statewide average of \$66,658.

### Growth Projections

- ✓ SRPEDD projects an employment growth rate of about 15% by 2035, reaching a total of 2,039 jobs. This represents an increase of about 266 new jobs from 2010.
- ✓ 1999 build-out analysis prepared by SRPEDD identifies up to 11.1 million Sq. ft. of commercial/industrial space but town only has about 1.1 million built, indicating a substantial amount undeveloped space and opportunity for economic development benefits.

### Dighton's tax base is heavily dependent on residential uses.

- ✓ Commercial, industrial and personnel property uses currently (2014) represent 14.4% of the total assessed valuation.

- ✓ Total tax revenue (FY 2014) from commercial, industrial/personnel property uses comprises 24.2% of the tax levy raised by local property taxes. Dighton is able to tax its commercial and industrial properties at a higher rate, reducing some of the tax burden for homeowners.

**Table I-5: Dighton Tax Rate (FY 14)**

Tax Classification	Tax Rate	Tax Levy	% of Total Tax Levy
Residential	\$15.23	\$10,509,735	75.7%
Commercial	\$28.71	\$843,555	6.0%
Industrial	\$28.71	\$1,069,751	7.7%
Personnel Property	\$28.71	\$1,460,090	10.5%
Total		\$13,883,131	100%

Source: Mass DOR Municipal Data Bank

### Competitive Regional Position – Relatively High Commercial Tax Rate

- ✓ In 2013, Dighton ranked fourth out of six towns in the area in the percentage of commercial/industrial/personnel property (CIP) valuation.
- ✓ Most town surrounding Dighton (including Dighton) with the exception of Berkley and Rehoboth have tax classification. That is commercial property is taxed at a higher rate than residential property.
- ✓ The actual CIP tax rate is the third highest after Somerset.
- ✓ CIP shift ratios (CIP tax rate/single tax rate) can't be larger than 1.75 according to Massachusetts state law, Taunton has the highest followed Swansea.

**Table I-6: Municipal Budget Revenue By Source (FY 14)**

Municipality	Tax Levy	State Aid	Local Receipts	All Others
<b>Dighton</b>	<b>78.63%</b>	<b>4.37%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>
Berkley	52.09%	30.84%	5.09%	11.97%
Rehoboth	77.71%	4.97%	10.63%	6.70%
Somerset	67.80%	10.66%	14.69%	6.85%
Swansea	69.99%	20.44%	8.93%	0.63%
Taunton	39.95%	28.67%	20.04%	11.94%

Source: Mass DOR Municipal Data Bank

- ✓ Total tax revenues in Dighton represent nearly 79.0% (78.6%) of municipal revenues
- ✓ Compared to six neighboring towns Dighton receives the lowest percentage of state aid just under 4.4 % in contract to a high of 30.8% for Berkley.

## Appendix 2. Analysis of Areas and Sites for Potential Development/Redevelopment/Infill

Site	Address	Business	Map and Lot	Acres	Zoning	Building SF (ga)	Redevelopment Type	Comments
<b>AREA A: Route 44 Business Corridor</b>	<b>Route 44 Business Corridor</b>	<b>Mixed- commercial and residential uses</b>	<b>XX-XX</b>	<b>XX</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>(XXX,XXX)</b>	<b>Mixed-use commercial or MU including residential, reuse, redevelopment and infill</b>	<b>Infrastructure available: water, sewer; significant portion of corridor identified as PPA. MU including residential or significant commercial redevelopment to include zoning revision. Potential 38-acre redevelopment site and other opportunities see below for details. Site is split zoned bus and res</b>
1.	1938 Winthrop Street	Trevious Corp Heavy equipment storage	1-0	38	Business-Res	5,400	Mixed-use or mixed commercial redevelopment	Site has potential for mixed commercial redevelopment or mixed-use including residential. Water and sewer available. Also adjacent to Segreganset Country Club
<b>AREA B: Manheim Site</b>	<b>Williams Street</b>	<b>New England Auto Auction</b>	<b>XX-XX</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>59,449</b>	<b>Light industrial (production, assembly, distribution, warehouse) commercial redevelopment – office</b>	<b>Town should proactively plan for redevelopment options on this site. Light industrial, commercial and office opportunities have potential. Infrastructure investment (sewer) in this area would attract private investment and increase redevelopment opportunities. This site is designated as a PDA, has EOA and 43D possibilities to provide incentives and funding options.</b>
1	0 Williams Street	NE Auto Auction	3-1	16.9	Industrial		See above	All the above applies
2	0 Williams Street	NE Auto Auction	3-2	51.7	Industrial		See above	All the above applies
3	93 Williams Street	NE Auto Auction	3-3B	9.9	Industrial		See above	All the above applies
4	0 Williams Street	NE Auto Auction	3-18	35.8	Industrial		See above	All the above applies
5	123 Williams Street	NE Auto Auction	3-1	47.8	Industrial	59,449	See above	All the above applies
<b>AREA C: Dighton Industries</b>	<b>620 Spring St and Summer St</b>	<b>Dighton Industries</b>	<b>17-0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>344,118</b>	<b>Maintain light industrial and include mixed- use including</b>	<b>Light manufacturing assembly and warehouse existing options to redevelop portion of site as mixed-use including residential and ground floor retail and service. Zoning revision may be required.</b>

							residential on cleared portion of site	Mixed-use redevelopment incorporated with 3-Mile River and existing neighborhood (Spring Street/Warner Blvd). Possible brownfield considerations. Expedited permitting under 43D is a possibility.
1.	620 Spring Street	Dighton Industries	4-0	33.7	Industrial	344,118	Redevelopment potential likely limited initiate discussions with DEP and property owners Mixed-use redevelopment in existing buildings fronting Spring Street	Partially vacant/demolished building and existing warehousing /light manufacturing, assembly and distribution. Potential redevelopment/reuse opportunities. Potential 43D site.
2.	Summer Street	Dighton Industries	4-405	3.5	Industrial	vacant	Redevelopment opportunities assembled with adjacent site Ten-Mile River Access	Vacant industrial. Same as above
<b>AREA D: Dighton Power and Advanced Looseleaf Tech</b>	<b>1450 and 1424 Somerset Avenue</b>	<b>Dighton Power and Advanced Looseleaf Technologies</b>	<b>XX-XX</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>41,750</b>	<b>Light industrial redevelopment or reuse light manufacturing, assembly warehouse and distribution</b>	<b>The area has access to water and sewer, potential for infill and light industrial redevelopment (ALT-41,000 SF facility). Sites have been designated as PDAs and EOAs. In addition, Chapter 43D streamlined permitting has potential as well. It should be noted: most of the area is zoned open space and recreation with the exception of the plant facility and ALF property.</b>
1	0 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	13-0B	41.0	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
2	0 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	179-0	.8	Open Sp & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
3	0 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	180-0	1.37	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land

4	0 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	181-0	1.73	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
5	1450 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	171-0	25.0	Industrial	Plant footprint	See above	Area around the footprint of the facility are zoned Open Space and Recreation
6	1458 Somerset Avenue	Dighton Power	12-0	1.1	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
7	0 Elm Street	Dighton Power	175-0	6.7	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
8	0 Elm Street	Dighton Power	11-0	3.8	Open Space & Rec	Vacant		Open Space and Recreation land
9	1424 Somerset Avenue	Advanced Looseleaf Technologies	13-0	6.3	Industrial	41,750	See above	Future reuse for potential light manufacturing, assembly, warehouse, distribution and office
AREA E: Maxaldan Corporation Complex	455 Somerset Avenue	Maxaldan Corporation Complex	2-0	46.0	Ind	359,883	Industrial and commercial reuse or redevelopment. In addition to mixed use redevelopment including residential options	Area has access to water and sewer options for redevelopment include industrial, commercial or mixed-use. Site contains a medical overlay district with underlying zoning for industrial uses. The site is a designated EOA, PDA and has potential for Chapter 43D designation. A mixed-use (including residential) redevelopment scenario would require zoning revisions.
AREA F: Route 138 Business District	Route 138 Business District	Mixed Commercial and Residential uses	XX-XX	165	Business	XXX,XXX	Business and commercial redevelopment, reuse and infill opportunities. Also mixed-use	Located on Route 138, the area offers numerous possibilities for business redevelopment, reuse and infill. Several underutilized and vacant properties are available for redevelopment or reuse. Infrastructure investment (sewer extension) needed to attract private investment and stimulate

						including residential options	improved redevelopment; mixed-use including residential is an option. In addition, this area has the potential to link to destinations on Taunton River and bike path Sweets Knoll to Slade's Ferry, Somerset. Brand area zoned residential as "Dighton Village Center". The area is designated as a PDA, has EOA potential and Chapter 43D can be considered. Key redevelopment parcels are identified below.
1.	1892 County Street	Vacant Res/commercial land (construction material and debris)	17-0	29	Res/Business	Vacant	Commercial or mixed-use development including residential development with ground floor retail (i.e. shops restaurants, business services
2.	1886 County Street	Vacant restaurant	17-0	1.7	Business	15,100	Reuse options marketplace shops, eateries and services
3.	1940 County Street	Vacant commercial Bldg	17-0	4.7	Business	7,640	Land assembly with vacant land at 0 County Street to 7.0
4.	2011 County Street	Town of Dighton DPW	17-0	2.0	Business	4,966	Disposition parcel for commercial, mixed-use redevelopment
5.	0 County Street	Church	17-0	15.7	Res	Vacant	Mixed-use redevelopment

								also currently tax exempt.
6.	0 County Street	Vacant commercial	17-2	2.5	Business	Vacant	Land assembly with 1940 to form 7.0 acre site for redevelopment commercial, mixed-use with residential	Vacant land adjacent to 1940 County Street. Property could be assembled to form a 7.0 acre site for redevelopment allowing for potential designation under 43D.
AREA G: Zeneca Corporation Property	Main and Elm Streets	Vacant industrial and residential properties	XX-XX	14 (129)	Industrial and Res	XXX,XXX	Industrial or commercial redevelopment	Zeneca is a remediated brownfield site containing several parcels scattered along Main Street and Elm Street. Parcels have been sold over the past 10 yrs. The primary site consisting of the office, plant and warehouse was located on Main Street and contains about 14 acres, the principal redevelopment site. All building associated with the property have been razed. Adjacent and south of the Main Street site is a 27.8 acre site zoned industrial but is mostly covered by wetlands and held in reserve. The remaining sites are all zoned residential located along Elm Street.
1	0 Main Street	Vacant land (Buildings demolished) Slabs remain	84-1	14	Industrial	Vacant	Industrial or commercial redevelopment	This site is perhaps the only site that would be available for either industrial or commercial redevelopment. It was the main entrance to Zeneca and contained the primary facilities and operations. All buildings have been demolished at grade slabs and parking lots are all that remain. Site is designated as an EOA and a PDA, Town could also designate property under chapter 43D for streamlined permitting and other incentives. Possible limitations on use.
2	0 Elm Street	Vacant land Buildings demoed some slabs	84-3	27.8	Industrial	Vacant	Reserved	Reserved property containing the Muddy Cove Brook and several ponds.
3	0 Elm Street	Vacant land	106-0	65.8	Res	Vacant	Residential	Limited development options half the parcel contains the Muddy Brook Reservoir

4	0 Elm Street	Vacant land	104-0	10.0	Res	Vacant	Reserved	Zoned residential and reserved as open space
5	0 Elm Street	Vacant land	103-0	11.4	Res	Vacant	Residential	Zoned residential

## APPENDIX: 3 Preliminary Concept Plans

Site 1: Manheim – see attached

Site 2: Dighton Industries – see attached

Site 3: Route 138 Business Corridor – see attached

Site 4: Zeneca Property – see attached

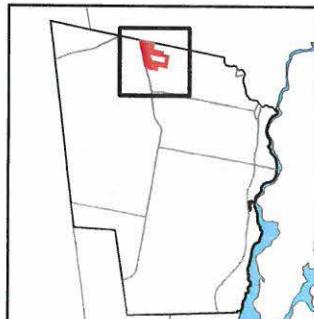
# Site - 1

## Manheim Site

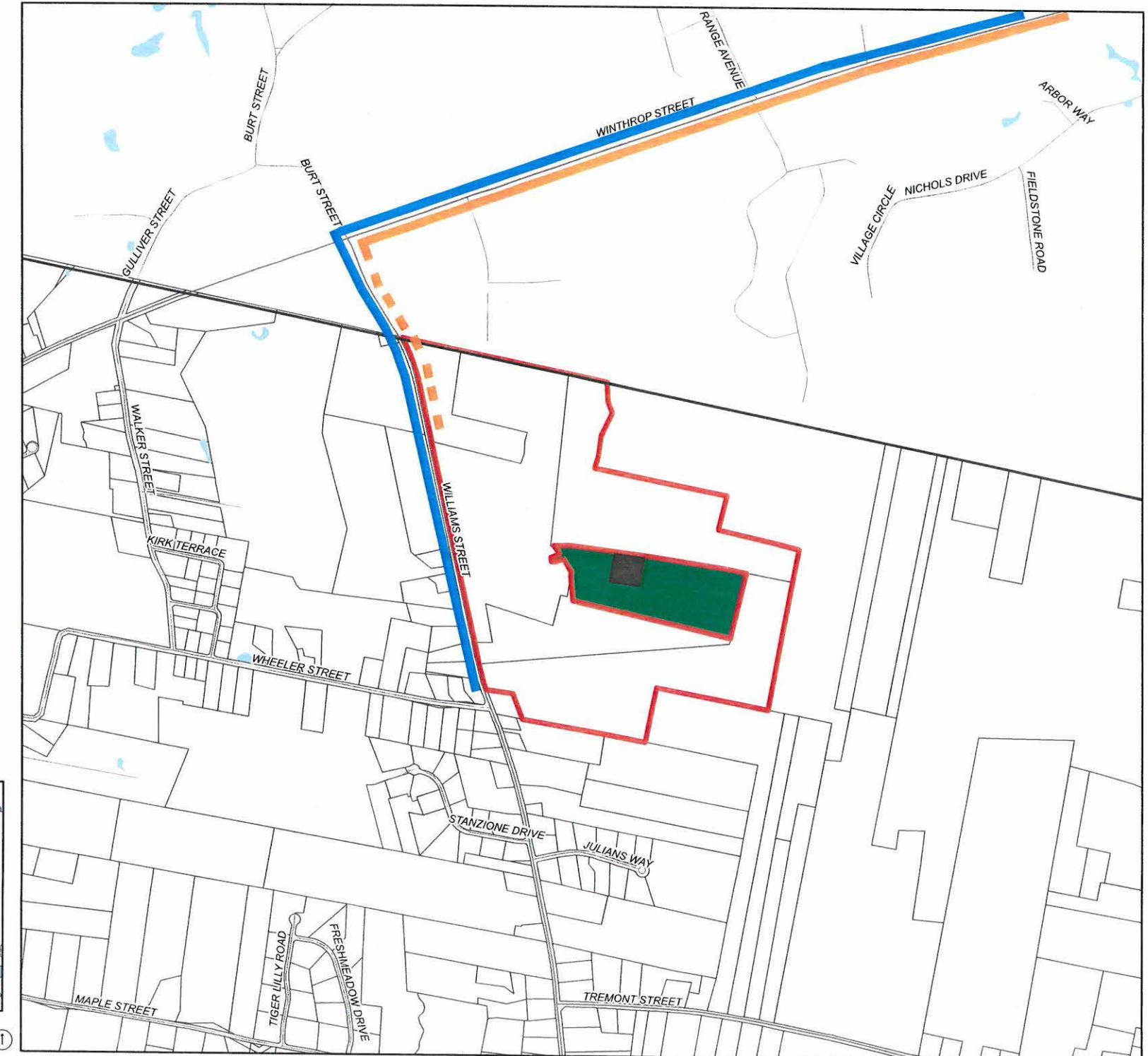
Redevelopment Opportunity -  
Office-Business Park, commercial  
and mixed-use or combination

### Legend

- Site - 162 acres 50% with development constraints
- Waterline
- Existing sewer line
- Proposed sewer extension from RTE 44
- Town-owned protection area
- Private



1,000 feet



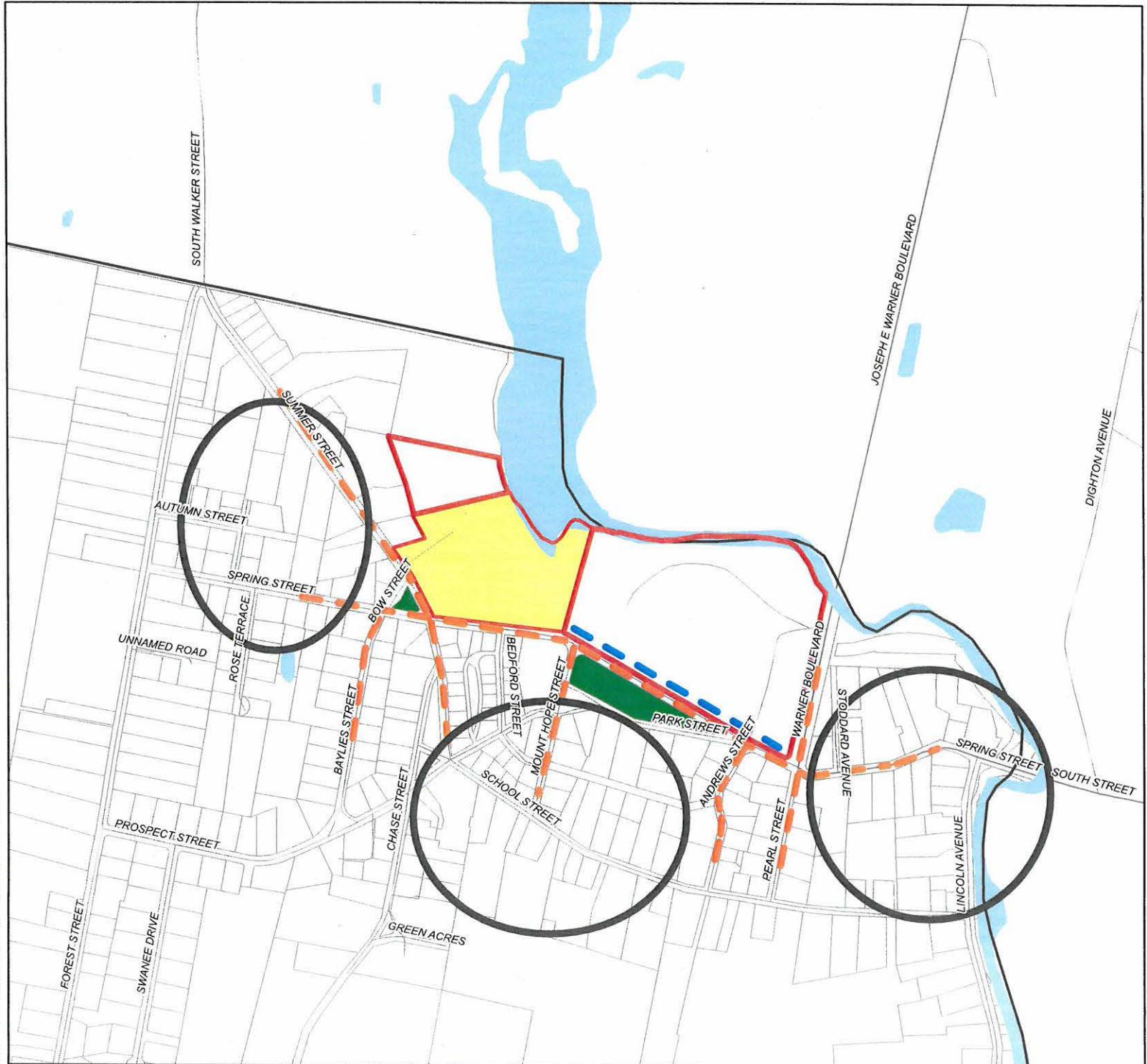
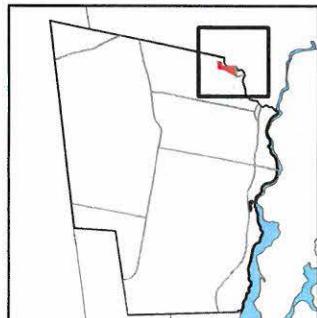
## Site - 2

### Dighton Industries

Commercial/mixed-use  
redevelopment, Neighborhood  
redevelopment, Development  
of Town Common, Infrastructure  
improvements /ped connections

#### Legend

- Site – 37 acres brownfield
- Mixed-use potential shops, restaurants, retail & services
- Commercial redevelopment (demo portion of site)
- Improve & develop town common (pass recreation)
- Infrastructure improve pedestrian connections
- Neighborhood housing rehabilitation



# Site - 3

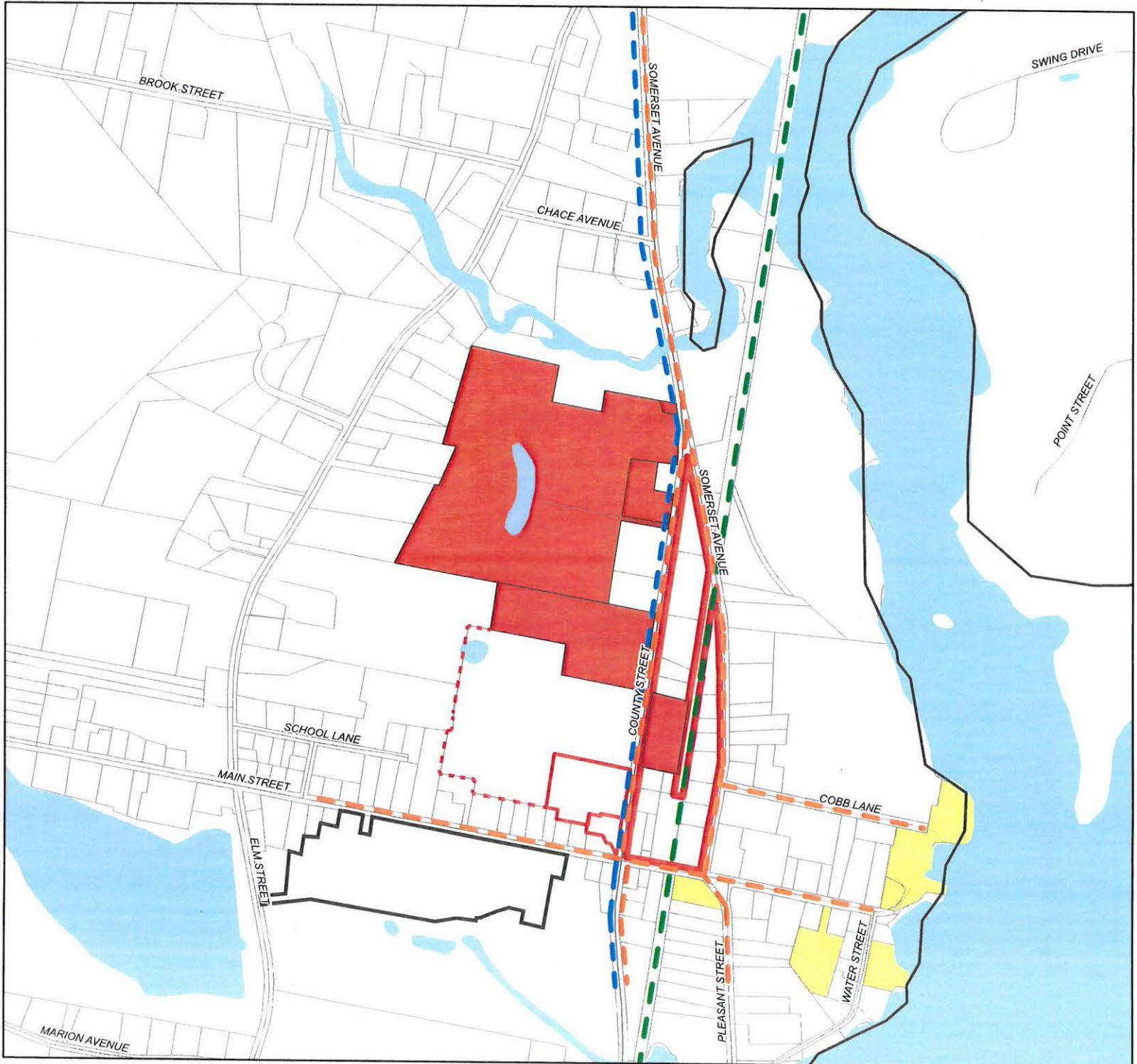
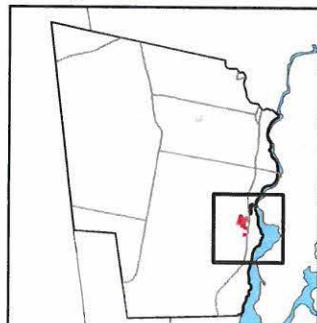
## Route 138

### Business Corridor

Commercial and mixed-use  
redevelopment (Shops, restaurants,  
retail and service businesses)  
Proposed sewer line extension,  
infrastructure improvements  
pedestrian linkages/access to  
Taunton River and bike path

#### Legend

- Site - 165 acre redevelopment area
- Key redevelopment parcels
- Vacant property (church)
- Proposed sewer extension
- Proposed infrastructure improvements and ped connections
- Proposed bike path
- Additional assets
- Zeneca Property



# Site - 4

## Zeneca Property

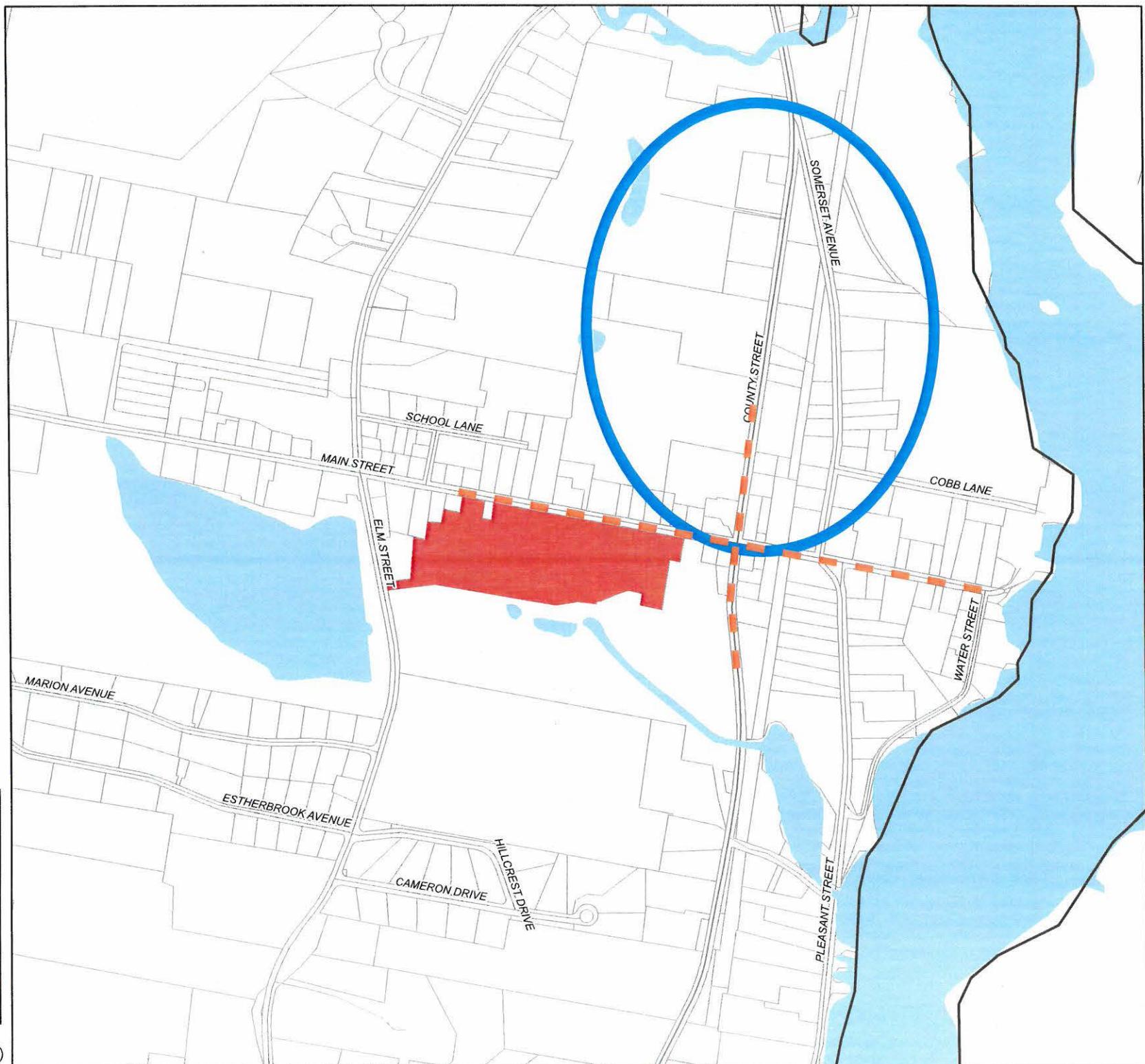
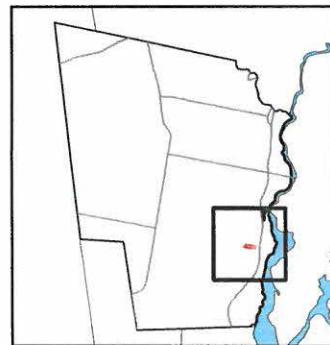
Mixed-use Commercial  
Redevelopment

### Legend

■ Site – 14-acre brownfield  
redevelopment potential.  
Reuse project to provide  
infrastructure improvements  
and pedestrian linkages to  
Rte 138 business area and  
Taunton River

---- Infrastructure improvement  
and pedestrian linkages to  
destinations Business village  
area and Taunton River

□ RTE 138 mixed-use village



500 feet



# 4 Natural Resources

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## Introduction

Located along the Taunton River, the Town of Dighton boasts many natural resources. Rivers, wetlands, and forests offer critical habitat to wildlife and important ecological functions such as carbon sequestration and stormwater filtration. Open spaces and farmlands, which define the rural character of the town, provide scenic attractions and contribute to the town's economic vibrancy. Recreational resources such as parks and trails promote active living and help foster healthy neighborhoods.

While these natural, historic, and cultural resources are valued very highly by Dighton residents as expressed in the public outreach process, the preservation of rural landscapes, agricultural heritage, and places of historic and cultural interests has consistently been considered as an important attribute of living in Dighton. This chapter of the Master Plan provides an overview of the natural resources, cultural resources, and historic heritages in Dighton, and discusses constraints and barriers to resource protection in town. The chapter ends with a series of goals and recommendations to better preserve these valuable resources in Dighton.

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## Baseline Assessment

The Town of Dighton is located in the center of Bristol County and is comprised of rural, suburban, and some light industry uses. Dighton, which once contained many small produce farms, is gradually becoming a bedroom community for the Greater Providence and Boston areas. Though Dighton has seen slower growth compared to its neighboring towns, new developments over the years are encroaching on what Dighton is known for, its rural setting.

### *Topography, Geology and Soils*

Dighton is located within the Narragansett/Bristol Lowland Subregion of the Northeastern Coastal Zone Ecoregion<sup>1</sup>. This subregion has flat to gentle rolling plains,

<sup>1</sup> As defined by the Massachusetts Ecological Regions Project (US EPA, 1994)

underlain by both sedimentary and igneous bedrock, with soils derived from an extensive cover of glacial deposits<sup>2</sup>. Forests are mostly central hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red and white pine. There are an abundance of wetlands, some cropland and pasture, and many cranberry bogs in this region, with many rivers drain this area.

Elevations in Dighton are relatively low with smooth contours. The topographic differential is only 198 feet where the highest point in town is the summit of Richmond Hill at elevation 198 feet above mean sea level and the lowest point is the mean sea level at the Taunton River. Most of the town is 100 feet above mean sea level or greater and characterized by hilly, often rocky land. In terms of land slope, Dighton is relatively flat with a few moderately sloping hills in the central and eastern sections of the town. The gradient of most land is between 3 and 8 percent; less than one percent of the total land area has a slope of greater than 15 percent.

Geological deposits in Dighton can be divided into two types – hard bedrock and surficial material. Dighton is located entirely within the Narragansett Rift Basin that consists primarily of Pennsylvanian aged (approximately 300 to 290 million years BP) meta-sedimentary rocks. The dominant type of rock in Dighton is called the Dighton Conglomerate, which is coarse-grained, classic sedimentary rock composed of rounded to subangular rock fragments larger than 2 mm, commonly with a matrix of sand and finer materials (often referred to locally as “puddingstone”). The other type of bedrock found in Dighton is called the Rhode Island formation which consists of grayish sandstone, greenish siltstone and (lesser amounts) black shale and coal.

Surficial geologic deposits are primarily glacial in origin but there is also some recent alluvial or floodplain deposits along the Taunton River, organic deposits in swamps and bogs, and human transported materials. Glacial deposits in Dighton consist of till, fluvial, and lacustrine materials. Till covers approximately 69% of Dighton, most of which is located in upland areas, particularly on oval-shaped hills called drumlins, such as Hunters Hill in central Dighton. Till has a very firm or dense layer referred to locally as “hardpan” that has very slow permeability and often causes water to perch above it. Fluvial deposits, also called “outwash”, consist primarily of stratified layers of sand and gravel with minor amounts of silt and clay. Fluvial soils cover approximately 14% of Dighton, primarily along the Taunton River and in valleys. These soils have rapid permeability and are often associated with aquifer recharge areas. Lacustrine is fine (silt and clay) textured material deposits in glacial lakes that have now drained or filled with sediments. The Lacustrine deposit is of relatively low permeability meaning that water

<sup>2</sup> Open Space and Recreation Plan, Town of Dighton, 2003

does not readily travel through it; therefore the Lacustrine deposit is the area where percolation from rainfall is expected to accumulate.

In terms of soil, Dighton's soils are primarily wet and stony in the many low-lying swampy areas. Wet or hydric soils are soils that are saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. They are generally associated with wetlands and are subject to protection under state and federal laws. Approximately 36% of Dighton is covered by hydric soils. Stony and sallow soils are characterized by a rocky surface, with bedrock, believed to be within several feet of the surface. These soils are relatively difficult to develop both because of the high cost of ledge excavation and the high water table in shallow soil. As for farmland soils, according to the 1981 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service soil survey approximately 22% of Dighton was covered by prime farmland soils. The latest MassGIS land use data of 2005 indicates that only 6.6% of Dighton's land was dedicated to agricultural uses, which decreased by nearly 5% than 11.5% in 1971 (see more details in the *Land Use Element* of the Master Plan).

### **Landscape Character**

Dighton is characterized by three types of dominating landscapes, the river corridor, agricultural landscapes west of the Taunton River particularly along Elm and Smith Streets, and the industrial landscape in North Dighton.

Land use patterns in Dighton are interesting to note as the town is divided into squares by the road system with three main north-south routes, four or five east-west routes, and almost no other roads carving up the landscape. The Taunton River forms the eastern boundary of Dighton and is traversed by the Berkley-Dighton Bridge which is to be replaced by a two-lane, four-span concrete arch bridge expected to be completed in 2015. As the Taunton River is central to the town's identity, the river corridor as a whole could be considered the town's most significant landscape.

There are two National Register of Historic Districts within Dighton's waterfront, the Wharves Historic District and the nearby Coram Shipyard Historic District (see more detail in the Historic Resources section). Broad Cove is a natural cove on the Dighton/Somerset border adjacent to the Dighton waterfront. It is a highly visible and ecologically valuable area that may have archeological resources associated with either Native American use or with its more recent history as part of Dighton Rock Park, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century trolley park. It is also a popular local fishing area and functions as a town gathering place.

Richmond Hill, located along Elm Street (also known as Old Bristol Path), is the highest point in Dighton, characterized by huge outcroppings of conglomerate rock known as puddingstone. Another significant landscape feature is the Council Oak Field. This area was traditionally a meeting ground for surrounding sub-tribes of the Wampanoag tribe and was the site where European settlers purchased the land that became Dighton from King Phillip in 1663. The huge oak on the site, which is estimated to be 500 years old, was struck by lightning and is now dying. Adjacent cornfields were used by Native Americans and later by white settlers. With the loss of the oak, this ethnographic landscape is important primarily for its strong associative value.

The industrial landscape in North Dighton is primarily represented by the Mount Hope Finishing Company complex located south of the Three Mile River Dam. The Mount Hope Finishing Company was established by Joseph Milliken in 1901 and remained active until 195 when a strike forced the company to relocate to North Carolina. During its heyday in the 1920's, Mount Hope claimed to be one of the largest textile companies in the country, stretching over  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile along Spring Street in the village of North Dighton. The area is a well-preserved early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial village with mill buildings, housing, and parks that appear to have been planned as a unit and retain a high level of integrity, except that in 2009 a portion of the old mill building complex that was most affected by high heating and maintenance costs was demolished by the current owner. At the wider part of the Three Mile River with dam and falls is the Harodite Finishing Company, located across the river in Taunton. Part of the dam and falls is in Dighton and the relationship of the two finishing companies (Harodite and Mount Hope) is visual as well as historical<sup>3</sup>.

## Water Resources

### Watersheds

The Town of Dighton divides neatly into two major watersheds, the Taunton River watershed and the Mount Hope Bay/Narragansett Bay watershed. Most of the town is located within the Taunton River watershed with drainage provided by several rivers, brooks, and streams. The northwest to southeast flowing Segregansett River and its tributaries drain a large part of Dighton into the Taunton River. The southwestern and extreme western part of the town drains into the Narragansett Bay Drainage Basin via the Coles River and low-lying wetland systems.

<sup>3</sup> MassDCR Heritage Landscape Inventory Program Dighton Reconnaissance Report, 2001

### Surface Water

Surface water within the Dighton town boundaries covers about 0.4% of the town's total area, or about 58.2 acres according to the 2005 land use data provided by MassGIS. All surface water in Dighton is within the Taunton River watershed, except for a portion of the town in the southeast that is within the Narragansett Bay watershed. Surface water flows in an easterly direction throughout most of the town with a small amount of drainage flowing southwest to the Coles River.

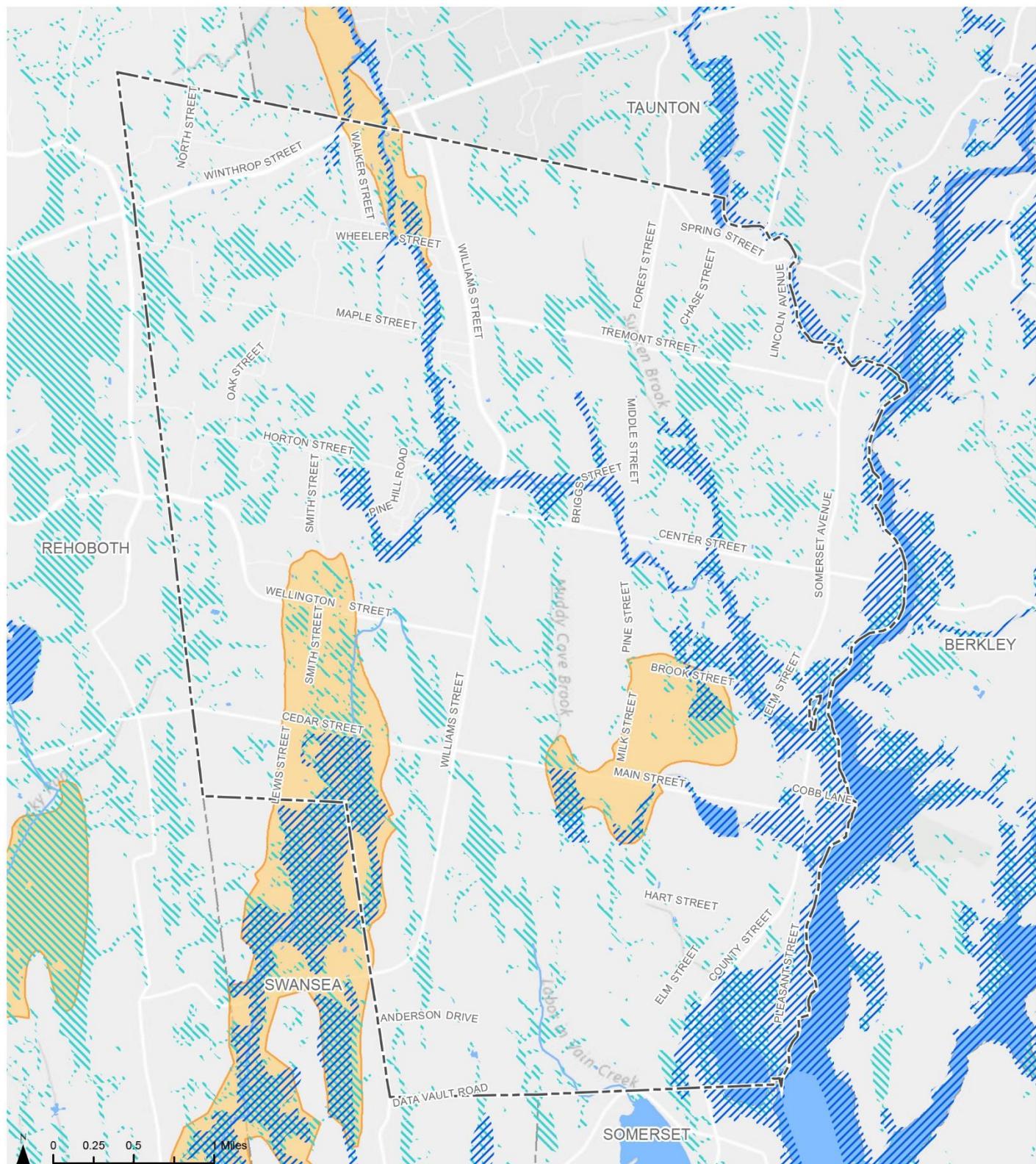
The largest water bodies in Dighton, the Taunton River, as well as the Three Mile and Coles River, extend beyond the town boundaries. The Taunton River, which empties into Mount Hope Bay, forms the eastern border of Dighton with Berkley. The Three Mile River, which is a major tributary of the lower Taunton River, forms part of the northern border of Dighton with Taunton.

### **Taunton River**

The Taunton River stretches for 44 miles from the confluence of the Town River and the Matfield River in Bridgewater to the broad estuary at Mount Hope Bay. Its main stem is tidally influenced from East Taunton to Mount Hope Bay and saltwater intrusion extends upriver to the Dighton section. Named "the Great River" by early Europeans, the Taunton River supported early riverfront settlements and mill villages along the river that later evolved into the cities of Taunton and Fall River. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Taunton River was home to major resorts in Dighton and Assonet featuring amusement rides, picnic areas, dance pavilions, and clambakes. The River had a prominent role in late-19<sup>th</sup> century recreational activities. Small pleasure crafts filled the river, canoe houses and yachting and boat clubs were built along its riverbanks. In addition, the Taunton River is home to an incredible diversity of vegetation and wild life habitats. It is considered by most locals to be the most ecologically diverse water bodies in the state.



**Taunton River**



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Water Resources, Dighton, MA

#### Water Resources

- Major Streams
- Open Water
- Wetlands
- 100 Year Flood Zone
- Zone II DEP Wellhead Protection Areas

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



For its prominent role in the history, culture, recreation, and economy of its thirteen communities, the Taunton River has earned its designation as the first Massachusetts Heritage River. Today the majority of the riverfront land is in private hands. Less than five hundred acres along its banks is truly protected from development. Fortunately, with the help of municipalities and non-profit land trusts, landowners have an array of land preservation options that provide significant financial benefits when land is preserved. As greater efforts are being made to acquire open space by towns abutting the River, by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and by conservation organizations, a potential for long-term protection of the upper Taunton River may be realized. The *Taunton Wild and Scenic River Study* conducted by the National Park Service will assist in and allow a managed approach to this preservation effort.

### ***Segregansett River***

This river runs across Dighton as a major tributary of the Taunton River. It drains in a southeasterly direction into the Taunton River. Currently this is the Town of Somerset's source of drinking water, where the Somerset Water Department manages and owns nearly 184 acres of land along the river banks for watershed protection purposes.

### ***Three-Mile River***

This river is also a major tributary of the Taunton River that drains in a southeasterly direction and runs across the northeastern political boundary between North Dighton and Taunton. Remnants of major industry can be found along the river banks. A relatively new herring run was built on the stretch along Lincoln Avenue.

### ***Coles River***

This is the only river in Dighton that is not part of the Taunton River Watershed. Rather it is a tributary of the Narragansett Bay Watershed and therefore drains there. This river flows from the southwestern portion of Dighton into the Town of Swansea. The Dighton Water District manages and owns the Town's Cedar Street wells, which are located just east of the Coles River.

### ***Broad Cove***

This brackish cove located on the southern political boundary of Dighton and the Town of Somerset along the Taunton River is a great local fishing spot. The Town of Dighton currently owns over 11 acres of land immediately surrounding the cove. This acreage includes the former New York/New Haven Railroad right of way owned by the Town, which once bisected the cove. If the former rail line is someday to be used as a trail for passive recreation, this bridge will need to be replaced. (see Water Resources Map)

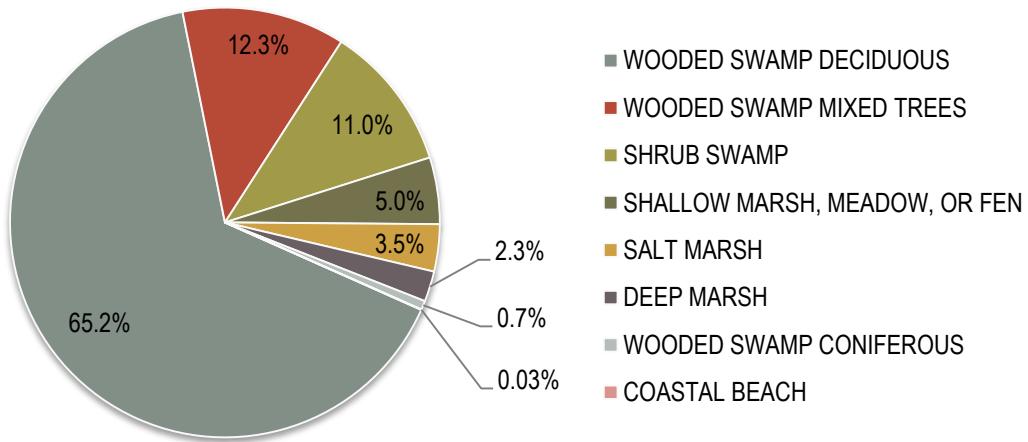
### Flood Hazard Areas

The 100-year floodplains delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps generally surround the rivers throughout Dighton. These floodplains in Dighton are protected by a Flood Hazard Overlay District (FHOD), which encourages non-intensive uses such as agriculture, forestry, and recreation.

### Wetlands

Wetlands are another important water resource in Dighton that play a significant role in the protection of public and private water supply, flood control, prevention of pollution, and provision of wildlife habitat. According to the latest (January 2009) Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Wetlands datalayer provided by MassGIS, there are approximately 2314.5 acres of wetlands, excluding open water, that are subject to protection under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (MGL Ch. 131, Sec. 40) in Dighton. The majority of the wetland resources in Town are wooded swamp deciduous (65.2%) and wooded swamp mixed trees (12.3%) wetlands as shown in Figure 4-1.

**Figure 4-1 Wetland Types in Dighton, MA**



Source: MassGIS



**Wetland off Taunton River**

The Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act requires a 100-foot buffer zone around protected wetland areas, with the exception of perennial rivers and streams, which have 200 feet of riverfront jurisdiction per the Massachusetts River Protection Act. The Town of Dighton has been proactive in terms of wetland protection. At the Town's 2001 annual meeting, the Town's people voted to adopt local wetlands protection bylaws. No subsurface sewage disposal system will be permitted within the 100-foot buffer zone of any wetland or within 200 feet of any perennial stream. No dwelling or structure shall be built less than 50 feet from the outer edge of any wetland. In addition, a 25-foot minimum undisturbed vegetated buffer zone will be required to protect wetlands and wildlife. The Dighton Conservation Commission is responsible for the local administration, implementation, and enforcement of the wetland protection bylaws.

### Public Water Supply

Dighton Water District receives water from 5 active wells located in the town of Dighton and water purchased from the Taunton Water Department. The wells from the Dighton Water District are within two Zone II protection areas and an IWPA. The Zone II area for the Walker Street wells extends into the Town of Taunton and the Zone II for the Cedar Street wells extends into the Town of Swansea. Each of the wells has a Zone I of 400 feet. These wells are located in an aquifer with high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeological barriers, such as clay, that can prevent contaminant migration<sup>4</sup>.

#### **What is a Protection Area?**

*A well's water supply protection area is the land around the well where protection activities should be focused. Each well has a Zone I protective radius and a Zone II protection area.*

- **Zone I:** *The area closest to a well; a 100 to 400 foot radius proportional to the well's pumping rate. This area should be owned or controlled by the water supplier and limited to water supply activities.*
- **Zone II:** *The primary recharge area for the aquifer. This area is defined by hydrogeologic studies that must be approved by DEP. Refer to the attached map to determine the land within your Zone II.*
- **Interim Wellhead Protection Areas (IWPA):** *the primary, protected recharge area for public water supply groundwater resources. The minimum IWPA radius is 400 feet and the maximum is ½ mile.*

<sup>4</sup> Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report for Dighton Water District, MassDEP, 2003

Dighton Water District has been experiencing water quality problems at the well sources and in the distribution system, primarily caused by contaminants like iron, manganese and natural organic matter. Source Water Quality data from previous studies did not implicate risks of non-compliance for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and Synthetic Organic Compounds (SOCs) which usually originate from manufactured solvents, petroleum byproducts, pesticides, and herbicides and migrate to a well through the porous aquifer material such as sand and gravel. Chloroform was detected at concentrations well below what would be considered a risk. Small amounts of Inorganic heavy metals have been reported. Additional data also revealed that these well supplies have very low or non-detectable levels of nitrate/nitrite, which usually originate from surface disposal of human waste, livestock yards and agricultural areas with fertilizer application<sup>5</sup>. In an effort to improve drinking water quality, the Dighton Water District is considering a request for Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection authorization to take by eminent domain Linsey Family Trust property on Williams Street for protection of the purity of the Walker Street wells<sup>6</sup>.

The existing well supply in Dighton is inadequate to meet projected growth in the water system through the year 2020 without addition of new well supply(s). This deficit grows gradually from 160 gpm to 293 gpm in the year 2020, based on emergency water use provided by Taunton through the existing municipal interconnections. The 2001 report of the Dighton Water District recommended increasing water supply capacity through either identification of a new source of supply within the Cedar Street well aquifer or at another site in Dighton<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Vegetation and Wildlife***

Dighton has the typical plant communities found in the Taunton River Corridor, such as forested riparian wetlands, non-forested riparian wetlands like floodplain meadow, shrub swamp and shallow marsh, forested and non-forested palustrine wetlands, and various upland forested and non-forested plant communities.

According to the 2012 report of BioMap 2, a comprehensive biological resource inventory program led by the Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, Dighton has a total of 5 species of Conservation Concerns included on the Massachusetts Endangered

<sup>5</sup> Dighton Water District Comprehensive Water System and Treatment Alternative Evaluation Report, 2001

<sup>6</sup> Dighton Water District The Water Resources Trustees Regular Meeting, September 2013; Water Trustee Patrick Menges, August 21, 2014

<sup>7</sup> Dighton Water District Comprehensive Water System and Treatment Alternative Evaluation Report, 2001

Species Act (MESA) list based on their rarity, population trends, and threats to survival. They include 1 plant, 1 bird, 1 amphibian, 1 fish, and 1 insect species, as listed below:

- Plants: Long's Bitter-cress (*Cardamine longii*), Endangered
- Birds: Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Special Concern
- Amphibians: Marbled Salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*), Threatened
- Fishes: Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*), Endangered
- Insects (butterflies): Hessel's Haristreak (*Callophrys hesseli*), Special Concern

The fauna of Dighton is linked directly to the quantity, quality, and diversity of soils, water, and vegetation. The NHESP has mapped out Priority and Estimated Habitats of Rare and Endangered Species to indicate the geographic extent of the habitat of state-listed rare species. Priority Habitat areas are the filing trigger for project proponents, municipalities, and all others for determining whether or not a proposed project or activity must be reviewed by the NHESP for compliance with MESA(Massachusetts Endangered Species Act) and its implementing regulations.

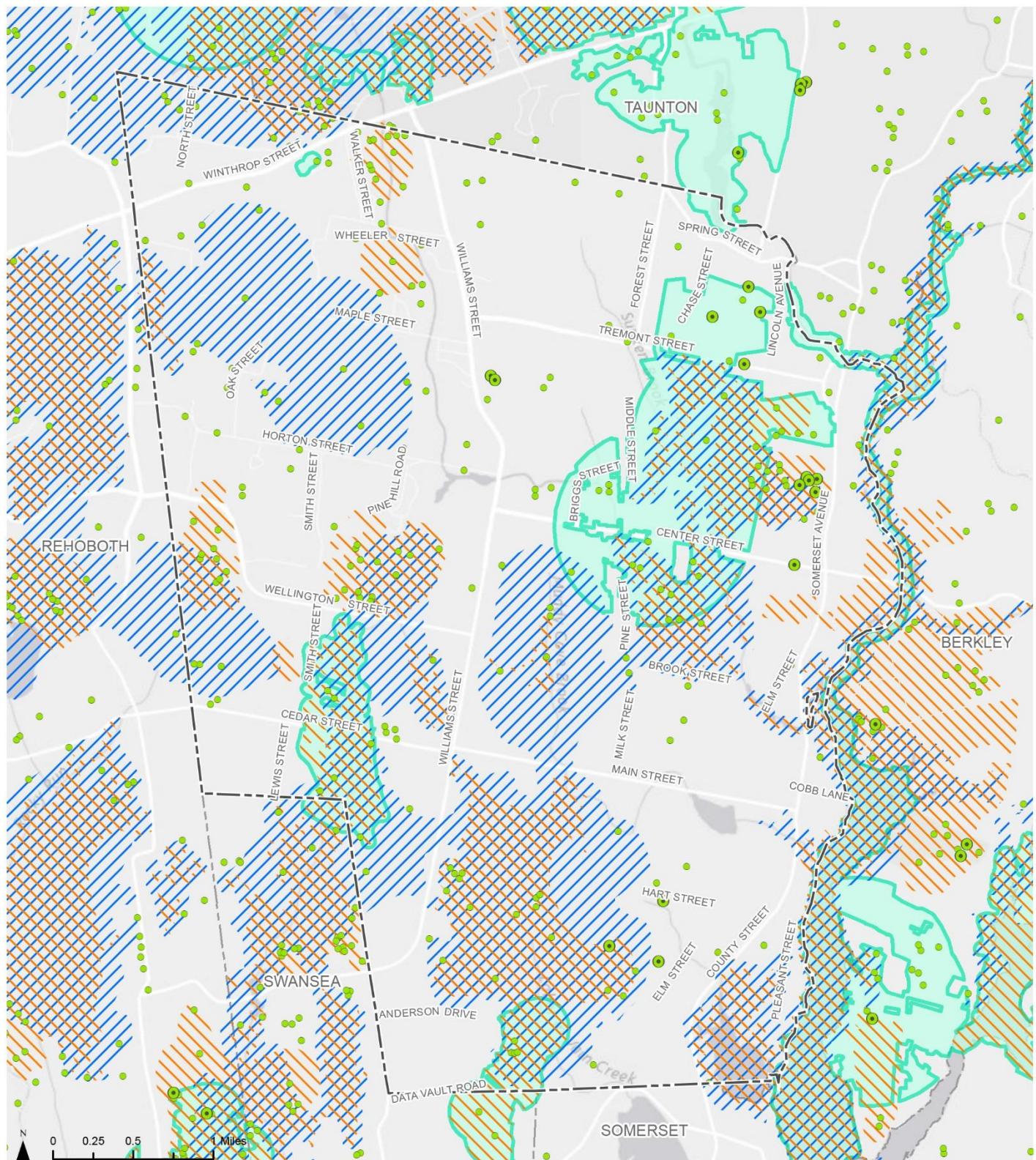
BioMap 2 further identifies Core Habitats<sup>8</sup> and Critical Natural Landscape<sup>9</sup> in Massachusetts cities and towns. The latest BioMap2 report indicates that Dighton has a total of 2,752 acres of Core Habitat and 5,473 acres of Critical Natural Landscape, of which 5.4% and 3.2%, respectively, are protected (see Primary Wildlife Habitats Map).

Vernal pools are another important component of Dighton's ecosystem. As temporary bodies of fresh water, vernal pools provide critical habitat for many vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife species<sup>10</sup>. Many of the species which are entirely dependent on vernal pool habitats are listed by the state as rare species. According to the latest data from MassGIS, there are 10 vernal pools in Dighton that have been officially certified by Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to date. In addition, another 202 potential vernal pools have been identified through interpretation of aerial photographs.

<sup>8</sup> Core Habitat identifies specific areas necessary to promote the long-term persistence of rare species, other Species of Conservation Concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems.

<sup>9</sup> Critical Natural Landscape identifies intact landscape in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames.

<sup>10</sup> Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program, Vernal Pool Fact Sheet



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Primary Wildlife Habitats, Dighton, MA

#### Primary Wildlife Habitats

- Certified Vernal Pool
- Potential Vernal Pool
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- BioMap2 Core Habitat
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



## ***Environmental Challenges***

### **Hazardous Waste Sites**

Dighton, as many communities, has a number of contaminated sites resulting from former industrial uses. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has currently inventoried 40 reportable chemical releases from 1993 through the present in Dighton, most of which are associated with oil or hazardous materials. One such site is the Zeneca Inc. site, which is still in cleanup process.

While these sites are in various stages of remediation, most are in the Response Action Outcome (RAO) compliance status, meaning that immediate actions were taken on these sites that were sufficient to contain the spill to the point of posing no significant risk to the public. Three of the 40 sites in Dighton are currently listed as MassDEP Tier Classified Chapter 21E sites that have not achieved a permanent cleanup within a year of being reported.

### **Water Pollution**

Water pollution, in both surface water and ground water, is a growing concern in Dighton as in many other communities. Small sources of contamination such as failed septic systems, golf courses, construction sites, residential lawn manicuring and hazardous waste sites pose a staggering threat to Dighton's water resources. Nonpoint source pollution (NPS pollution) generally exists in Dighton as well which usually comes from many diffuse sources. It is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground while picking up and carrying away natural and human-made pollutants and eventually depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ground waters.

### **Development Impact**

Unplanned and uncontrolled new development will always have negative impacts on the town's natural resources. For example, to meet building codes and Title V restrictions basement floor and septic systems must be located at an elevation above high water table. In most case large amounts of fill are needed to increase the elevation of land, which destroys natural low land areas where surface water runoff would be filtered before entering water supply areas<sup>11</sup>.

### **Impact of the Desalination Plant**

The first desalination facility in Massachusetts, the Taunton River Desalination Plant, was developed in North Dighton in 2008 by Aquaria Water LLC, a joint venture between

<sup>11</sup> Open Space and Recreation Plan, Town of Dighton, 2003

Inima and Bluestone Energy in order to provide high-quality drinking water to the City of Brockton, MA, which has suffered from long term water supply shortage, as well as the surrounding communities in Southeastern Massachusetts. This desalination facility, located on south of the confluence of Threemile River and Taunton River, operates at a 5 to 10-million-gallon-per-day capacity and utilizes reverse osmosis to produce potable water from a tidal reach of the Taunton River. The distribution system involves 16 mile long, 20-inch diameter water pipeline that extends from the Taunton River Desalination Plant in Dighton through the City of Taunton and Towns of Raynham, Easton and West Bridgewater, connection to the City of Brockton's municipal water system.

There are a number of environmental concerns associated with the operation of the desalination plant, including but not limited to effects of brine discharge on water quality and aquatic resources, impacts from withdraw on aquatic resources in Taunton River such as the entrapment of organisms on exclusionary screening device, direct impacts on wetlands and endangered plant species. There are a number of water quality, fisheries, and vegetation monitoring programs in place to evaluate the security of the water supply and measure the impacts on the Taunton River. Further mitigation efforts are needed to ensure protection of lands along the riparian corridor of the River at a regional level.

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## Goals

**Goal 1.** Preserve, protect, and enhance Dighton's natural, cultural, and historic resources.

**Goal 2.** Preserve and celebrate the agricultural heritage and rural character of Dighton.

**Goal 3.** Establish a long-term sustainable balance between development and agricultural and open space resources preservation.

**Goal 4.** Maintain and improve the quality of Dighton's water resources including streams, ponds, rivers, and drinking water resource areas through sustainable stormwater management and targeted land conservation.

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## Recommendations

*Goal 1. Preserve, protect, and enhance Dighton's natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

- Work collaboratively to assess and develop the potential of increased passive and active recreation activities in Dighton's natural areas, especially along the Taunton River corridor.
- Monitor progress on any ongoing remedial action conducted for the known oil or contamination sites.
- Certify additional vernal pools in Dighton and educate the public on the environmental benefits of vernal pools.

*Goal 2. Preserve and celebrate the agricultural heritage and rural character of Dighton.*

- Promote Public education on recognizing and preserving Dighton's natural resources, especially our rich agricultural heritage, as an integrated part of town pride through outreach, media, print materials, charrettes, and seminars.
- Better utilize Community Preservation Act funds to support conservation and open space acquisition in priority areas.
- Encourage conservation easements to help preserve rural landscapes.

*Goal 3. Establish a long-term sustainable balance between development and agricultural and open space resources preservation.*

- Identify and secure priority areas in Town for natural resource conservation and passive recreation purposes, such as open land adjacent to important water supply areas, wetlands, wildlife corridors, and scenic landscapes, using various tools such as conservation restriction, deeded easements, and purchase, etc.
- Update zoning bylaw and consider adopting additional smart growth policies and tools such as Open Space Design (OSD) to encourage sustainable land use in Dighton and preserve agricultural and open space land.
- Reach out to agricultural land owners and farmers to encourage the enrollment in Chapter 61 programs and/or Agricultural Preservation Restriction. Provide adequate information and support to facilitate their decision making in preserving agricultural resources in Town.

***Goal 4. Maintain and improve the quality of Dighton's water resources including streams, ponds, rivers, and drinking water resource areas through sustainable stormwater management and targeted land conservation.***

- Continue to implement the Stormwater Management Bylaw and promote town-wide Best Management Practices, such as Low Impact Development, for the collection and treatment of stormwater.
- Assess municipally-owned properties for potential environmental issues, particularly around water resources areas, drinking water supply areas, and recreation areas/facilities, and address stormwater management concerns as required.
- Develop an informational packet to encourage and facilitate the adoption of sustainable stormwater management features by land owners and developers on private properties.
- Evaluate and enforce the Wetland Protection Bylaw to protect important wetland resources throughout Town.
- Develop a Wellhead Protection Plan and establish a Wellhead Protection Committee, including representatives from citizens' group, neighboring communities, and the business community.
- Continue working in partnerships with local and regional preservation organizations and state agencies to preserve the watersheds and conserve land along river corridors.
- Support the ongoing efforts to monitor and control water quality in the Taunton River.

## Introduction

Historic resources and cultural assets contribute to and sustain a community's character and sense of place. Further, they enhance the quality of life for residents by providing educational and recreational value and creating unique environments that visitors want to experience.

This chapter provides an overview of the Town of Dighton's historic resources and cultural assets. Some of these elements are well known, while others require more investigation and/or promotion. This chapter also sets forth goals and strategies, identified with input obtained through public participation, designed to preserve and foster these elements for use and enjoyment by future generations.

*Historic resources include individual or groups of buildings, districts, structures, objects or sites with national, state, or local significance.*

*Cultural assets include organizations, destinations, or events that celebrate or add to a community's collective heritage.*

## Baseline Assessment

Established in 1712, the Town of Dighton has an abundance of historic resources. Many of these resources are associated with the Town's early economic development, which primarily focused on shipbuilding and port-related activities as well as forge and mill operations that took place between the Colonial Period (1675 – 1775) and the Late Industrial Period (1870 - 1915).

Shipyards in the Town began to develop along the Taunton River beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century through to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Notable properties included Thomas Corum and John Hathaway's shipyard at the east end of Main Street as well as Ebenezer Stetson's shipyard in the same general location and John Reed's shipyard at Muddy

Cove.<sup>1</sup> The shipyards' infrastructure contributed to the Town's role as a distribution center for commodities to be transported throughout central and southern New England during much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

Other forms of economic activity that shaped the early physical formation and cultural heritage of the Town include forge and mill operations that were largely centered at North Dighton as well as the area along the Segreganset River between Williams and Middle Streets.<sup>3</sup> One such development is the Mount Hope Finishing Company (c. 1901) located along Spring Street in North Dighton. In addition to producing mercerized cottons, the Mount Hope Finishing Company built a community of 175 houses for its employees, and introduced water systems and street-lighting services to the Town.<sup>4</sup>

Economic growth between the Colonial and Late Industrial Periods fueled residential and institutional development. Much of the Town's early residential development survives to date, including 18<sup>th</sup> century two-story houses of Georgian design that are representative of the prosperity of their times and many of the workers' houses associated with the Mount Hope Finishing Company in North Dighton.<sup>5</sup> Many of the Town's institutional buildings are no longer existing or have been significantly altered. Examples include the West Dighton Congregational Church (1796), the earliest known Baptist meetinghouse in the country, which was remodeled with Greek Revival/Italianate elements and the North Dighton Primary Schoolhouse (also known as Van Gyzen Hall), which has undergone several interior and exterior alterations since its completion in 1893.<sup>6</sup>

Inhabitants of the Town historically engaged in both subsistence and commercial farming, which were contemporary with shipbuilding and port-related activities as well as forge and mill operations. Despite the industrial and commercial growth experienced during the early part of the Town's development and subsequent decline beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of its agricultural landscapes and its predominant rural character have endured.

<sup>1</sup> Town of Dighton, MA. Undated. *History of Dighton*. [http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public\\_documents/dightonma\\_webdocs/historical\\_info](http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public_documents/dightonma_webdocs/historical_info). Accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1981. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Dighton*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/dig.pdf>. Accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

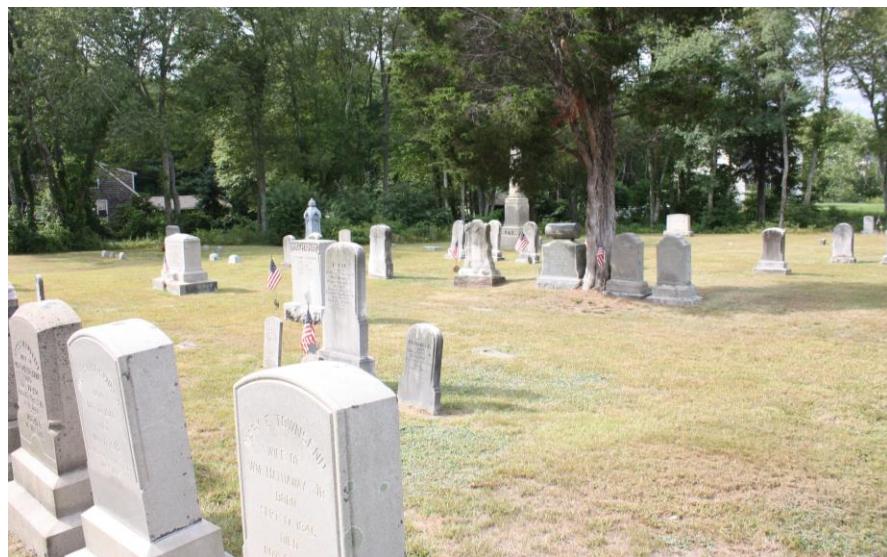
<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1981. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Dighton*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/townreports/SE-Mass/dig.pdf>. Accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Today, the Town of Dighton is a rural community that lies south of Taunton, and functions as a residential suburb of Boston, and Providence, Rhode Island. Suburbanization is a past and current threat to the Town's pastoral character as well as its historic resources, as developers purchased much of its farmland for residential developments.<sup>7</sup>



**Historic Segreganset School House**



**Cemetery in Dighton**

<sup>7</sup> Town of Dighton, MA. Undated. *History of Dighton*. [http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public\\_documents/dightonma\\_webdocs/historical\\_info](http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public_documents/dightonma_webdocs/historical_info). Accessed April 15, 2014.

## Designated Historic Resources

Designated resources in the Town of Dighton include properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and properties included in the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places (State Register) (see Designated Historic Resources map). Properties in the State Register include those listed in the National Register, as well as local landmarks and local historic districts, properties formally determined eligible in the National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 process, and properties protected by preservation restrictions. Subsequent sections of this chapter, *Designation and Inventory Programs* and *Federal and State Preservation Laws and Regulations*, provide more information on the NRHP, State Register, and the Section 106 process.

NRHP-listed properties in the Town consist of two historic districts: Coram Shipyard Historic District and Dighton Wharves Historic District.<sup>8</sup> The Coram Shipyard Historic District, which was listed in the NRHP on January 5, 1998, was established around 1698 by master shipbuilder Thomas Corum and his partner John Hathaway. The site is located between the west bank of the Taunton River and Water Street, and was the locus of the Town's earliest shipbuilding industry. The district boundaries include the following significant resources (defined as properties documented on MHC inventory forms): the Corum Shipyard Wharf (c. 1699), Thomas Corman House (c. 1699), the John Hathaway House (c. 1700), the Taunton Yacht Club (c. 1950), and the Coram Shipyard Historic Marker (c. 1950). The shipbuilders' homes (of early Georgian period design) are currently private residences, while the shipyard and wharf collectively make up the existing Taunton Yacht Club.<sup>9</sup>

Listed in the NRHP on July 17, 1997, the Dighton Wharves Historic District lies south of Muddy Cove Lane along Pleasant Street and the Taunton River. Like the Coram Shipyard, the site of the Dighton Wharves Historic District played an instrumental role in the early development of the Town's maritime industry. The district boundaries include the following significant resources (defined as properties documented on MHC inventory forms): the Darius Perry House (c. 1750s), the Eddy House (1770), the Elkanah Andrews/James Spooner House (c. 1770), the Dighton Customs House (1770), and the Muddy Cove Bridge – Ferry Landing Marker. The site also consists of the Perry, Spooner, and Andrews Wharves. The residential properties (of Georgian period design, with Greek Revival and Italianate style influences) were once owned by the individuals

<sup>8</sup> National Park Service. 2014. National Register of Historic Places: *Focus*. <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome>. Accessed April 7, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> National Park Service. Undated. *Corum Shipyard Historic District*. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/maritime/cor.htm>. Accessed April 25, 2014.

that worked in the maritime industry, and are the Town's "best examples of 18<sup>th</sup>- to mid-19<sup>th</sup>- century residential design."<sup>10</sup>

As part of the National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 process, a formal determination of eligibility was made for the Bridge Village Historic District.<sup>11</sup> Split between the Towns of Dighton and Berkley and located around Center Street, the Bridge Village Historic District was determined eligible for inclusion in the NRHP on April 16, 1987. The district boundaries include the following significant resources (defined as properties documented on MHC inventory forms): the David Standish House (c. 1790), the Thomas Standish House (c. 1845), Dighton Town Landing (c. 1950), and the Center Street Maple Tree Allee (c. 1920). The predominant feature of the district, the Berkley-Dighton Draw Bridge (c. 1896), was demolished in 2010 due to its structural deficiency.

The MHC reviewed the NRHP eligibility of North Dighton Village in 1991, but did not have enough information at the time to finalize an opinion. In order to render an opinion, the MHC requested a completed area form, additional inventory forms for encompassed properties that are associated with the Late Industrial and Early Modern periods, and a future site visit.<sup>12</sup>

None of the Town's designated historic resources is subject to preservation restrictions. Preservation restrictions, which can come with sizable federal income tax benefits if donated, are legal contracts by which a property owner agrees that a property will not change in a way that would compromise its historical and architectural integrity. These contracts run in perpetuity with the land; the owners who grant them, as well as all subsequent owners, are subject to their terms.

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## Inventoried Resources

The *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*, an inventory of areas, buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, and burial grounds maintained by the MHC, includes a number of properties in the Town of Dighton. Although many of these properties have not received an official designation, further

<sup>10</sup> National Park Service. Undated. *Dighton Wharves Historic District*. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/maritime/diq.htm>. Accessed April 25, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> National Park Service. 2011. *National Register of Historic Places: Federal Determinations of Eligibility as of October 1, 2011*. <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreg/docs/Download.html>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1991. *MHC Opinion: Eligibility for National Register: North Dighton Village*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcl=DIG.I>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

study of inventoried properties often identifies candidates for designation can be a useful guide to the historical development of communities.

The Town has nine inventoried areas, including the two historic districts listed in the NRHP and the two areas subject to MHC eligibility evaluations described above. The additional inventoried areas included in the *Inventory Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* are provided in Table 5-1 and illustrated in Designated Historic Resources map.

**Table 5-1 Inventory Historic and Archaeological Assets in Dighton**

Name	Location	Years of Significance
Center Street Area	Intersection of Center Street and SR 138	--
Main Street Area	Intersection of Pleasant and Main Streets and SR 138	--
Dighton Rock Dairy Farm	Bisected by Elm Street - south of Hart Street	1830 - 1940
Mount Hope Finishing Company	Along Spring Street at the Dighton-Taunton municipal boundary	1870 - 1950
Lower Taunton River Area	Along the west bank of the Taunton River from the Berkley-Dighton Bridge to the Dighton-Somerset municipal boundary	1720 - 1980

The Dighton Rock Dairy Farm and the Mount Hope Finishing Company were both recognized for their potential as historic districts by the consultants who prepared the documentation on them but neither has a corresponding formal determination of eligibility or eligibility opinion from the MHC. According to the Heritage Landscape Inventory report and associated inventory forms, the Dighton Rock Dairy Farm is NRHP-eligible, as it is “only one of a few remaining Dighton farms retaining most of its nineteenth century farm land.”<sup>13</sup> According to the same source, the Mount Hope Finishing Company was recommended NRHP-eligible, as it is “an extraordinarily well preserved example of a patriarchal factory village designed by a notable landscape architecture firm” (Olmsted Brothers).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2003. *Inventory Form: Dighton Rock Dairy Farm*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcl=DIG.F>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2003. *Inventory Form: Mount Hope Finishing Company*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcl=DIG.G>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

The Heritage Landscape Inventory Project also identified the Lower Taunton River Area as a cultural landscape that is significant to the Town. The area's significance is derived from its predominantly undeveloped shoreline, which is dotted with historic residences and maritime properties that are connected to the Town's heritage.<sup>15</sup>

Altogether, the Town has 438 inventoried properties, including 42 burial grounds.<sup>16</sup> The majority of inventoried properties are located within and around the North Dighton locality and along the Taunton River at Center Street and Main Streets.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the aboveground resources identified above, the Town has 35 recorded prehistoric (pre-European contact) archaeological sites and 10 recorded historic (post-European contact) archaeological sites, mostly located near the Taunton River. The prehistoric archaeological sites consist of campsites, village sites, and workshops, and date back to as early as the Early Archaic Period (8,000 BC – 6,000 BC). The historic archaeological sites include the remains of homesteads as well as maritime and mills sites.<sup>18</sup>



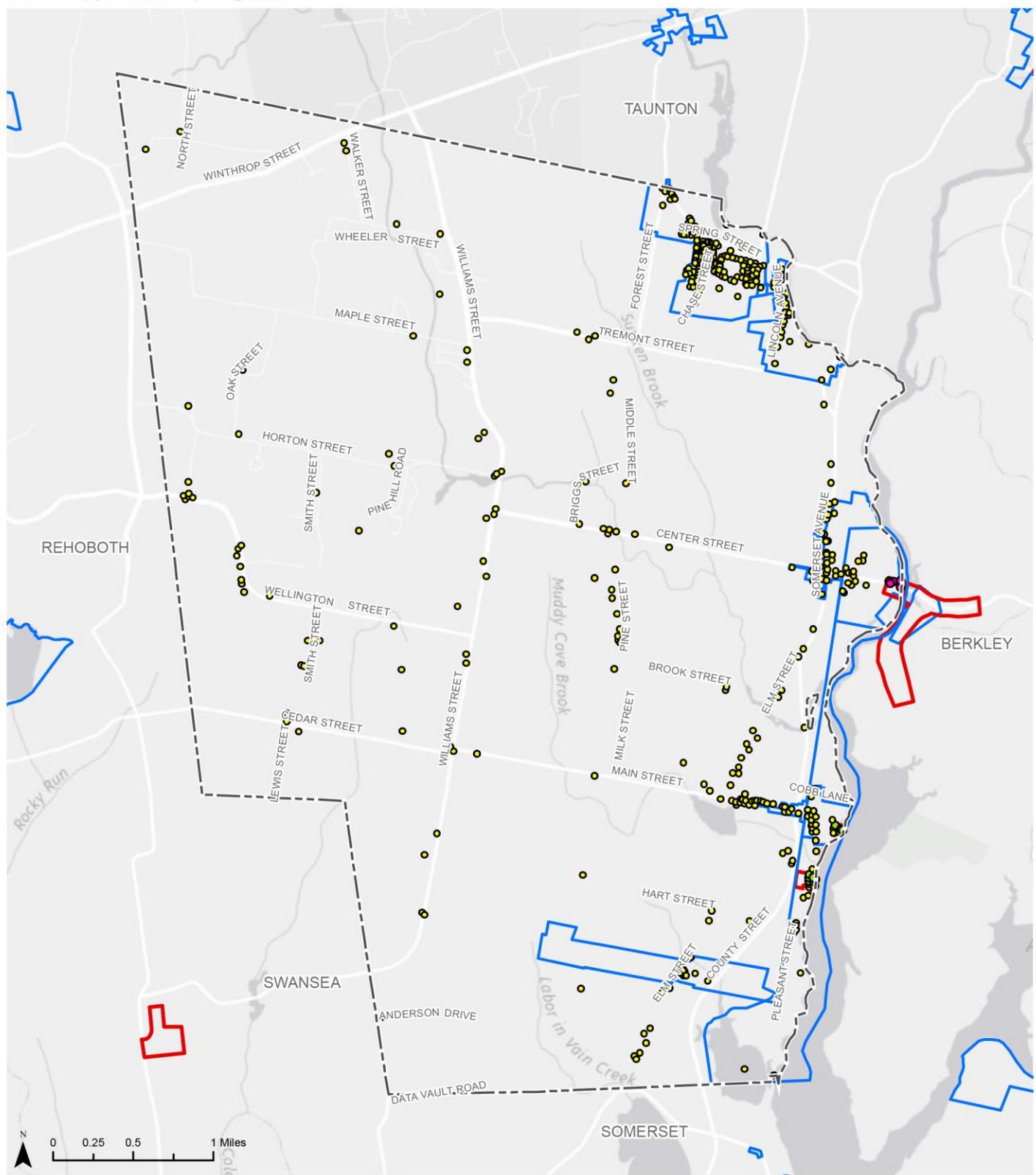
**Dighton Veterans' Common**

<sup>15</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2002. *Inventory Form: Lower Taunton River Area*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhld=DIG.H>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2014. Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System - MACRIS. <http://mhc-macris.net/Towns.aspx?Page=towns.asp>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2014. *MACRIS Maps 2.0 Beta*. <http://maps.mhc-macris.net/>, Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> The locations of known archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas are generally kept confidential for protection of these resources.



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Designated Historic Resources, Dighton, MA

#### Designated Historic Resources

- Historic District, National Register of Historic Places
- Other Inventoried Districts
- Properties within National Register District
- Properties of National Register Determination of Eligibility
- Inventoried Properties

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



## Cultural Assets

The Town of Dighton possesses an eclectic inventory of cultural assets that help sustain, evolve, and celebrate its cultural heritage. Some of the Town's major cultural assets include:

### *Dighton Historical Society*

The Dighton Historical Society (Society) occupies and maintains the Winslow-Davis House, constructed around 1775, and is included in the *Inventory of the Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*.<sup>19</sup> This non-profit organization strives to preserve and propagate the history of the Town, and does so through public exhibitions and other educational programming. The Society uses the Winslow-Davis House for meetings as well as the storage of various artifacts of historical significance.



**Dighton Historical Society**

### *Dighton Public Library*

The Dighton Public Library is located at 395 Main Street, a one-story building constructed in 1911 and included in the *Inventory of Historical and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*.<sup>20</sup> The library offers traditional material loan services;

<sup>19</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1973. *Inventory Form: Winslow, Job – Davis, Samuel House*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?MhclId=DIG.200>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1970. *Inventory Form: Dighton Public Library*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?MhclId=DIG.G>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

community gathering space; adult, teen, and kid programming; and discounted museum passes.

According to the library's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014 – 2019, the institution's vision includes establishing itself as “an authority on local history, as well as becoming knowledgeable in best practices of preservation of Dighton’s local artifacts.”<sup>21</sup> Further, one of the strategic plan’s five goals is “Researchers, historians and Dighton residents will look to the Dighton Public Library as a resource on local history.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***Dighton Cultural Council (DCC)***

The DCC connects, promotes, and provides grants to individuals and/or organizations that promote the cultural heritage of the Town. The Massachusetts Cultural Council provides funding for DCC and subsidizes student field trips to local and regional cultural destinations and programs. Past grant awardees include the Dighton Public Library, Dighton Lions Club, and Little Folks Theatre.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Dighton Arts Festival***

Sponsored by the Dighton Lions Club, the Dighton Arts Festival takes place annually on the first Sunday in November at Araujo Farm and Greenhouses. The Dighton Art Association, whose mission is “to encourage artists of all ages, to promote interest in the arts, and to contribute to the community,” organizes the event.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the exhibition and sale of jewelry, paintings, pottery, and woodcarvings among other forms of artistic expression, the festival features live demonstrations, music, and children’s programs.

### ***Cow Chip Festival***

The Dighton Lions Club also sponsors the Town’s Cow Chip Festival, which takes place every June behind Town Hall and reflects the pastoral heritage of the Town. The event features carnival rides and games, craft and food sales, live music, and nighttime fireworks. It also features a presentation of cows, which includes event participants

<sup>21</sup> Dighton Public Library. 2012. *Dighton Public Library: Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014 – 2019*. Report.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Massachusetts Cultural Council. 2014. *Dighton Cultural Council*. <http://www.mass-culture.org/Dighton#>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Dighton Art Festival. 2011. *About Us*. <http://www.dightonart.org/about>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

wagering on which patch of pasture a cow chooses to defecate. The proceeds from the event go into the Lions Club charitable fund.<sup>25</sup>

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## Existing Preservation Programs

The Town of Dighton employs the following programs to assist in the preservation of the Town's historic properties.

### *Dighton Historical Commission*

As part of its duties, the Dighton Historical Commission provides advisory comments on project reviews to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to support the preservation of the Town's historic resources and character. The Commission also administers the Town's demolition delay ordinance (see separate paragraph below).

In 2012, the Commission spearheaded the Town's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. Various colonial reenactments, a candlelight walk and reading of the Declaration of Independence, Dighton's Tri-Centennial Parade, and historical home tours were among the many related events that took place throughout the year.<sup>26</sup>

### *Community Preservation Act*

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a program that the Town instituted by legislative body vote on April 10, 2010. In Dighton, CPA is funded by a property tax surcharge of one percent, which is matched by the state. Low-income households (up to 80 percent of median income) as well as moderate-income seniors (up to 100 percent of median income) are exempt from contribution. In addition, the first \$100,000 of any residential property is exempt.

CPA funds can be used for projects that help develop or acquire open space, increase the number of affordable housing units, and support historic preservation efforts. According to the legislation, not less than 10 percent of the annual revenues must go toward open space, not less than 10 percent toward community housing, and not less than 10 percent

<sup>25</sup> Taunton Gazette. 2011. *Dighton's annual cow chip festival a good bet to raise funds.* <http://www.tauntongazette.com/x907624899/Dightons-annual-cow-chip-festival-a-good-bet-to-raise-funds>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Town of Dighton. 2012. *Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Dighton.* [http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public\\_documents/dightonma\\_bcomm/2012%20Annual%20Report.pdf](http://www.dighton-ma.gov/public_documents/dightonma_bcomm/2012%20Annual%20Report.pdf). Accessed April 29, 2014.

toward historic resources. The remaining 70 percent can be divided among the categories as the Town sees fit.<sup>27</sup>

As stated by the Town of Dighton CPC, the criteria for CPA funding for historic preservation projects include:

- Acquires, preserves, enhances, restores, and/or rehabilitates and provides permanent protection for historic, cultural, landscape, architectural or archaeological resources of significance, especially if threatened;
- Preserves, rehabilitates, or restores town-owned properties, features, or resources of historical significance, including the historical function of a property or site;
- Demonstrates a public benefit and helps retain town property ownership;
- Has benefits for future generations; and
- Is qualified by the Dighton Historical Commission as a historic resource.<sup>28</sup>

The CPC, which is made of a nine voting members, is tasked with studying the needs, possibilities, and resources of the Town as they relate to community preservation. The CPC also makes recommendations to Town Meeting on CPA projects and funding.

To date, the Town has used CPA funding for historic preservation projects on one occasion. In November 2012, the Town installed a new heating system at Old Town Hall, which was built in 1869 and used as a town hall until 1935.<sup>29</sup> The Dighton Intertribal Council currently uses the property as a meeting space.

The Town's Board of Selectman recently filed an application to the CPC for use of CPA funds to rehabilitate of Van Gyzen Hall on School Street. The property, which is owned by the Town, was previously used by a local AmVets group. If rehabilitated, the Town plans to use the building for Town functions as well as private events.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Demolition Delay By-Law***

In June 2011, the Town adopted a Demolition Delay By-Law (Article 31 of the Town's General By-Laws) that regulates the issuance of demolition permits. The intent of this by-law is to preserve and protect buildings within the Town that reflect its architectural,

<sup>27</sup> Community Preservation Coalition. 2013. *Text of the Community Preservation Act*. <http://www.communitypreservation.org/content/text-legislation>. Accessed April 28, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Town of Dighton Community Preservation Committee. 2010. *Doc 2: General Criteria/Definitions/Decision Guidelines for Project Proposals*.

<sup>29</sup> Community Preservation Coalition. Undated. *CPA Projects Database*. <http://www.communitypreservation.org/projects/report?town=Dighton>. Accessed April 28, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Taunton Gazette. Undated. Work begins on Van Gyzen Hall in Dighton. <http://www.tauntongazette.com/article/20131006/News/310069853>. Accessed May 1, 2014.

cultural, economic, political, or social heritage. Any building that is 100 years or older is subject to the provisions of the by-law, and may be required to undergo a six-month demolition delay period if the Historical Commission (with public input) determines that the building is preferably preserved. This delay period allows for the demolition permit applicant and/or the Commission to seek alternative development plans as well as provide the opportunity for a preservation-minded buyer to purchase the building and retain the building's historical character.<sup>31</sup> The Town has not yet invoked this by-law. In the event that it does, the Town may use CPA funds to preserve and/or restore buildings proposed for demolition and subject to the provisions of the demolition delay by-law.

### ***Conservation Subdivision Design By-Law***

Along with encouraging the preservation and use of open land, the conservation subdivision design by-law was also designed to preserve historic and archaeological resources. It attempts to accomplish these goals by protecting the predominant pastoral character of the Town's landscapes as well as through site planning/design that is sensitive to these resources. According to the by-law, which is available under special permit from the Planning Board, "a minimum of 20% of the parcel should be contiguous open space and no more than 25% of this space should be wetlands."<sup>32</sup>

### ***Priority Protection Areas***

As part of the South Coast Rail Corridor project and in collaboration with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, the Town identified its Community Priority Areas. Community Priority Areas include Priority Development Areas (PDAs), Priority Protection Areas (PPAs), and Combined Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas (Combined Areas). The Town designated PDAs as areas where increased development or redevelopment is appropriate; PPAs as areas where significant natural or cultural resources require preservation; and Combined Areas as areas where development should be sensitive to its surroundings. As per Executive Order 525, certain state agencies are required to consider Community Priority Areas in their investments and actions.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Town of Dighton. 2011. *Town of Dighton, General By-Laws*. [http://www.dighton-ma.gov/Public\\_Documents/DightonMA\\_Clerk/Town%20By-Laws%20rev%209.2011.doc](http://www.dighton-ma.gov/Public_Documents/DightonMA_Clerk/Town%20By-Laws%20rev%209.2011.doc). Accessed April 27, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Town of Dighton. 2014. *Dighton Housing Production Plan*. Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). February 2014. Report.

<sup>33</sup> SRPEDD. 2013. *South Coast Rail Corridor Plan, Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas – Dighton*. Report.

According to the *South Coast Rail Corridor Plan, Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas – Dighton*, the Town designated Council Oak and Main Street as Community Priority Areas for the purpose of the preservation of their cultural and historic resources. The Council Oak PPA is 56.7 acres in size, encompassing selected parcels north of Main Street, while the Main Street Combined Area is 36.5 acres, encompassing selected parcels along Main Street.<sup>34</sup>

## ***Designation and Inventory Programs***

### **National Register of Historic Places**

As mentioned above, the Town has two historic districts listed in the NRHP. The NRHP is the nation's official list of significant historic properties. Properties listed in the NRHP include sites, buildings, structures, districts, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Contrary to popular perception, listing in the NRHP does not limit a property owner's right to alter, manage, or sell the property when using private funds. Instead, the designation acts as a key to access preservation programs and incentives at the federal, state, and local level.

Some of the key benefits to NRHP listing include eligibility for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, access to income tax deductions for the donation of historic preservation restrictions, and matching grant funds for preservation related projects. NRHP listing also requires consideration in federal, state, and some local planning projects.

Properties considered for NRHP listing must be at least fifty years old (unless they demonstrate exceptional significance) and must possess physical integrity by retaining enough of its original materials to exhibit its historic appearance during the period of its historic significance. The NRHP recognizes properties associated with famous figures and events, but also acknowledges places that are associated with the history of important themes and trends in American history and pre-history. NRHP listing is accomplished through a nomination process initiated by an individual, or a private or public entity. Property owners may object to the listing through a certified letter to the State Historic Preservation Office. If 51 percent of the property owners within a district object to the listing through the certified letter objection process, the district will not be officially listed in the NRHP. The number of properties held by a single owner is immaterial; each property owner has one “vote.” The nomination addresses the significance and integrity

<sup>34</sup> SRPEDD. 2013. *South Coast Rail Corridor Plan, Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas – Dighton*. Report.

of the resource through a thorough report documenting its appearance and history. Before the final designation, the report is reviewed by MHC staff, the MHC's state review board, and the National Park Service (NPS).

#### Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places

The State Register was established in 1982 as a comprehensive listing of the buildings, structures, objects, and sites that have received local or national designations (local historic districts and landmarks and NRHP-listed properties) based on their historical or archaeological significance. The State Register is not a designation program per se and does not have a separate nomination process. Properties that have preservation restrictions or have been formally determined eligible for the NRHP under the National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 review process are also included in the State Register. Every property that is contained in the State Register is also part of the *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*.

#### Inventory Programs

As noted above under Inventoried Resources, the Town has many areas and individual properties that have been documented on MHC inventory forms. The acceptance by the MHC of submitted forms places the properties in the *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*. The form is merely a record of the historical and architectural nature of a property and is not a formal designation of the property's importance. An evaluation of the property's significance is only undertaken if a project under review by the MHC and a federal or state agency would have a known effect on the property.

In 1981, the MHC undertook a Town Reconnaissance Survey in Dighton as part of their inventory efforts. In 2001, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) documented several important properties and prepared a reconnaissance report as part of its Heritage Landscape Inventory Program.<sup>35</sup> Recommendations of the DCR report include:

- Intensive study of the Lower Taunton River, Dighton Rock Dairy Farm, and Council Oak Field;
- Survey and National Register nomination for North Dighton; and
- Cemetery Documentation and Maintenance.

<sup>35</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 2014. *Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System*. <http://mhc-macris.net/>. Accessed March 10, 2014.

## ***Federal and State Preservation Laws and Regulations***

### **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act**

Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, was originally enacted to address the widespread loss of historic properties during federally sponsored urban renewal initiatives and highway construction projects during the 1960s. The law requires that any project that receives federal funds or is required to obtain permits or licenses from a federal agency is required to be reviewed for its effects on historic properties. Section 106 review is required for properties that are both listed or determined eligible for the NRHP. This determination is part of the review process if the property has not been previously assessed for its eligibility.

Typical examples of federal undertakings that can require Section 106 review in the Town include U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' permits and Federal Highway Administration (FWHA)-supported road improvement projects. If a property is determined eligible for the NRHP, the impact of the proposed federal project on the resource must be determined by the federal agency (or its assignee) and receive MHC concurrence. If the project is determined to have an adverse effect on the resource, the lead federal agency must consult with the MHC in order to determine mitigation options and/or find ways to avoid or minimize the impacts.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of their proposed actions and investigate alternatives and mitigation options that minimize any adverse impacts to the social, economic, and physical environment. Cultural and historic resources are included in the various categories considered in the NEPA process, and are addressed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Often this review is coordinated with the Section 106 review to avoid duplication of efforts. Like the Section 106 process, the lead federal agency is responsible for identifying effects and proposing mitigation alternatives.

The Town of Dighton coordinates with the MHC as part of the environmental review process for all projects with federal involvement, including federal funds and permits.

### **Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)**

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) is a comprehensive review process that requires state agencies to report on the potential environmental impacts of projects involving state licenses, permits, or financial support. This public process

requires a thorough study of potential environmental impacts and the development of feasible mitigation options designed to avoid or minimize those impacts. Historic resources, both above and below ground, are included in the list of environmental factors that must be examined in the MEPA process.

If the project has a connection to state funds permits, or licenses, certain thresholds must be met in order to initiate MEPA review. For historic resources, the threshold is met if the project involves the demolition of any part of a structure listed in the State Register of Historic Places, or (as of 1998) the property is listed in the *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*. A detailed project information statement, known as an Environmental Notification Form, must then be prepared to assess the impact of the project on the resource.

Similar to NEPA, the Town of Dighton coordinates with the MHC as part of the environmental review process for all projects with state involvement, including state funds and permits.

#### **State Register of Historic Places Project Review**

Chapter 9, Sections 26-27C of the Massachusetts General Laws, like Section 106 at the federal level, requires that any undertaking involving state funds or licenses be reviewed to determine whether the proposed project will have an adverse effect on a property listed in the State Register of Historic Places. If it is determined that the project will have an adverse effect on a listed property, the state agency and/or the project proponent must consult with the MHC to determine mitigation measures. Unlike Section 106, which considers NRHP-listed and eligible properties, M.G.L. Chapter 9 Section 27C considers properties or districts listed in the State Register of Historic Places, as well as inventoried resources that they believe are eligible for the NRHP.

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## **Underutilized or Potential Preservation Programs**

The Town of Dighton has not taken full advantage of the following programs that are suitable to its circumstances and have the potential to enhance its existing preservation efforts.

### ***Local Historic Districts***

Local Historic Districts (LHD) can protect the appearance of historic properties and encourage new construction that complements a district's historic setting. The designation of an LHD imposes a review and approval process by a Historic District

Commission for proposed exterior changes to properties. The primary strength of an LHD is that it can be adapted to specific community needs, while providing greater protection for local resources. Designation as an LHD is one of the most effective ways to protect the historic character of buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, and special landmarks from inappropriate alterations, new construction, and demolition. In addition to protecting historic resources, locally designated districts across the country consistently produce stable property values and greatly add to the attractiveness of neighborhoods.

Although the Town has an abundance of properties with historical value, it has no LHDs. In order to designate an LHD, the Town must refer to M.G.L. Chapter 40C, as amended. The process outlined in this law includes identifying an area for designation and forming a historic district study committee. The historic district study committee prepares a report that examines the area's qualifications for designation as well as the committee's recommendations; the report is prepared with input from the local planning board and the MHC. Once a final report is completed, the historic district study committee presents the document at a town meeting for approval. Once the Town designates an LHD, and establishes an associated historic district commission to oversee the LHD, the historic district commission assumes the role of the historic district study commission in future designation efforts.

Potential candidates for LHDs in the Town include the areas that have been recognized for their potential as historic districts, but have no corresponding formal determination of eligibility or eligibility opinion from the MHC. These include the inventoried areas of Dighton Rock Dairy Farm and Mount Hope Finishing Company. North Dighton Village may also be a potential candidate for an LHD, as the MHC has stated that there is evidence that this area is historically significant.<sup>36</sup>

If the designation of an LHD is not feasible, the Town can seek an alternative in a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD). NCDs are similar to LHDs in that they protect architecturally and historically significant resources through a review and approval process at the local level; however, they typically regulate a more limited set of design elements as well as demolition and new construction.

<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. 1991. *MHC Opinion: Eligibility for National Register: North Dighton Village*. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcd=DIG.I>. Accessed April 26, 2014.

## ***Design Guidelines***

Design guidelines provide a set of standards to owners and tenants of historic buildings to guide them in the maintenance and preservation of their properties in a manner consistent with a neighborhood's overall architectural character. By providing a consistent set of standards, a neighborhood can maintain its historic integrity and cohesiveness. Usually design guidelines cover such architectural elements as windows, exterior materials, new construction, and rooftop additions. Although generally associated with local historic districts and their standard for review processes, design guidelines are often employed in areas outside of local historic districts as a set of voluntary standards.

In the Town, design guidelines would be most appropriate for those neighborhoods with a cohesive architectural character such as North Dighton, which includes the inventoried areas of Mount Hope Finishing Company and North Dighton Village.

## ***Demolition by Neglect Bylaw***

Demolition by neglect, defined as the deterioration of a building through abandonment and/or inadequate maintenance, poses a serious threat to many communities. Such neglect can lead to the deterioration of a building's structural systems and its external and internal appearance. In addition to being dangerous, deteriorating buildings are an eyesore and discourage investment and damages neighborhood pride.

A Demolition by Neglect ordinance protects individual derelict buildings as well as the physical integrity of an entire neighborhood by specifying a set of minimum maintenance requirements for all buildings. While historic buildings and neighborhoods are by no means the only structures to suffer from owner neglect, concerns about the high costs and hassles involved in rehabilitation of older buildings tend to make older structures more susceptible to abandonment.

## ***Federal and State Historic Tax Credit Programs***

Since 1976, a federal tax credit has been available for rehabilitating buildings listed in the NRHP that are used for an income-producing use. This program offers a 20 percent tax credit for the qualified costs of a substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings when the work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.<sup>37</sup> A similar tax credit program at the state level in Massachusetts provides a state tax credit up to

<sup>37</sup> A federal 10 percent tax credit for rehabilitating buildings built before 1936 and are not historic (that is, not listed in the National Register of Historic Places) is also available. The rehabilitation requirements are minimal and do not require official approval.

20 percent of qualified costs. The programs have made an important contribution to not only the continued use and preservation of many historic buildings in Massachusetts, but have also resulted in the creation of additional jobs, revenue for municipalities, and housing units, among a number of proven benefits. To date, no project taking place in the Town has successfully taken advantage of either the federal or state historic tax credit programs.<sup>38, 39</sup>

As noted in Chapter 1, *Land Use*, the Mount Hope Finishing Company factory at 620 Spring Street is currently occupied by several manufacturing businesses and warehouses, but is in need of rehabilitation as evidenced by its condition and appearance. In the event that this property were to be substantially rehabilitated, its developer may be able to take advantage of either the federal or state historic tax credit programs, or both, as they can be combined. If the owner(s) of this building does not want to have the property listed in the NRHP, they would not be eligible for the 20 percent federal tax credit, but could take advantage of the state historic tax credit if MHC considers the building NRHP-eligible. Despite not being eligible for the 20 percent federal tax credit, the property's rehabilitation may still be eligible for a 10 percent federal tax credit, which is made available for non-historic buildings constructed before 1936. The NPS, which administers the federal historic tax credits, provides more information on tax incentives for preserving historic properties here: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>.

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## Goals

Developed through the public planning process for the 2014 Dighton Master Plan, the following goals reflect the priorities of the Town relative to its historic resources and cultural assets:

- Goal 1.** Preserve the Town's historical and archaeological integrity for the benefit of current and future generations
- Goal 2.** Create and enhance cultural networks and activities that promote the Town's heritage while augmenting the spirit and vitality of the community

<sup>38</sup> National Park Service. Undated. *Technical Preservation Services, Check Project Status*. <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/status/>. Accessed April 29, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2013. *Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit*. <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhctax/taxidx.htm>. Accessed April 29, 2014.

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## Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the public planning process for the 2014 Master Plan, previous planning efforts such as the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), and data collection and analysis performed in conjunction with Master Plan preparation:

- Commission a consultant to produce a Town-wide historic preservation plan and conduct on-call services;
- Work with the Dighton Historical Commission to inform and educate owners of all properties of designated and inventoried properties on the importance of preservation;
- Update the Dighton Historical Commission's website with information on the Commission and its activities, the Town's existing preservation efforts, and links to preservation education materials, including MHC-produced publications;
- Educate applicable property owners on the availability and potential applications of federal and state historic tax credits;
- Promote the activities of the Dighton Historical Society, and encourage participation and membership within the organization;
- Support the Dighton Public Library in its quest to become a steward of local history;
- Identify and promote additional spaces for community gathering, including Van Gyzen Hall;
- Encourage the creation and growth of new and existing cultural heritage events in the Town through a collaboration with the DCC;
- Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Town's historic buildings, including the Mount Hope Finishing Company factory;
- Expand use of CPA funds for the acquisition, preservation, and rehabilitation/restoration of the Town's historic properties;
- Provide for more intensive study of North Dighton Village, and support the potential nomination of the district to the NRHP;
- Hold property owners accountable for building maintenance by adopting a demolition by neglect bylaw;
- Promote and adopt design guidelines to protect the architectural cohesion of North Dighton Village; and
- Consider creating LHDs for the areas of Dighton Rock Dairy Farm and Mount Hope Finishing Company by following the process outlined in M.G.L. Chapter 40C.

# Open Space and Recreation

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## Introduction

According to the Massachusetts's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, open space is “conservation land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation.” The Open Space and Recreation element must examine a community’s desire to ensure a balance between the preservation of open space areas, and the future and current development trends of the community. Additionally, the present and future needs for recreation are assessed, along with the management of these resources.

The Commonwealth recognizes this importance and encourages each community in the state to have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which is to be updated every five years. When an OSRP is completed and approved by the Division of Conservation Services (DCS), the community is eligible for grant programs administered by DCS to fund open space acquisition or enhance recreational facilities. The Town of Dighton completed its first Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2003, which is in the process of being updated. It represented a strong collaborative effort led by the Dighton Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee and included various stakeholders in the community which a concerted and thorough public outreach component.

The key points from the OSRP are summarized and updated in this element of the Master Plan. While open space resources, passive and active recreation are discussed in this chapter, natural resources such as water and wildlife, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 – Natural Resources.

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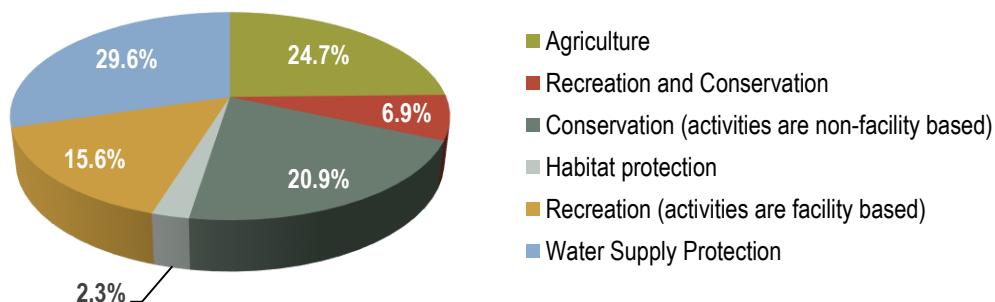
## Baseline Assessment

Town of Dighton has an abundant amount of open and natural land, with more than 70 percent of the Town’s total areas classified as natural undisturbed land. According to the

latest GIS data (as of January 2014) provided by MassGIS, Dighton has a total of 821 acres of protected and recreational open space within and across its boundaries<sup>1</sup>.

Nearly 30 percent or 243.3 acres of the open space areas are dedicated for water supply protection; another 25 percent or 202.4 acres are used for agricultural purposes while 171.4 or 20 percent of the total open space areas are for conservation uses. Recreational areas where activities are facility-based account for more than 15 percent of all the open space areas in town. Land devoted to recreation/ conservation uses and habitat protection purposes account for 6.9 percent and 2.3 percent respectively (see Figure 6-1).

**Figure 6-1 Open Space Resources by Primary Purpose, Dighton, 2013**



Source: MassGIS

### ***Private Parcels***

In the MassGIS open space database there are three privately-owned open space properties in Dighton. Two of these properties are permanently protected, including the 9.3 acres section of Mount Hope Farm on the northeast corner of town, which has an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) and the 19.1 acres of land located on Center Street that is preserved with a Conservation Restriction (CR). The third property is the portion of the Segregansett Country Club that is within Dighton and is located on Winthrop Street. Among these properties, the Mount Hope Farm and the Country Club properties are also enrolled in Chapter 61A and 61B programs respectively.

<sup>1</sup> The Protected and Recreational Open Space data layer by MassGIS contains the boundaries of conservation lands and outdoor recreational facilities. More specifically, it includes the following types of land: conservation land, recreation land, Town forests, parkways, agricultural land, aquifer protection land, watershed protection land, cemeteries (if a recognized conservation or recreation resource), forest land.

### ***What is a Conservation Restriction?***

*A Conservation Restriction is a legally binding agreement between a landowner (grantor) and a holder (grantee) – usually a public agency or a private land trust – whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values. The Conservation Restriction may run for a period of years or in perpetuity and is recorded at the Registry of Deeds (which runs with the title). Certain income, estate or real estate tax benefits may be available to the grantor of a*

Together with the above mentioned chapter land, Dighton has a total of 1081.6 acres of land in Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 61 forest land occupies 160.6 acres and is primarily located in northern section of town along Tremont Street and Maple Swamp Road. Chapter 61A land is designated for agricultural and horticultural purposes and must exceed five acres in size. These land parcels total 684.3 acres in Dighton and are seen scattered throughout Dighton but primarily along Tremont Street, Williams Street, and in the southeast section of town between Main Street and the Taunton River. The rest of 236.7 acres of chapter land are designated under Chapter 61B as recreational land for various purposes such as hiking, nature observation and golfing, among which is a significant portion of the Town's hiking areas, and are located at the Muddy Cove.

It should be noted that land properties under the Chapter 61 programs are not permanently protected and still could face development pressure at some point, unless they are further protected through such measures as a Conservation Restriction or some other form of deed restriction. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B provisions allow for voluntary removal of property from the program at any time, though it may be subject to a tax penalty. However, the voluntary Chapter 61 programs often serve a critical first step in developing coordinated priorities for the permanent protection of important natural and recreational resources.

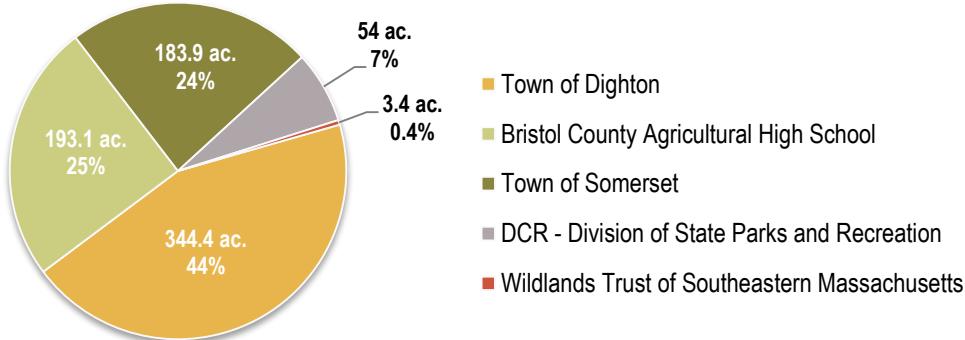
There are several other private recreational facilities in Dighton that are only accessible to members, including the Poppasquash Swim Club located on Horton Street, and the Shaw's Boat Yard and the Taunton Yacht Club located at the end of Main Street on the banks of Taunton River.

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61, 61A and 61B is designed to encourage the preservation and enhancement of the Commonwealth's forests, agricultural land and privately-owned recreation parcels by offering tax incentives to property owners for managing these lands for those purposes, and allowing the municipality the first option to buy (and protect) the land if landowner decides to sell.

## ***Public and Non-profit Parcels***

Besides properties in private ownership, Dighton has a total of 778.8 acres of public and non-profit land that's designated for open space, conservation, and recreation uses. The breakdown of these lands by ownership is summarized in Figure 6-2.

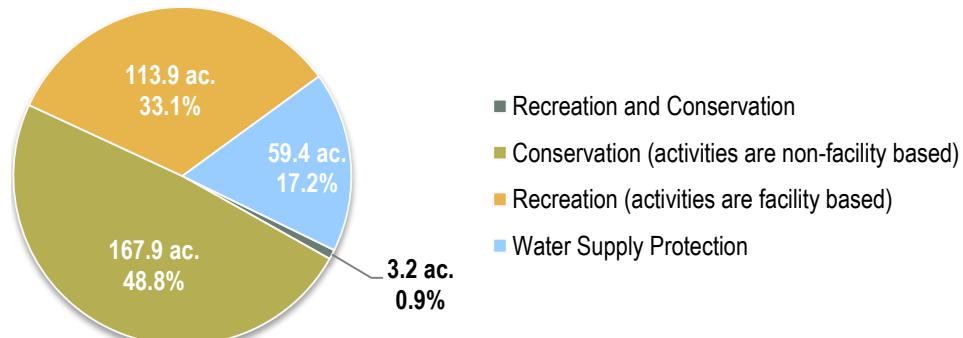
**Figure 6-2 Public and Non-profit Open Space Properties in Dighton, 2013**



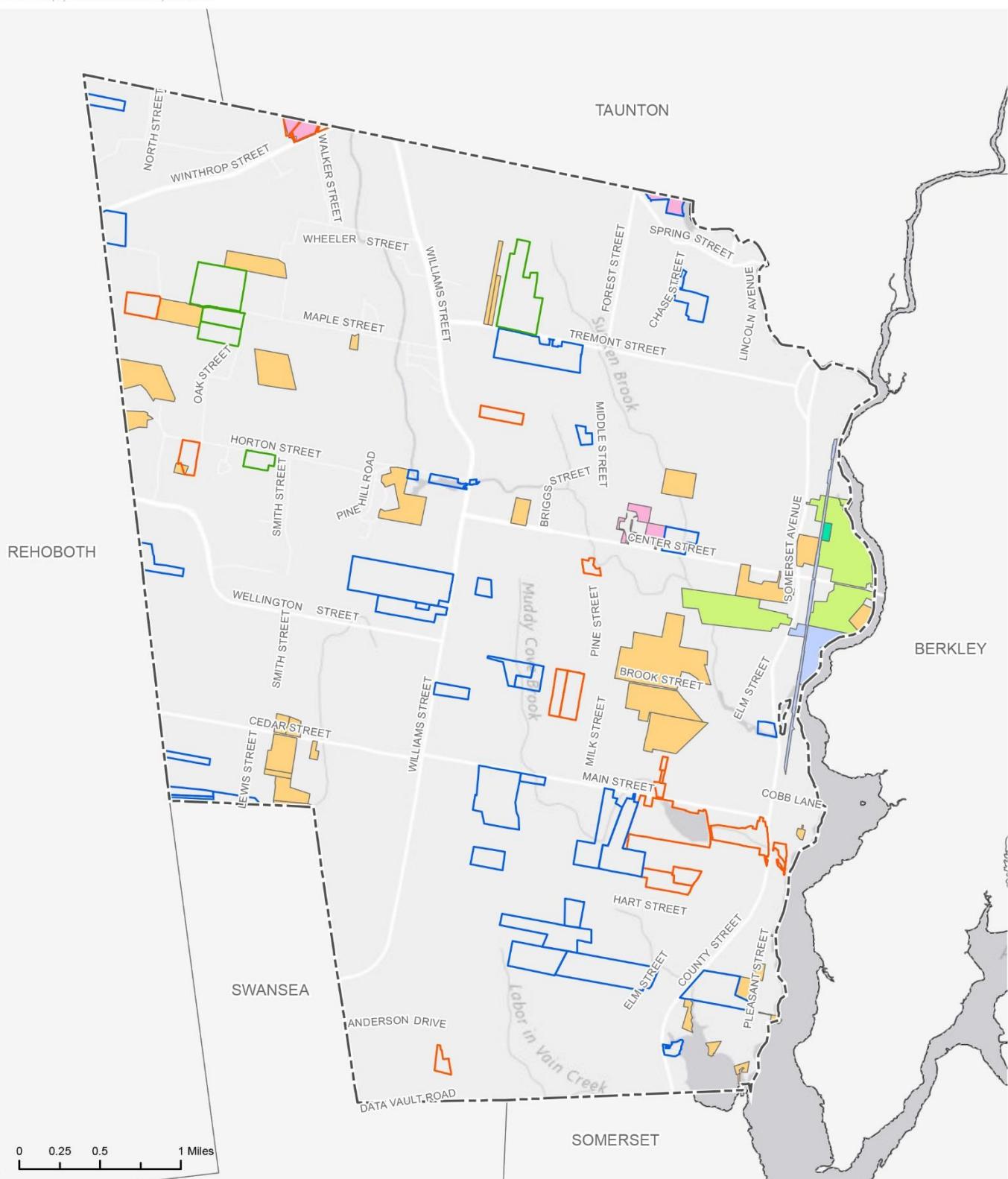
Source: MassGIS

The Town of Dighton owns 344.4 acres land, totaling 32 sites throughout town that consist of schools, fields, forests, wetlands and water supply protection zones, and other recreational and municipal facilities such as the Town Hall and the Town boat ramp (see Figure 6-3). Nearly half of the town-owned open space parcels are for conservation purpose, such as the Town Forest and areas around Broad Cove Marsh. Most of these conservation areas are accessible to the public for passive recreation uses such as hiking, nature appreciation, etc. While some of these conservation lands like the areas around Broad Cove Marsh are protected in perpetuity, most others including the Town Forest only have limited protection.

**Figure 6-3 Town-owned Recreational Facilities in Dighton**



Source: MassGIS



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Open Space and Recreation Resources, Dighton, MA

**Open Space and Recreation Resources****Open Space by Ownership**

- █ State
- █ County
- █ Municipal
- █ Land Trust
- █ Private for profit

**Chapter 61 Land**

- █ Chapter 61
- █ Chapter 61A
- █ Chapter 61B

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



Dighton's town-owned park and recreation inventory consists of nine sites totaling 113.9 acres. These include the Little League fields, Dighton Elementary and Middle School, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School Fields, Town Offices, Town boat ramps, and Helen Lane Field. It should be noted that these facilities do not serve all the neighborhoods equally. During the first Master Plan Public Forum on January 29, 2014, participants were asked whether and to what level they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the amount of recreational facilities such as parks, playgrounds and ballfields. While the majority, nearly 80 percent of all the participants, responded that they are either very or somewhat satisfied, 16 percent of the participants said they are not satisfied. Particularly, people said there needs to be more recreational amenities, such as playgrounds, neighborhood parks, etc. for families with smaller children in North Dighton and other parts of town in general.

In addition to conservation land and recreation land, Dighton owns another 59.4 acres of water supply protection zones managed by the Town of Dighton Water District. These permanently protected parcels are concentrated between Cedar Street and the town boundary between Dighton and Swansea and no public access is allowed in these areas.

Other open space areas in public and non-profit ownerships include 193.1 acres of agricultural land owned by the Bristol County Agricultural High School, 183.9 acres of water supply protection land owned by the Town of Somerset, the 54 acres Sweets Knoll State Park owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of State Parks and Recreation, and the 3.4 acres of Wayne M. Philbrook Preserve owned by Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts. Except the water supply protection zones, most of these areas are publicly accessible to some level. All of these resources are protected either in perpetuity or with some limitation.

### ***Open Space and Recreation Needs***

The Town's goals for this Master Plan include the protection of open space and the preservation of the Town's rural character for enjoyment by future generations. This has been expressed by town residents in surveys and at the Master Plan public forums. In order to keep up with growth in the Town while also retaining adequate open space and recreational facilities, opportunities to expand existing parks and open spaces or acquire new ones should be considered. Properties surrounding the Town's water supply wells should be investigated to better protect the Town's drinking water. Vacant school lands could be considered for sports field development or other opportunities. Expanding existing open space and recreational areas would also contribute to the goal of creating linkages and connections between these resources. Dighton should strive to develop a more robust open space and recreational network that is interconnected where possible.

Participants in the public forums demonstrated that they were in favor of town supported land acquisition, particularly fields, meadows, and woodlands. There was support for new nature and historic trails, and foot paths. This is also reinforced in the Community Preservation Plan described below.

#### Community Preservation Act

In 2010, the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which in Dighton adds a one percent surcharge to the property tax bills. The Town established the Dighton Community Preservation Committee (DCPC) and prepared a Community Preservation Plan in 2012. This provides the Town with a funding source for open space and recreation activities consistent with that plan.

CPA funds can be used for the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for open space and recreation use, and for the rehabilitation and restoration of land acquired or created by CPA funds.

The DCPC Plan includes the following priorities for open space<sup>3</sup> (recreation priorities have not yet been established):

- Protect land along the Taunton, Segreganset and Coles Rivers
- Protect land containing potential vernal pools, riparian zones and wetlands
- Support agriculture, hunting and forestry
- Create opportunities for passive recreation
- Support the drinking water protection efforts of the Dighton Water District
- Support the efforts of the Conservation Commission to identify and protect open lands
- Preserve priority habitats as identified by NHESP
- Preserve historic landscapes and agricultural lands
- Promote connectivity and prevent fragmentation of wildlife habitats
- Protect water supplies, aquifers, wildlife habitats and biodiversity

#### Protection of Agricultural Lands

The rich agriculture heritage of Dighton continues although in a diminished capacity over the years. Between 1986 and 2003, Dighton lost at least five farms to residential development, which resulted in the permanent altering of over 300 acres of mostly prime agricultural land. Encouraging Chapter 61A enrollments is a technique that can be used to prevent this erosion of agricultural land, but it is more likely to slow the process than to

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4 – Natural Resources for more detail on resources

stop it. There are currently a variety of active small farms in town and according to the latest Chapter 61A inventory approximately 684.3 acres of land is devoted to agriculture and horticulture uses, representing a nearly 40 percent (421.8 acres) decline from the 2003 inventory.

Another available tool to protect agricultural resources is through use of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. As of January 2014, there is one farm in Dighton with an APR which preserves the working farm in perpetuity. It is the 9.3 acres portion of Mount Hope Farm located on S. Walker Street inside Dighton on the Dighton/Taunton line. The remaining land located in Taunton is also restricted. The restriction is held by Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. This is a conservation option available to other willing property owners who meet the APR program's criteria.

As development pressure continues to mount, buildable lots will increase in value and scarcity. Efforts should be made to reach out to farmers about their land conservation options. The Town should also seek to encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites in order to steer development away from valuable agricultural land and greenfields.



**G. Lopes Field**

### Enhance Recreation Opportunities

The need for town-sponsored recreational activities is expected to increase as the Town's population grows. The demand for ballfields and seasonal recreational programming is likely to exceed the Town's capacity to provide the services at current levels. The Parks and Recreation Committee is responsible for maintenance of park and recreation areas, although the actual work is done through the Highway Department. However, there is no long-term plan for maintenance of facilities and replacement of worn equipment, so the issues are addressed on an as-needed basis. Americans with Disabilities Act requirements also need to be addressed at most of the Town's facilities.

#### **Walking Trails**

Dighton has few well developed walking/hiking trails. Passive recreational activities on conservation and open space holdings are the preferred recreational use. It is generally applied to activities, which have minor impact on natural areas, e.g., swimming, boating, hiking, nature education and photography. There are a number of public lands protected in perpetuity that are suitable for enhanced walking trails.

One significant effort centers on the development of the Taunton River Trail. The proposed Taunton River Trail would be a 22 + mile network of off-road trails and on-road bike lanes extending from Somerset northward through the City of Taunton along the Taunton River. The highlight of the trail would be a two-mile segment in Dighton through Sweets Knoll State Park, with pristine views of the Taunton River.

The trail is currently in conceptual design with an active Taunton River Trail Committee meeting monthly to plan it segment by segment. The committee includes representatives from the Taunton River Watershed Alliance (TRWA), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Wildlands Trust, the National Park Service, the City of Taunton and the Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD).<sup>4</sup>

The lack of sidewalks in many sections of town seems not to inhibit walkers on such streets like Williams Street, Pleasant Street, and Smith Street, etc. These streets are used daily for many pedestrian activities. Historic sites, trees, stonewalls, and other points of interest along these routes should be preserved and maintained for future use. The Town could consider adoption of a scenic roads bylaw to enhance protection of the unique features of these roadways. In addition, people expressed interests in converting the former New York/New Haven Railroad into a trail. Fourteen acres of this abandoned rail

<sup>4</sup> <http://tauntonrivertrail.weebly.com/>

line currently is owned by the Town. There is enough interest in this to warrant further consideration.

### **Boating, Swimming, and Fishing**

The Taunton River or “Great River” is regionally well known for its boating and other recreational uses. Dighton currently has two public boat ramps located at Pleasant Street and Center Street. There is no public swimming facilities located in Dighton but occasionally swimmers are seen in the Taunton River. The River also provides abundant fishing opportunities. It has long been recognized that the riverfront resources should be better protected and utilized towards enhancing recreation opportunities and the economic vibrancy of the town. The public outreach process of this Master Plan reiterates such desire by the town and its residents. Riverfront parcels need maintenance and upgrading to improve public access and introduce more diverse activities, such as a public swimming area and fishing piers.



**Taunton River**

It is clear that the availability of riverfront property is a rarity and all efforts should be made to protect this precious resource for future generations to enjoy. As mentioned above, the Town owns a substantial portion of the former New York/New Haven Railroad Right of Way (ROW), which parallels this “Great River” and presents potential for future recreational uses. More planning efforts should be put into the riverfront areas to understand preservation needs and reprogram recreational and economic activities.

### **Playgrounds and Active Recreation**

The Town has several playgrounds and ballfields, although they tend to be relatively small (two acres or less). The largest recreational facilities in Dighton are the Central Playground and Karl K. Spratt Jr. Memorial Field, both of which are located behind Town Hall on Somerset Avenue. Additionally, there are a few tennis and basketball courts.



**Karl K. Spratt Jr. Memorial Field and playground**

As expressed by the participants during the first public meeting for the Master Plan, most residents are satisfied with the number of athletic fields in Dighton. But it should be noted that many also expressed desires for more neighborhood parks and playgrounds that are more geared towards family with smaller children. This is an important quality of life feature that would help to keep younger families in Dighton.

### **Facility Maintenance**

Many cities and towns establish routine maintenance plans that describe what is to be done at each park and ball field on a revolving basis to address short-term maintenance issues and identify where repairs are needed so that they do not become long-term problems into the future. This can also help to extend the life of each field and minimize the effects of overuse. However, given the scarcity of available resources in Dighton, this is an additional challenge. The Highway Department has numerous responsibilities, including park maintenance, but creating routine plans may make the effort more predictable.

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## **Goals**

- Goal 1.** Promote and enhance open space preservation in Dighton as an essential part of the town pride of “living in Dighton”.
- Goal 2.** Preserve Dighton’s agricultural heritage and rural character through protection of agricultural landscape and small farm viability.
- Goal 3.** Maximize recreational opportunities for citizens of Dighton to encourage healthy living in town.

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## **Recommendations**

*Goal 1. Promote and enhance open space preservation in Dighton as an essential part of the town pride of “living in Dighton”.*

- Develop a standing Open Space Committee who would advocate and negotiate for land acquisition in consistency with the vision and policy framework of the Master Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
  - Develop and maintain a land acquisition data base.

- Develop criteria for prioritization and ranking criteria for open land acquisition (the priorities established by the DCPC as described above can serve as a starting point for developing appropriate criteria).
- Seek funding sources for acquisition of open space.
- Look at regional links or land acquisition opportunities.
- Launch a public campaign and promote the awareness of town residents on the environmental and social benefits of open spaces in their community.
- Develop and maintain an educational resource center for community members interested in preserving open space.
- Reach out to public and private groups to support local open space initiatives.
- Review zoning bylaws, regulations and rules to ensure that they help facilitate open space retention.
- Pursue funding resources, appropriate zoning changes, and other available supports to retrofit the Zeneca property and incorporate it into the open space system of Dighton.

***Goal 2. Preserve Dighton's agricultural heritage and rural character through protection of agricultural landscape and small farm viability.***

- Reach out to and engage farmers and agricultural land holders to maintain and increase enrollment in the Chapter 61A and Agricultural Preservation Restriction programs.
- Make information readily available to interested farmers and landowners regarding the Chapter 61A and Agricultural Preservation Restriction programs.
- Identify needs of small farms in town and provide necessary supports for them to prosper in Dighton.
- Bring the agricultural community and the town residents closer together through events and programs such as seasonal or year-round farmers' market, Open Farm Day, and "Farm-to-Table" or "Grow Local Eat Local" campaigns.

***Goal 3. Maximize recreational opportunities for citizens of Dighton to encourage healthy living in town.***

- Provide and maintain areas for both passive and active recreation for the various age groups in town, particularly senior citizens and children.

- Explore opportunities to incorporate more walking trails in town-owned open space and conservation areas for passive recreation uses.
- Prioritize trail and sidewalk connections that will enhance the internal connectedness of Dighton's walking path network and points of interest, and/or help link to the regional trail systems wherever possible.
- Evaluate community needs for additional playgrounds and tot lots and identify appropriate location for these facilities in order to serve neighborhoods in need.
- Create a centralized location, ideally on the town's website, to make information available to the public regarding available recreation resources in town, such as locations, hours of operation, parking, and permissible activities, etc.
- Develop maintenance plans for town-owned recreational facilities to address routine maintenance issues, as well as scheduling long-term improvements and repairs to play equipment, fields, sitting areas, etc.
- Continue to expand recreational programs for people of all ages through more robust programming and improvements to key recreational facilities.

- Improve, expand and manage water access on Three Mile River and Taunton River.

## Introduction

The public services and facilities element of a comprehensive plan should serve as a guide for decision-making about the public buildings, infrastructure, utilities and services provided by a local government. The adequacy of municipal and school facilities – which affects the ability of municipal employees to serve the community – is largely determined by four factors:

- The form, size and organization of the local government;
- Projected population and economic growth;
- The community's land use pattern; and
- The expectations of residents and businesses for the types and levels of services, and the ability of the Town to meet those expectations.

A Town's ability to provide adequate services to the community requires both short- and long-term planning. Effective capital planning and asset management policies are often challenged by limited revenue for government operations, which can put long-term investment at risk. Prioritizing and setting goals for short- and long-term investment needs can help a Town ensure that it meets the community's expectations for municipal services.

### **What is a Public Facility?**

*A public facility is any municipal property that has been improved for public purposes, such as a town hall, library, police or fire station, parks and playgrounds, and schools.*

*It also includes municipal services and utilities such as water or sewer service, and solid waste facilities such as a transfer station or recycling center.*

The Town of Dighton receives limited funding from non-local sources and relies almost entirely on its residents and businesses for financial support. Some of Dighton's facilities are inadequate to meet current and future needs in order to accommodate the personnel, equipment, technology and records storage that government organizations need to run efficiently. Some departments are also understaffed, creating more of a challenge for the Town to balance demands for town services and facilities with its other municipal needs.

Like residents of other towns, Dighton voters have traditionally supported their public schools and worked hard to assure that children receive an excellent education. Good schools benefit a community's families and help to preserve high property values for everyone, so investing in public schools is very important. During the public outreach residents mentioned the quality of the schools as a significant asset in Dighton. In addition, many people come into contact with school buildings, not only parents and children, but also residents participating in community or recreational activities that take place inside school facilities.

One of the key issues facing the Town is how to prioritize and pay for its many capital needs. Given the growing demands on public services and facilities, the Town is challenged in how it can meet and balance those needs. Economic development opportunities, such as those discussed in the Land Use and Economic Development chapters of this Plan, can help to increase the Town's tax base to support improvements.

This chapter includes an analysis of the adequacy of the following public services and facilities in Dighton. The services and facilities listed below are among the key issues that were identified by Town officials and residents through interviews and the public forum.

- Public safety
- Public Works
- Water, wastewater, and roads
- Solid waste and recycling
- Health
- Education
- Library
- Senior services

Note that the Parks and Recreation Department is addressed in the Open Space and Recreation element of this Plan.

## Baseline Assessment

### *Town Services*

The municipal services that Dighton provides are fairly typical of Massachusetts towns. Like most communities, Dighton does more for its population than it is required to do by law. Many local government services qualify as “essential” regardless of whether the state mandates them. For example, municipalities do not have to provide solid waste disposal services, recreation programs, a senior center or a public library, but the towns that provide these services often consider them important to the quality of life and an indispensable part of what it means to be a community. At the same time, Dighton is a small, primarily residential community and does not have the resources available to it that many of its neighboring communities have.

One of the most essential information portals that helps residents and businesses understand and access public services provided locally is the official website of the municipality. The town website can be a good tool to promote awareness of town happenings and to provide basic information regarding town services and facilities. Residents are looking for effective ways of finding out what is happening in Dighton, whether it is information that affects the municipality, or opportunities for social engagement. Unfortunately, Dighton does not have a staff person dedicated to information technologies, including maintaining and updating the Town’s official website. Dighton’s website needs major improvements in order to better serve the town itself, its staff, and local businesses and residents.



## ***Town Administrator***

The Town currently does not have a Town Administrator or equivalent overseeing town operations and personnel. The three-person Board of Selectmen fills that role and meets weekly to address the types of issues normally the responsibility of a Town Administrator. Given that the Town has been growing steadily, Town Meeting directed the Board to appoint an exploratory committee to evaluate the Town's options. The Town Administrator Study Committee presented its intial report to the Fall 2014 Special Town Meeting. The Committee found that given Dighton's rate of growth, it would be "prudent to evaluate if our current form of government is best suited for the future evolution of the town."<sup>1</sup> The Committee recognizes that the creation of such a position would professionalize town government and execute daily town management activities. Specifically, the Committee reported on issues that would need to be explored further including the job description for the position, selection and appointment process, compensation package, removal process, the dynamics between the Board of Selectment and the Town Administrator, and any subsequent reconfiguration of town government that may be necessary. The Committee is expected to continue its work into 2015.

## ***Public Library***

The Dighton Public Library is the place that residents turn to for the discovery of ideas, the joy of reading and the power of information. The Library provides open access to resources that enhance and contribute to individual knowledge, skills, enlightenment, and enjoyment that help maintain and improve the quality of life for all citizens from infant to elder.



<sup>1</sup> Exploratory Report for the Creation of the Position of Town Administrator, 2014 Town Administrator Study Committee, Special Town Meeting Fall 2014

One of the major issues facing the Dighton Public Library is the limited space of the existing library facility located at 395 Main Street. The 3,000 square feet library building (of which less than 2,000 square feet is publicly accessible) was constructed in 1910 and is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the Town and its residents. The current building does not have the capacity to support the demand for standard library operations and there is no space to accommodate and expansion of services. In fact, it was deemed insufficient in the Town's 1970 Master Plan. The Town received a provisional grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to conduct a feasibility study for expansion. A Building Needs Committee is expected to be convened for that purpose by the spring of 2015. Additional funding will be sought through the Community Preservation Committee given the historic nature of the library building.

The Library's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2019 set up a goal for the Dighton Public Library to become a community center that ensures Dighton residents are aware of and have access to community resources and information. The Library, with its staff of almost four full-time equivalents, strives to offer collections, programs and services that meet the needs and demands of the Town to the best of its ability given the facility constraints. In addition, the Library hopes to improve access to the library both physically and virtually. This includes a series of actions, such as conducting an ADA study of facilities and programs, starting the Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal, and researching compliance measures, to make the library more physically accessible; and developing a website that is useful for library users to use 24/7 from any computer.

Dighton is a participant on the SAILS Network, which serves much of southeastern Massachusetts. It provides access to a broad collection of library resources that can be shared – over 4 million items are borrowed from the public library members.

### ***Council on Aging***

The Dighton Council on Aging Office is located in the Lincoln Village Community Center at 300 Lincoln Avenue. The mission of the Council is to promote, evaluate, and encourage new and existing activities and services that will enhance the quality of life of elders living in the Town of Dighton.



Currently, the Dighton Council on Aging operates "Prime Time", an adult supportive day program established in 1994, which is currently located in its own building behind Dighton Town Hall at 1059 Somerset Avenue. The program utilizes no town funds to operate and is self-supporting and funded through special grant and trust awards, donations, and individuals that pay for services privately. The Prime Time program, which promotes openness, sharing, laughter and understanding in a homelike setting, offers elders the opportunity to socialize and enjoy nutritious meals along with their peers. Various activities are offered throughout the day. The goal of the Prime Time is to foster personal enrichment and to promote the highest level of social functioning in a safe, caring and nurturing environment. The program offers seniors a way of maintaining their dignity and independence while still remaining in their homes and community, while offering respite to their caregivers. Presently there are thirty-five clients enrolled in the Prime Time Program, most attending five days a week.

## ***Public Schools<sup>2</sup>***

The Town of Dighton is served by the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District based on a legal agreement adopted by the Towns of Dighton and Rehoboth in 1958 and amended in 1987. This agreement is currently under review and may be revised to better reflect current conditions. The Town of Rehoboth represents approximately 60% of the student population of the District and the Town of Dighton represents the remaining 40%. The powers and duties of the District are vested and exercised by the Regional School Committee consisting ten members of which five members are elected from Rehoboth

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Catherine Antonellis, Business Manager, Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District, August 21, 2014

and five members are elected from Dighton. To meet the requirement of proportional representation respective to the population of each town, each elected member from the Town of Rehoboth has one full vote while each of the five members from Dighton has a weighted 0.8 vote.

There are two elementary schools within the Regional School District, Palmer River Elementary in Rehoboth and Dighton Elementary in Dighton which contains kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as special education. A tuition-free full day kindergarten will be starting in the 2014 – 2015 academic year. The District is served by two middle schools, the Beckwith Middle School in Rehoboth and the Dighton Middle School in the Town of Dighton, both have grades 5 – 8 and special education. Students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade attend schools located in their towns of residence, except for students in special education classes who attend schools as designated by the Committee and students enrolled in specialized educational programs on the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and by vote of the Committee. Students in grades 9 – 12 attend the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School located in North Dighton. Students can enroll in the vocational/technical program at the school, which is being updated to offer more options for students.

Additional details about the schools in Dighton are as follows:

- Dighton Elementary School, 1250 Somerset Avenue, Dighton
  - Opened in 1953
  - Last renovation was in 1999
  - 68,000 square feet
- Dighton Middle School, 1250R Somerset Avenue, Dighton
  - Opened in 1993
  - Last renovation in 2007
  - 68,000 square feet
- Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School, 2700 Regional Road, North Dighton
  - Opened in 1960
  - Last renovation in 2004
  - 280,000 square feet

Overall enrollment within the district is expected to increase slightly over the next few years due to the influx of new housing developments. Up to 30 new students may enter the school system over the next two years, and there is some concern on its impact on the elementary schools in particular. Over the last five years, there has been a gradual decrease in enrollment, especially at the high school level. In the 2013 – 2014 academic year, there were 2,930 students enrolled in the district: 1,166 from Dighton and 1,764 from Rehoboth. The maximum number of children per class is 26.

With the anticipated increase in enrollment in the elementary school, there is some concern about the capacity of the school to handle the influx. As a result, the District is considering moving the pre-K and kindergarten classes to the high school since enrollment there has been decreasing.

The District does not have a capital improvement plan in place to address infrastructure, building and facility needs. The District is planning to create a new Director of Facilities position to assist in coordinating the maintenance and improvements to the schools. All three schools in Dighton (and the middle school in Rehoboth) are undergoing roof repairs that will total approximately \$13,600,000, more than half of which is funded by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Additionally, improvements are being made to make the buildings more energy efficient, including the replacement of boilers and the installation of insulation, some which is funded by Columbia Gas of Massachusetts.



## **Highway Department<sup>3</sup>**

The Highway Department in Dighton has a number of responsibilities beyond the maintenance and repair of the Town's 60 miles of roadway and signs. This includes the maintenance and removal of town-owned trees; grass mowing; sidewalk upkeep and repair; maintenance and improvements in the Town's park and recreation facilities (grass mowing, installation and repair of playgrounds, care of playing fields, etc.); cemetery care; management of public properties and buildings; maintenance and repair of municipal vehicles; maintenance of town docks, boat ramps and marine vessels; stormwater management, control and monitoring; snow and ice removal; and management of the landfill and transfer station. Management of school properties was shared between the Regional School District and the Highway Department, although the burden has shifted to the District. The Department is located at 2011 County Street. Staffing includes the Director and six other staff people, but additional staffing is needed given the number of responsibilities.

The Town's transfer station is located on Tremont Street and is open two days a week. Bulky items and appliances can be dropped off or pick-up can be arranged in April of each year. Yard waste is collected at the transfer station one day a month. Town-wide curbside trash and single-stream recycling pick-up is provided as well (every other week).

The headquarters and garage building is inadequate to meet current and future needs of the department. More inside storage and vehicle space is needed, especially since some of their vehicles are parked outside. The Town is considering a new facility on a larger piece of land, but this is a long-term solution at this time due to the anticipated cost.

The Department would also like to retrofit its snow clearing vehicles so that the Town can utilize alternative ice melting materials that are more environmentally-friendly. The existing vehicle stock is not equipped to handle these materials.



<sup>3</sup> Interview with Thomas Ferry, Highway Superintendent, October 3, 2014

## ***Police Department<sup>4</sup>***

The Dighton Police Department is currently headquartered at 1551 Somerset Avenue. The site previously served as a Highway Department garage and two trailers have since been added to provide additional capacity. However, since these facilities were not



initially constructed to house the Police Department, and given its current condition, the construction of a new Police Station is a top priority of the Town. A new station was approved by voters in 2012 and the new facility is being planned. It will also be located on Somerset Avenue. A proposed Proposition 2 ½ override vote is scheduled for January 2015.

Including the Police Chief, the Department has ten full-time officers, 11 reserve officers, and two special officers. This allows for the assignment of two officers on patrol for each shift, although for a community such as Dighton, there should be three officers on patrol at any given time. This level of staffing is the same as it was in 1980. The Department currently averages approximately 10,000 calls per year, which includes standard business calls.

The Department's vehicle fleet is in good shape. It includes seven marked cars, two unmarked cars, and a variety of other vehicles. There is no plan for regular replacement of the vehicles as a routine matter.

## ***Fire Department<sup>5</sup>***

The Dighton Fire Department headquarters is located at 300 Main Street and was built around 1960. Station 1 requires interior improvements as well as new flooring and masonry. Since this station is not considered to be adequate for the Town's long-term needs, the adjacent property may be made available for future expansion. A second station is located at 132 Chase Street in North Dighton. This station was constructed in

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Chief Edward Dutra, September 2014

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Chief Thomas Medeiros, September 2014

the early 1900's, with an addition built in 2007. With the addition, this station is considered to be in good condition and adequate to meet the needs of that section of the Town. However, the older building will need some upgrades including new concrete bays, possible lead paint removal, and an improved exhaust extraction system for the trucks.

The Department has seven full-time firefighters with an additional 25 on-call. The Town participates in the Bristol County mutual aid program and conducts EMS training with the towns of Berkeley and Raynham. The Department needs at least three more firefighters since it relies on on-call personnel to provide coverage one day each week.

The Department's apparatus should be on a regular schedule for replacement. A new ladder truck should be purchased within five years and the ambulances should be on a regular five-year replacement schedule.

The Department currently handles between 1,200 and 1,400 calls per year, which includes both fire and EMS services.

### ***Water District<sup>6</sup>***

The maximum capacity of the Dighton Water District's treatment plant, located at 192 Williams Street, is up to 1.5 million gallons per day (gpd), although for optimal treatment, the District plans for 1 million gpd. The plant was built in 2007 and has a 20 year anticipated life expectancy. During the summer of 2014, the Town consumed approximately 800,000 gpd and there were no restrictions on use for the first time in many years. The Town draws its water from four wells, although only three are currently active (two on Cedar Street and one on Walker Street). Given the anticipated growth in development and population, the Town needs additional treatment capacity and water sources. The Water Resources Trustees was established in January 2012 and one important aspect of its mission is to explore the acquisition and development of new water supplies. The Trustees are awaiting tax-exempt status, which is expected in early 2015, in order to accept donated land for water supply purposes.

One option is through the City of Taunton, which has a long-term contract to supply water to the North Dighton Fire District. Taunton has excess capacity that could be sold to Dighton, although the rates are higher than those charged by the Dighton Water District. The Trustees are also looking at several surface water options and one potential well site, recognizing that treatment will be required. The District can lay new water

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Patrick Menges, member, Water Resources Trustees, August 6, 2014

supply mains anywhere in order to reach a potential new source, but distribution needs to be within land in which it has jurisdiction.

The Town is partially sewered and uses only about 10 percent of its contracted capacity with the Taunton wastewater treatment facility. Residents tied into the sewer system are charged based on 80 percent of water consumption.



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## Goals

**Goal 1:** Establish a comprehensive planning process for short- and long-term capital improvements for all town facilities and services.

**Goal 2:** Given the often conflicting demands, establish priorities for building and facility upgrades and replacement.

**Goal 3:** Ensure that municipal buildings, facilities, equipment, and operations meet the Town's needs and are accessible, efficient, resilient, well-staffed, and well-maintained.

**Goal 4:** Lead by example in community facilities and operations by establishing energy efficiency targets.

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## Public Facilities and Services Recommendations

Dighton, like many other communities in Massachusetts, is facing an uphill battle in trying to meet the needs of residents and businesses to provide cost effective services and to maintain and improve its public facilities.

The funding situation is exacerbated by two primary factors that were out of the Town's control. First, the nation faced a significant economic downturn during the 2008 recession, which stressed municipal budgets across the country, and continues to have a long-term impact. Second and somewhat related, the State of Massachusetts also faces funding constraints and is not able to support grant programs or other initiatives at the same level it has in the past.

### ***Capital Improvement Planning<sup>7</sup>***

The Town does not have a regular process for planning capital improvements and does not have a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Recognizing that this is an issue in a growing community, the Town recently established a Capital Outlay Committee.

- The Town, as well as the Regional School District, should establish a systematic process for developing, maintaining and implementing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). While such a plan will help to establish priorities for each department, the goal will be to better coordinate departmental needs in a more comprehensive manner on a town-wide basis across all departments. The Town needs to develop a program for comprehensive capital planning to look at the "big picture" in setting budget priorities. The plan would likely include capital budget items that are recurring requests for maintenance and repairs or vehicle replacement.

#### *What is a Capital Improvements Plan?*

*A capital improvements plan (CIP) is a road map for planning and funding public facilities and infrastructure. It typically incorporates both the construction of new facilities and the rehabilitation or replacement of existing capital. Typically, a CIP covers a period of three to six years and serves as a declaration of intent by a locality to make capital expenditures on the schedule indicated. A CIP may or may not consider multiple forms of funding.*

Years of deferred maintenance will aggravate the condition of facilities that need to be renovated, replaced or expanded. Substantial funds are needed to meet these needs and with all these pressing requirements, it is necessary to address the long-term priorities for making improvements, recognizing that continued deferral of these expenses will result in ever increasing expenses over time.

<sup>7</sup> Terry Holzheimer, FAICP, Capital Improvement Programming, PAS QuickNotes No. 25, a publication of the American Planning Association's Planning Advisory Service (PAS), April 2010.

By way of background, a CIP is typically a three to six-year financing plan for a series of agreed-upon capital projects. Projects anticipated to extend beyond the plan's window should be memorialized in an appendix or future projects list, and revisited as the plan is updated each year. Developing a CIP is not difficult, but developing a long-range CIP that a community can actually implement requires all of the following:

- A complete, descriptive inventory of existing assets – real estate, equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, and other items defined as a capital project under local policy;
- An assessment of the lifespan of existing assets;
- Criteria for evaluating and ranking capital project requests;
- A roster of current and anticipated near-term capital funding requests from town departments and the schools, including a description of each request, the time required to start, carry out and complete each request, and the estimated capital and operating costs associated with each request;
- An analysis of potential funding sources on a project-by-project basis, i.e., a determination of each project's eligibility for general fund, enterprise fund, recreation fees, grants, developer contributions, bonds, proceeds from sale of existing assets, and so forth, and the approximate amounts that should be contributed from each source;
- Six-year financial goals for the Town;
- Debt evaluation standards;
- Local revenue projections, and a transparent methodology for preparing them;
- An analysis of the CIP's impacts on the tax rate, cash reserves, enterprise reserves, and bonding capacity; and
- A financing plan for all projects included within the CIP.

Essentially, the Town should ensure that a coordinated CIP process takes a holistic and comprehensive view of all the Town's capital needs. The process needs to allow for the integration of recommendations from various plans and studies with other capital needs. The goal is for all departments to continue to work closely together to obtain the funding necessary to provide the best services and support to all Dighton residents.

- The Town could also consider developing a town-owned property inventory for the CIP to identify surplus property and conduct an assessment of a site's suitability for municipal facilities or open space. The properties should be ranked by relative importance to the Town, based upon criteria that are established for potential suitability to meet the Town's needs.

## ***Meeting Facility Needs***

- Continue to explore how to meet the space and staffing needs of municipal services. As Dighton grows and changes in how it provides municipal services throughout the Town, it will need to continue to consider how to meet space and staffing needs of its municipal services. With the need to provide more space for the library, as well as the new Police Department headquarters building, it is important to move forward with applicable space studies, site identification and design to move these potential projects forward in a timely manner. A continued assessment of similar municipal services and their facilities will enable the Town to plan for where it needs to grow and reduce space and staffing needs.
- With growing fiscal constraints, it has become more difficult for municipalities in Massachusetts to provide services in a cost-effective manner. As an alternative, municipalities around the country have considered ways in which supplies can be purchased and services provided across municipal boundaries. Examples include inter-municipal agreements to provide public safety, solid waste disposal, library (the Town is already part of a large regional system), and public works services and shared facilities.

Although there are some challenges to implementation of a regional approach to the sharing of municipal responsibilities, such as funding disparities between small and large municipalities, control of budgets and services, and potential resistance among employees, the Town should attempt to work with SRPEDD and neighboring communities to begin a dialog on options for shared services and facilities. SRPEDD's Regional Cooperative Purchasing Program helps communities obtain lower prices on items as diverse as street sweepers, fire fighter gear, EMT medicines and other supplies.<sup>8</sup>

## ***Specific Town and Department Needs***

- The Town should continue to explore the option of creating a Town Administrator position in order to increase the effectiveness of town government.
- Library: A modern library, as a source of knowledge, culture, literature, arts, music, and a community gathering place is an essential element of Dighton's public infrastructure. Although the library of the future may look and act much

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.srpedd.org/municipal-partnerships>

differently in the way it serves the community and uses technology, its core function to provide community access to knowledge resources is vital for the foreseeable future. To meet that core function, Dighton's public library must develop and execute a vision for a 21st century public community library. The Library Board of Trustees has been examining a number of possibilities for expansion or replacement of the current library facility. The Library needs to stay relevant with the latest technologies so that it can provide the services to meet the needs of the Town's residents. Once a recommendation has been brought forward, the Town should incorporate it into the CIP process as described above.

- Water: The Water District should undertake a comprehensive feasibility study to identify new water sources. Such a study can better assess each potential water source, water quality, costs for development, and treatment requirements.
- Town Hall: Explore the feasibility of an expanded Town Hall so that staff can more easily communicate and collaborate by allowing for more meeting spaces and consolidation of municipal office space.
- Town website: Municipal websites have become one of the most significant ways in which a city or town communicates with its residents and businesses. Information regarding meetings (schedule, agendas and minutes); the roles and responsibilities of various departments, boards, and commissions; contact information for key municipal officials; programs; bylaws and regulations; planning and budget documents; major construction projects; and emergency preparations can be very useful things to communicate. Currently, there is very little information beyond the contact information for Town department personnel. The Dighton town website should be revamped and updated on a regular basis to maximize its outreach to residents and businesses. Departmental web pages should have descriptions of their responsibilities, copies of key reports and plans, applicable rules and regulations, etc., and should be updated on a regular basis. The Town should consider retaining a consultant or a part-time IT manager to undertake this effort and coordinate regular updates to the website to ensure it is current and relevant.

### ***Sustainability and Energy Efficiency***

- The Town should take a leadership role in “greening” Dighton through its operations, governance, and management. This is particularly true with respect to municipal buildings and facilities. As an example, the Town has been upgrading energy

efficiency in some municipal buildings and seeking ways to reduce energy costs across all municipal operations. These are substantial projects that can serve as models for making cost-effective, sustainable planning and building practices part of project design, planning, construction, and operations.

The Town should seek ways to reduce the cost of municipal energy use and its carbon footprint. This strategy could advance efforts to develop public and private partnerships to also reduce residential and business energy use. Potential strategies include:

- Develop a long-range energy reduction plan for municipal operations.
- Establish a schedule for the regular replacement of Town-owned vehicles with more efficient models.
- Develop sustainability principles or guidelines for Town projects, operations, policies and regulations including new or renovated municipal facilities.
- Incorporate cost-effective Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Design (LID) strategies into all municipal projects and work with developers and residents on what they can do. This strategy will enable the Town to move forward with implementing green infrastructure best practices into projects.
- Adopt a Green Stormwater Infrastructure Bylaw that addresses the Town, developers, and residents. Use rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, and green parking lot design when upgrading or permitting all roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and parks.

The Town is in the process of addressing these issues as it considers taking the steps necessary to become a Green Community. As of late 2014, 136 Massachusetts communities have been designated as Green Communities. A city or town must meet these five criteria to be designated a Green Community

- Provide as-of-right siting in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research & development, or manufacturing facilities.
- Adopt an expedited application and permit process for as-of-right energy facilities.
- Establish an energy use baseline and develop a plan to reduce energy use by twenty percent (20%) within five (5) years.
- Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles.

- Set requirements to minimize life-cycle energy costs for new construction; one way to meet these requirements is to adopt the new Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BFRS) Stretch Code.<sup>9</sup>

Dighton should continue with this effort, which will qualify the Town for grants that finance additional energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at the local level.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy UTILITIES-clean-tech/green-communities/gc-grant-program/>

# Transportation

## Transportation Overview

The Town of Dighton is located in Bristol County of southeastern Massachusetts. The southeastern region has a healthy mix of cities, suburbs, and rural areas. The community is bordered by Taunton to the north, Berkley to the east, Swansea and Somerset to the south and Rehoboth, to the west. Dighton is 37 miles southwest of Boston and 15 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. The roadways within the community provide good access to the surrounding communities and highway systems offering excellent regional transportation access and mobility. These roadways include:

- **Route 138:** an urban minor arterial that runs along the east border of the Town and provides north-south mobility and access to a significant amount of the Town's retail and commercial industry. Route 138 is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).
- **Williams Street:** classified as an urban principal arterial north of Center Street and a minor arterial to the south, bisects the Town and provides north-south mobility between Route 44 in Taunton to the north and indirect access to Interstate 195 in Swansea to the south.
- **Center Street:** an urban principal arterial that bisects the Town and provides east-west mobility between Williams Street and Route 24 in Berkley.

The Roadway Network and Jurisdiction map illustrates the Dighton transportation network. Currently, Dighton has no direct access to a fixed route public transportation. The Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) provides the following services within the Town:

1. Dial-a-Ride: for para-transit service and for disabled, or elderly residents.
2. Human Services Transportation for MassHealth patrons.
3. GATRA also provides fixed route bus service in the neighboring community of Taunton.

While Dighton does not have direct access to the commuter rail, the adjacent communities of Berkley, Taunton and Fall River will be serviced in the future by the South Coast Rail Extension; which will offer access to commuters traveling to Boston, Providence or destinations in-between.

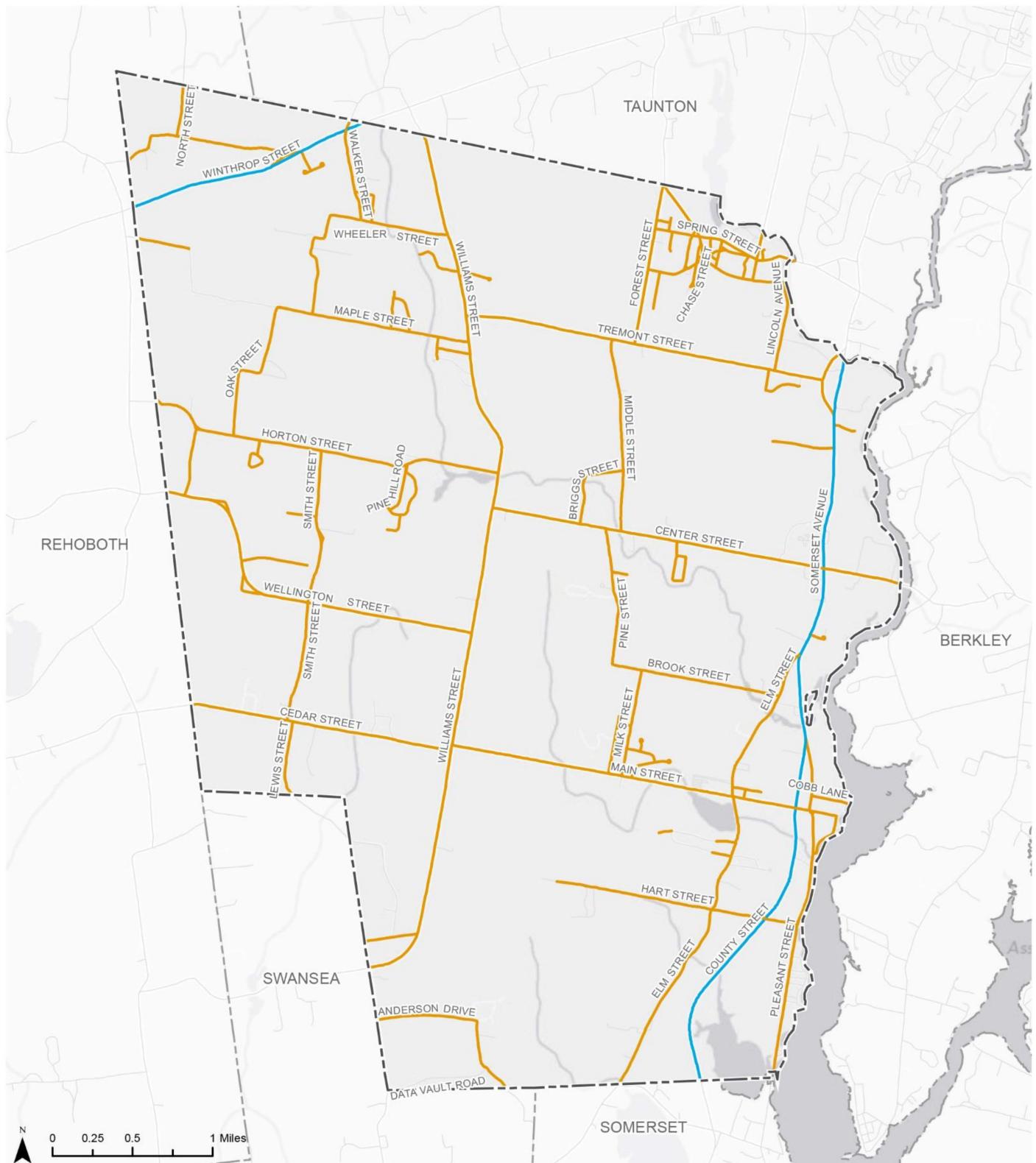
Prior planning efforts locally and regionally identified a number of challenges for the community as a whole to be considered and targeted certain areas for the community to focus on. The construction of highways has spurred significant retail and commercial development (and thus an increase in traffic and congestion) in the region.

During meetings with Town Officials, a number of issues were identified that had transportation themes. The following lists these issues, and following each issue is the potential transportation theme that may need to be considered.

- Main Street needs to be revitalized: implement complete street, access management, and/or streetscape initiatives;
- Character of neighborhoods: implement streetscape initiatives and/ or traffic calming measures;
- Avoid strip malls: consider adopting access management and/ or traffic impact study guidelines;
- Lack of transportation infrastructure: consider providing and/ or improving sidewalks, bicycle accommodations, etc.;
- Lack of transit: consider a Town-wide bus loop;
- Bike access and safety: consider share the road accommodations or wider shoulders for bicyclist; and
- Roadway conditions: improve roadway conditions and associated infrastructure (catch basin, drainage, etc.).

This Transportation Element of the Dighton Master Plan identifies the range of transportation issues, needs, and deficiencies over the near and long-term and establishes goals and strategies for physical enhancements and policies worth implementing. Key goals identified include:

- Provide a safe transportation system with adequate capacity for all users.
- Plan for Sustainable Transportation with emphasis on pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.
- Identify and implement safety improvements along the Route 138 corridor.
- Study the feasibility of an on-road and an off-road bike path.



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Roadway Network and Jurisdiction, Dighton, MA

#### Roadway Jurisdiction

- MassDOT-owned Road
- Town-owned Road

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



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## Regional Context

Regionally, Dighton is positioned on the westerly edge of the Taunton River where it meets Mt. Hope Bay. The town is approximately 37 miles south of Boston and 15 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. Dighton has great access to Route 44, which serves as the principal east-west corridor in the region, providing access between Providence, Rhode Island and Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Town also has good access to Interstate 195, which provides greater regional access. Due to its location, Dighton primarily serves as a residential, commuter suburb of the regional urban centers, including Providence, Attleboro, Taunton and Fall River, among others. This is highlighted by the substantial increase in population recorded in Dighton over the last decade (14.8% increase), in combination with a net loss of jobs within the Town. (SMMPO 2012 Full Transportation Plan, pages 2-2 & 2-7).

### *Regional Planning*

For the development of this Master Plan, it is important to acknowledge and understand past transportation planning and land use efforts in town and the region to ensure that recommendations are consistent and complimentary. Regional planning agencies (RPAs) play a key role in the development and execution of any municipality's Master Plan. As overseers of a larger area, RPAs help ensure that regional plans are complementary to each community. The Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is the RPA to which Dighton belongs. The SRPEDD also provides support for the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO). Plans that have been prepared include:

**SMMPO Regional Transportation Plan (2012):** The SMMPO Regional Transportation Plan outlines a number of goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for the future of the region. This updates the previous plan that was issued in 2007. Key transportation goals for the region generally focus on ensuring that people will have more transportation choices. The following summarizes some of the regional goals; which could be used to develop local goals and strategies for Dighton:

- Improve the integration of land use and transportation planning;
- Improve the time and cost efficiency of the transportation system;
- Reduce the number and severity of vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle crashes;
- Improve traffic flows, especially during peak traffic hours;
- Improve the accessibility of the transportation infrastructure for all persons;
- Study all forms of freight movement, including rail, truck, air and seaport;

- Improve access and safety through sound Access Management practices;
- Promote alternative modes of transportation to decrease the number of vehicles on our roadways while developing a more sustainable transportation system;
- Ensure environmental justice in all forms of transportation planning;
- Consider environmental impacts in all transportation projects;
- Maximize connectivity between origins and destinations and the modes used to travel between them;
- Use of real time driver message boards;
- Implementation of improved tracking systems for the GATRA;
- Concentrate development in Priority Development Areas;
- Enhance the capacity and efficiency of the transportation network; and
- Preserve and improve the existing transportation infrastructure.

Some of the specific recommendations from this report identified the need to further evaluate or monitor the following locations in Dighton:

- Transportation Infrastructure: deteriorating roadway conditions along Cedar Street, Warner Boulevard and Williams Street.
- Transit Accommodation: The 2000 Census reported that 63-percent of Dighton seniors reported living with a disability (highest in the SMMPO region).
- Multi-use Trail: DCR purchased 56 acre area along Taunton River to turn into Sweets Knoll State Park; which includes 2 miles of abandoned railroad right-of-way.
- Bicycle Connectivity/ Accommodation: Dighton called out as a gap in connecting bicycle facilities to the South Coast Bikeway and new commuter rail stations.
- Pedestrian Improvements: Route 44 a priority for pedestrian improvements.
- Sidewalk Improvements: Improve sidewalk connectivity to the Center Street/ Route 138 intersection; from neighborhoods on Center Street.

**SRPEDD Regional Truck Route Study (2009):** The study reviewed truck movements throughout southeastern Massachusetts as well as inhibitors to truck movements including deficient bridges, roadway congestion, and unsafe intersections. The study's goals include identifying and prioritizing regional truck routes and prioritizing potential improvements to enhance truck mobility within the region.

**SRPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):** The Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD) finalized their CEDS document in June 2013. This document reviewed existing economic statistics in the region and developed visions and goals, as well as identified current activities and progress in the region. The following goals were identified to be realized by 2020:

- Support the development of small business and new startups in the region
- Support the development of infrastructure for economic development
- Pursue sustainable development and enhance the region's quality of life
- Promote employment opportunities in emerging sectors such as marine science, biotech and creative economy
- Provide institutional support for economic development

***Local Master Plans:*** Several Towns within the region have developed Master Plans in recent years, including Seekonk (2012), Rochester (2009), and Fall River (2009). While these plans are not immediately adjacent to the Town of Dighton, summarizing the goals or objectives for each can give the Town an idea of what other communities are focusing on with respect to transportation issues. The following lists the underlying transportation goals of these plans:

#### Seekonk

- Minimize frequency and severity of accidents at high-incident locations.
- Optimize the ability of existing roadways to service the transportation needs of the community.
- Minimize traffic demand generated by new development.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle amenities town-wide.
- Increase the use of the public transportation system.
- Aggressively pursue funding for transportation projects.
- Integrate transportation infrastructure into a “place-making” approach.

#### Rochester

- Provide adequate and accessible community facilities for public use.
- Protect the town's rural character while providing the necessary services.
- Encourage planning the town we want as a cohesive, mutually respectful “community”.

#### Fall River

- Provide an efficient, equitable, and safe system for vehicular transportation.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access, circulation and safety.
- Improve signage and wayfinding for all modes and interest.
- Improve transit opportunities for residents and employees.
- Use roadway upgrades as an opportunity to coordinate aesthetics and appearance of the city.

## ***Local Planning***

For the development of a Master Plan, it is also important to acknowledge and reflect on previous plans developed within the Town. However, this will be the Town of Dighton's first Community Master Plan, so there are no specific acknowledgements to make with respect to transportation.

## ***Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)***

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Air Quality Conformity Determination is an intermodal program of transportation improvements produced annually by SMMPO. The TIP serves as the implementation arm of the SMMPO's Regional Transportation Plan by incrementally programming funding for improvements over the next four-year period. It programs federal-aid funds for transit projects and state and federal aid funds for roadway projects. Table 8-1 below provides a summary of the projects in Town that are currently under construction; it is noted that the Town does not have any project that are under design and in the "queue" of the TIP.

**Table 8-1 Projects Under Design and Construction**

MassDOT Project #	Description and Location	Project Type	Status	TIP Year
5300	Berkley-Dighton – Bridge Replacement, B-08-001=D-08-011, Elm Street (Berkley) Center Street (Dighton) over the Taunton River	Bridge Replacement	Construction	NA
606374	Dighton – Bridge Replacement, D-08-006, Brook Street over Segreganset River	Bridge Replacement	Construction	NA

Source: MassDOT, 2013

Dighton currently has two projects programmed in the 2014-2017 SMMPO TIP; both of which are bridge replacement projects currently under construction.



**Bridge Construction in Dighton**

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## Existing Conditions

Mobility in and around Dighton is the central theme of the Transportation Element of the Master Plan. The sections below discuss the components that comprise the existing transportation network in Dighton.

### *Roadway Jurisdiction/Functional Classification*

The jurisdiction of roadways in Dighton is depicted on Roadway Network and Jurisdiction map and summarized on Table 8-2. The jurisdiction of a roadway indicates the ownership and responsibility for maintenance, enhancements, and repairs.

**Table 8-2      Jurisdiction of Roadways in Dighton**

Roadway Ownership	Length (miles)	Length (%)
Town	56	70%
MassDOT	6	8%
Other (Private)	18	22%
Total	80	100%

Source: Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of MA Information Technology Division

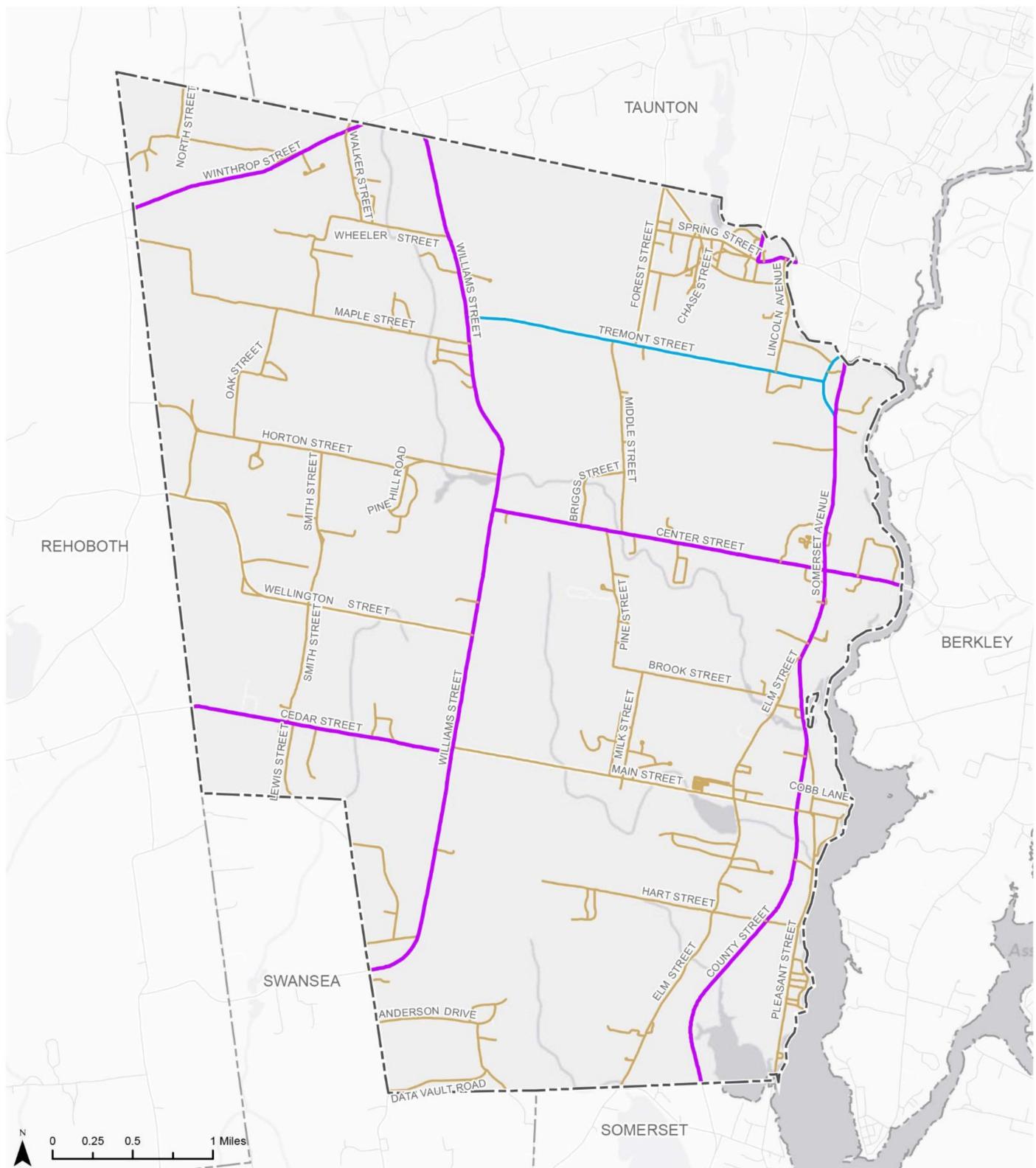
The majority of the Town's roadway system falls under the jurisdiction of the Town of Dighton (56 miles, or 70-percent). The state owned roadways include Route 138 and the segment of Route 44 in the northwest corner of the Town; which totals 6-miles and accounts for approximately 8-percent of the entire roadway network.

The functional classification of roadways in Dighton is depicted on the Roadway Functional Classification map and summarized in Table 8-3. A roadways functional classification indicates its design function to serve local demands; which could comprise of a roadway where multiple driveways are present to maximize access; or a roadway that would service regional demands with limited access to maximize mobility.

**Table 8-3      Functional Classification of Roadways in Dighton**

Functional Classification	Length (miles)	Length (%)
Arterials	17	21%
Collectors	3	4%
Local	60	75%
Total	80	100%

Source: Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of MA Information Technology Division



Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Roadway Functional Classification, Dighton, MA

#### Roadway Functional Classification

- Arterial
- Collector
- Local

Source: MassGIS  
May 2014

2014 Master Plan, Dighton, MA



The majority of the roadways in Dighton are classified as local roadways totaling 60-miles, or 75-percent of the total roadway miles in Town. Arterial roadways comprise 21-percent of the roadway network. The hierarchy of roadway functional classification is traditionally as follows: arterials and interstates provide mobility, and collector and local roadways provide access to adjacent developments, residences, etc. After reviewing the data in Table 8-3 above, the Town has more roadways that promote access than mobility.

### ***Roadway Network***

Only one major roadway travels through Town; Route 44. This route traverses the northwest corner of the Town and in an east-west direction. Route 138 is another roadway that traverses the Town in a north-south direction. These two roadways provide access and mobility within the Town and the region. The following provides a more detailed summary of these (and other) roadways.

#### ***Route 138***

Route 138 provides the primary north to south access through the Town of Dighton. Route 138 is also known as County Street and Somerset Avenue as it moves through the town. The land use and roadway characteristics along this roadway are primarily residential, along with local retail, commercial industry, as well as the Town's offices and numerous schools. The majority of the Town's industrial infrastructure is located along the northerly segment of the corridor. The following provides a summary of other key statistics of the corridor:

- The posted speed limit varies along the corridor, starting at 50 mph south of Hart Street, 45 mph between Hart Street and Railroad Avenue and then 40 mph north of Railroad Avenue.
- The roadway generally consists of a single northbound and a single southbound through lanes, or a two lane roadway. Turn lanes are present at major intersections and the corridor is under MassDOT jurisdiction.
- Shoulder widths vary, with narrow shoulders present to the south and wider shoulders to the north.
- Continuous sidewalks are not provided along the corridor. No sidewalks are provided along the south portion of this corridor. Sidewalks are provided on both sides of the roadway in the vicinity of the Center Street intersection and in multiple locations further north.

### Route 44

Route 44, also known as Winthrop Street, serves as a primary east-west roadway in the region. Located in the northwest corner of the Town, Route 44 provides direct access to Rehoboth and Taunton, as well more regional destinations such as Providence and Plymouth. The land use and roadway characteristics along this roadway are primarily a mix of residential and commercial industrial. Route 44 is a two-lane roadway with consistently wider shoulders (approximately 4- to 5-feet) along its length. Sidewalks are not provided along the roadway and the roadway is under MassDOT jurisdiction/ownership.

### Williams Street

Williams Street, is an arterial roadway that provides north-south access between Somerset and Route 44. This two-lane roadway bisects the Town, running parallel to Route 138. No sidewalks or marked shoulders are provided. Land uses along Williams Street are primarily residential and farming, with the Manheim Auction lot located at the intersection of Williams Street and Route 44.

### Center Street

Center Street is an arterial roadway that runs east-west between Williams Street and the Town of Berkeley. The Berkeley/Dighton Bridge, located at the easterly end of Center Street, provides the only crossing of the Taunton River within the Town and serves as an important regional connection. Center Street is a two-lane residential roadway with no sidewalk or marked shoulders.

## **Vehicular Traffic**

To gain an understanding of existing travel patterns, historical traffic data and transportation mode choice data were obtained.

### Traffic Volumes

Table 8-4 summarizes traffic volumes on various roadways throughout Dighton using MassDOT historical traffic volume data and traffic volume data collected in the town for other transportation or development projects.

**Table 8-4      Traffic Volumes on Select Roadways in Dighton**

Route	Source	Count Date	Average Daily Traffic Volume
Route 44 (Winthrop Street) – just west of New Street/ Rehoboth	MassDOT	2014	10,400
Route 138 – at Somerset Town Line	MassDOT	2008	8,300
Center Street – East of Route 138	MassDOT	2009	7,900
Somerset Avenue – South of Center Street	MassDOT	2009	4,400
Williams Street – South of Main Street	MassDOT	2012	3,500
Summer Street, north of Spring Street	MassDOT	2013	1,240

Source:      Historical MassDOT count data  
1              Average daily traffic volumes expressed in vehicles per day (vpd).

Route 138 and Center Street are the two busiest roadways in Town, based on available data within the Town of Dighton. However, it appears that Route 44 carries more traffic than either of these roadways, and just to the west of the Dighton Town Line (in Rehoboth and just west of New Street), the MassDOT collected traffic counts (two-way) in 2014 that totaled approximately 10,400 vehicles per day. There are numerous roadways in Town that carry less than 1,000 vehicles per day; which were not reported in the table above since the volumes that were collected are more than 5-years old and are outdated.

### Journey-to-Work

A review of US Census American Community Survey journey-to-work data for Dighton residents and employers reveals commuting trends - specifically work location and mode choice. Tables 8-5 and 8-6 summarize these data.

Approximately 11.2-percent of the 3,255 Dighton residents surveyed were also employed in Dighton; see Table 8-5 below. The top commute single destinations outside Dighton were Taunton (21.5 percent) and Fall River (8.5 percent). The remaining commute destinations represent a variety of Massachusetts and Rhode Island cities and towns, the majority of which are located within 15 miles of Dighton. The table below illustrates 9 other communities that have between 2 and 4 percent of residents working outside Dighton. The balance of the residents, or approximately 33 percent, worked in a total of 55 other communities.

**Table 8-5      Census Journey-to-Work Data for Dighton Residents**

<b>Location of Employment</b>	<b>Percent of Residents</b>
Taunton, MA	21.5%
Dighton, MA	11.2%
Fall River, MA	8.5%
New Bedford, MA	3.6%
Boston, MA	3.6%
Providence, RI	3.2%
Somerset, MA	3.0%
Attleboro, MA	2.7%
Seekonk, MA	2.7%
Swansea, MA	2.5%
Rehoboth, MA	2.3%
Raynham, MA	2.06%
55 other communities (totaled)	33.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Journey-to-Work Data

1 Other towns and cities not listed comprise one percent or less each of employment locations of Dighton residents.

The journey-to-work census data was also reviewed to determine where people live who commute to Dighton; Table 8-6 summarizes this data.

**Table 8-6      Census Journey-to-Work Data for Dighton Employees**

Location of Residence	Percent of Employees
Dighton, MA	19.8%
Taunton, MA	17.1%
Fall River, MA	13.7%
Somerset, MA	5.1%
Rehoboth, MA	3.8%
New Bedford, MA	3.3%
Freetown, MA	2.3%
Dartmouth, MA	2.2%
Raynham, MA	2.2%
49 other communities (totaled)	30.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Journey-to-Work Data

1 Other towns and cities not listed comprise one percent or less each of employment locations of Dighton residents.

Approximately 19.8 percent of 1,836 Dighton workers also live in Dighton.

Approximately 17.1 percent of people employed in Dighton resided in Taunton, while another 13.7% resided in Fall River. The majority of the remaining locations of residence of employees of Dighton are within Bristol County. The table above illustrates six other communities that have between two and five percent of workers in Dighton. The balance of the workers in Dighton, or approximately 30.6 percent, traveled from 49 other communities.

#### Mode Choice

Similar to the journey-to-work evaluation, Table 8-7 summarizes the mode choice for Dighton residents. Mode choice is defined as the means as to which someone would travel to/ from work.

**Table 8-7 Dighton Journey-to-Work Mode Choice**

Mode	Percent of Employed Residents
Single-Occupant Automobile	85%
Multiple-Occupant Automobile	8%
Transit	1%
Walk/ Bicycle	2%
Work at Home	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011, American Community Survey

Approximately 93-percent of Dighton residents take a car to work – either alone (85 percent) or with others (8 percent). Approximately one percent of Dighton residents use public transportation while two percent walk or ride a bike.

The low transit mode share for Dighton residents and workers reflects the limited public transportation options in the Town, and low walking/ bicycling totals could indicate lack of sidewalk or bicycle accommodations on roadways.

### **Safety**

A review of MassDOT crash data was conducted to identify potential transportation safety issues in the Town of Dighton. No locations were identified through the MassDOT crash cluster database; which depicts locations in Town that could be considered eligible for safety funding under the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). It was observed that five fatal crashes were noted between 2009 and 2014; however, some of these fatal crashes appeared to be weather related. It was also noted that there were eight(8) crashes between 2007 and 2011 that involved pedestrians or bicyclists.

In 2007, MassDOT began a Road Safety Audit (RSA) program to study roadways in which fatal and incapacitating injury cross median crashes had occurred. Today the RSA program has become an integral part of their HSIP. MassDOT now requires that all HSIP locations have a RSA performed to determine if they are eligible for HSIP funding. As previously noted, MassDOT has not identified that there are any crash locations that are eligible for this funding. However, the Town should investigate further the cause and location of the fatal crashes in Town over the last 5-years and determine if a case can be presented to MassDOT to seek funding through this funding source to improve safety.

### **Transit**

The region and adjacent communities are served by the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA). The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority

(MBTA) provides commuter rail service to several nearby Towns. The availability of public transit provides greater mobility to populations that do not have access to a private automobile such as low income, young adults, and the elderly; however, the Town does not have any transit services. However, GATRA offers a Dial-a-Ride service to Town residents; which provides curb-to-curb transportation for passengers who meet ADA requirements and/ or are age 60 and above. The following summarizes these services:

- A person is eligible if they have a disability that limits one major life function who cannot, because of a disability or certain conditions, use public transportation or a fixed-route transportation.
- A person 60 years of age or older is eligible for this service as well.
- Service is generally available between the hours of 6:00AM and 6:30PM Monday through Friday; and Saturday from 9:00AM to 5:00PM.
- Fare is a \$1.25 within Town or \$2.50 to travel to neighboring towns.

### ***Bicycle Facilities***

Currently, there are no designated off-road bicycle facilities within the Town. Bicycle accommodations are currently limited to wide shoulders on a number of streets, but there are no continuous routes through Town or on-road signage.

### ***Pedestrians Facilities***

Pedestrian access and mobility are limited in Dighton. The town center and the immediately outlying areas have some sidewalk and crosswalk connectivity, but connections to neighborhoods appear to be lacking.

### ***Bridges***

There are several bridges in Dighton that are routinely inspected by MassDOT using National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS). The primary purpose of the NBIS is to locate, evaluate, and act on existing bridge deficiencies to ensure that the bridges are safe for the traveling public. Each NBIS bridge is inspected at regular intervals of two years with certain types or groups of bridges requiring inspections at less than two-year cycles.

In addition, there are 6 non-NBIS bridges located within the town of Dighton.

There is one location (bridge) within Dighton that is classified as “Functionally Obsolete” and another that is classified as “Structurally Deficient”. Structural deficiencies are characterized by deteriorated conditions of significant bridge elements and reduced load-carrying capacity. Functional obsolescence occurs when the geometry of the bridge is not

meeting current design standards based on traffic demands carried, including lane or shoulder widths or horizontal/vertical curvature. Neither type of deficiency indicates that a bridge is unsafe.

The following summarizes the bridges in Dighton that fall in these two categories.

1. Brook Street over Segreganset River (D-08-006) – Structurally Deficient
2. Center Street over Segreganset River (D-08-008) – Functionally Obsolete

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## Future Conditions

The next step in the planning process is to identify growth trends in the area (see Chapter 3 for population and housing forecasts). These trends are often based on previous traffic volume patterns (as described in Table 8-4), past and forecasted population growth, and major development projects.

### *Future Challenges and Opportunities*

Dighton's population has steadily grown over the last six decades and is expected to continue growing through 2030 due in part to its accessibility to regional employment centers and the regional transportation network. As the population has been increasing, local traffic counts suggest that traffic volumes have been increasing as well, albeit at a slower rate over the past 5 to 7 years.

### *Planned Developments*

In 2013 the SRPEDD prepared a report identifying Priority Development Areas (PDAs). A PDA is an area that is appropriate for increased development or redevelopment due to factors such as good transportation access, available infrastructure, lack of environmental constraints, and local support. Since development tends to have a negative impact to transportation (increase in traffic and congestion), the priority development locations should be understood. The following summarizes the PDAs in Town:

- Dighton Industrials: Industrial, commercial, or mixed-use redevelopment; location: along the Three Mile River northeasterly corner of the Town along Spring Street.
- Dighton Power and Advanced Loose Leaf: Industrial redevelopment; location: Route 138 south of Main Street.
- Manheim Site: Light industrial or commercial redevelopment; location: Williams Street north adjacent to Town Line with Taunton.

- Maxaldan Corporation Complex: Industrial, commercial, or mixed-use redevelopment; location: off Route 138 northeast of Town just east of Old Somerset Avenue.
- Route 138 Business District: Business redevelopment; location: north of Main Street along portions of Route 138.
- Route 44 Business Corridor: Mixed-use, commercial and in-fill redevelopment; location: Route 44 within Town boundaries.
- Zeneca Property: Industrial, commercial or mixed-use redevelopment; location southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Route 138.

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## Goals and Implementation Strategies

Dighton's transportation must meet the needs of its residents, commuters, and businesses through vehicular, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian means. Transportation must be convenient, safe, aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly as it meets the complex needs of residents and travelers. A thorough transportation plan which both provides active and passive connectivity internally to neighborhoods within Dighton (and to the greater region) is essential to ensure a sustainable system over the long-term. The goals and strategies described in this section are based upon this framework.

### *Transportation Goals*

As the Master Plan process progressed and community input was received, the following were common transportation needs for Dighton:

- Improve sidewalk connectivity.
- Create opportunities for on-road bicycle routes or off-road recreation accommodations (multi-use paths).
- Develop complete street, access management, and traffic impact and access study initiatives/ guidelines.
- Improve intersection and corridor safety.
- Improve transportation infrastructure.
- Reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.
- Improve roadway aesthetics/ streetscape amenities.

Transportation goals were developed from these needs. The following summarizes the goals that have been developed:

- **Goal 1:** Define a long-term vision for initiating complete street visions within Town.

- **Goal 2:** Identify sustainable transportation and infrastructure improvements that minimize the impact of new development or re-development.
- **Goal 3:** Assess fatality crash locations within Town in greater detail to see if safety improvement could be made by the Town or through the MassDOT RSA/ HSIP programs.
- **Goal 4:** Improve connections of bicycle lanes and sidewalks among neighborhoods and other destinations in Town.
- **Goal 5:** Determine the need or seek opportunities to provide an in-Town bus route that serves the Town and provides connections to the GARTA stations in adjacent communities or South Coast Rail Stops.
- **Goal 6:** Develop a storm water management plan that is sustainable and uses best management practices (bmpps).

### *Transportation Strategies*

Taking into account the existing and future issues, needs, and the goals of this transportation element, the following specific recommendations have been developed.

#### *Expand Public Transportation Options*

**Issue:** Dependency of the automobile.

**Recommendation:** Transit planning is an important part of the complete streets focus area for the transportation system in the community. The Town of Dighton should focus on providing an existing transit program that provides connections to the GATRA and MBTA in adjacent communities..

- **T-1:** Explore options for providing new transit services (GATRA or private) along major roadways such as Route 138, Route 44, Main Street, and Williams Street. Creating a loop route that would serve a large residential population that is currently unserved as well as any future development in the Priority Development Areas.

#### *Complete Streets Programs within the Community*

**Issue:** Infrastructure projects should consider all forms of transportation prior to being finalized.

**Recommendations:** The three-pronged approach of complete streets seeks to incorporate multimodal designs into roadway projects to ensure that streets are shared by all users and not dominated by cars.

Complete streets also often look to place an emphasis on green design elements that promote an environmentally sensitive, sustainable use of the public right-of-way. Greener designs incorporate street trees, rain gardens, bio-swales, paving materials and permeable surfaces, with plants and soils collecting rain water to reduce flooding and pollution.

Lastly, smarter technology-assisted design elements incorporate intelligent signals, electric vehicle sharing, car and bicycle-sharing, way-finding and social networks for greater system efficiencies and user convenience.

The Town of Dighton should develop a complete streets checklist that is appropriate for the community goals and objectives. Elements should be respectful of the specialized needs and environmental resources within the Town. But these should also be balanced with the overarching goal of providing for all modes of transportation.

Specific recommendations should include:

#### Develop Scenic Streetscapes

- **T-2:** Durable landscaping that is close to the roadway (or in new medians) can increase the driver's awareness of the immediate environment and alter behavior, resulting in slower speeds and a safer street. The following streetscape strategies should be considered:
  - Consider developing gateways within Town to historic centers or major nodes such as entrances to downtown;
  - Design ADA compliant sidewalks that include a landscaping buffer between the sidewalk and roadway on residential roadways;
  - Where appropriate, replace the existing faded crosswalks with imprinted/textured crosswalks at intersections and mid-block locations along major through routes through the downtown.

#### Consider Traffic Calming Measures

- **T-3:** Traffic calming involves changes in street alignment and other physical measures to reduce traffic speeds in the interest of street safety and livability. This can be combined with create gateways in Town (as identified in T-2 above). The following traffic calming elements could be considered for the identified key nodes:
  - Curb extensions/bump outs/neckdowns along with complimentary on-street parking;
  - Narrowed travel lanes and widened shoulders with potential for bike lanes;
  - Rumble strips (only in non-residential/non-business areas due to noise);
  - Raised crosswalks or speed tables; and
  - Roundabouts.

## Access Management and Compact Development

- **T-4:** Develop access management and traffic impact study guidelines and incorporate them into the zoning by-laws and subdivision regulations. Minimizing curb cuts and greater separation between driveways improve safety, appearance, and the viability of roadways. An access management approach would benefit areas where PDAs have been identified.
- **T-5:** Review the zoning by-laws and consider amendments that would encourage mixed-use (residential, office, retail) and compact/clustered development in areas already served by transportation infrastructure, particularly in the downtown area or in priority development areas.

## Intersection / Corridor Improvements

**Issue:** Intersections and corridors in Dighton should be evaluated to determine if there are problematic areas, since there have been a number of fatal crashes in Town over the last 5-years. Traffic flow, character, and safety need to be reviewed. For intersections with state-owned roadways, these recommendations would have to be vetted with MassDOT.

### **Recommendations:**

- **T-6:** MassDOT has implemented a program that could make intersections eligible for HSIP funding; should safety improvements be warranted. The Town should identify intersections that may be high crash locations. These intersections/roadway segments should be studied in more detail to determine the best course of action; a Road Safety Audit (RSA) may need to be prepared if initial crash investigations identified high crashes.

## Pedestrians

**Issue:** Need to provide a more safe and walkable environment.

### **Recommendations:**

- **T-7:** Install or upgrade sidewalks to be ADA compliant and include a landscaped buffer where there is available right-of-way and a buffer is applicable.
- **T-8:** Enhance the areas in and around public open spaces (parks, schools, athletic fields) so that children and parents who live nearby can make choices about how they can travel between home and these uses. Currently, in many locations, automobile use is perceived to be the safest mode of transportation.
- **T-9:** Construct crosswalks that enhance the awareness of drivers to pedestrians; could include raised and or textured treatments.

- **T-10:** Install crosswalk signage to reinforce vehicle and pedestrian awareness.
- **T-11:** Install countdown pedestrian signal heads at signalized crossings that do not currently have them.
- **T-12:** Improve pedestrian mobility on residential roads.
- **T-13:** Investigate locations for installation of future walking trails.

#### Bicyclists

**Issue:** Need to make areas within Dighton more bikeable – for both commuter and recreational users.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **T-14:** Develop, update, and implement a town wide Bicycle Master Plan that addresses both commuter and recreational bicycling.
- **T-15:** Develop and sign on-road bicycle routes.
- **T-16:** Improve bicycle mobility on residential roads.
- **T-17:** Look for opportunities to provide off-road bicycle connections between corridors and traffic destinations.

#### Signage

**Issue:** Need to address signage on town roadways.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **T-18:** Upgrade the overall consistency of traffic signage throughout Town by reviewing current regulatory signage and assuring that it is consistent with the current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidelines.