

Dalton Master Plan

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Members of the Master Plan Steering Committee:

Thomas Burgner	Elizabeth Erb	Richard Ladd	Robert Walter
Bill Chabot	Ronald Griffin	Samuel Smith	Stephen Wismer, Chair
Anthony Doyle			

A special thanks to former Steering Committee members Paul Carter, John Kittredge and Stephanie (Marvin) Talanian who exhibited tireless effort and outstanding leadership to coordinate all aspects of creating an updated Master Plan.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission served as the Lead Planning Consultant for the project and produced this document. Former Senior Planner, Thomas Skogland provided initial technical assistance to the Committee while they developed their MIG Business Development and Fiscal Impact Plan. Kara Roggenkamp, BRPC former Intern, provided much of the research, compiled the community survey and helped set-up the Public Forum. As of November 2000, BRPC Senior Land Use Planner, Joellyn Gregory assumed leadership of the master plan process. Mark Maloy, GIS Coordinator, provided necessary and useful mapping assistance. Charles Cook, Senior Transportation Planner, provided technical support. Nathaniel Karns, Executive Director, helped secure funding and provided project guidance.

The Community Planning Forum was facilitated by Jeanne Armstrong, LandUse, Incorporated. Jeanne also provided advice on Economic Development strategies.

Thank you for helping identify and plan for Dalton's desired future!

AUTHORIZATION OF THIS PLAN

The Massachusetts State Law (Chapter 41, section 81D) states that a town shall make a Master Plan. A Master Plan is advisory and does not impose additional requirements or regulations on the town. It can provide a basis for future regulatory changes that are desired by the community. The Planning Board adopts the Plan by majority vote after presentation to the town at an information meeting and a public hearing.

The purpose of the Master Plan is to provide a guide for the town's future that will help town boards and organizations coordinate their regulations, decisions and actions. A Town Plan acts as a guide for all development and furnishes public bodies with a long-range guide for the public decisions that are necessary to the viability and growth of the Town. Its value lies in seeing that both public and private decisions are coordinated toward the same ends and for a better community.

A Plan should never be conceived of as a permanent, fixed document expressing the last word on the future of the community. It must periodically be revised and updated to reflect population changes and periodically reconsidered to address changed attitudes in the community regarding land use regulations. The Plan can be updated at any time. This Plan looks ahead for a 10 to 20 year period. It may be necessary to amend the Plan before 10 years elapses. A major revision may very well be warranted before 20 years pass.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Town of Dalton



Dalton is a close-knit community of about 7,000 residents, encompassing approximately 21.8 square miles in central Berkshire County, just east of Pittsfield. Its diverse population, outstanding schools, extensive areas of open space, active community and social organizations, as well as other factors all contribute to Dalton's quality of life, and make it a vibrant and unique place to live. The Massachusetts

Department of Revenue classified Dalton as a Rural Economic Center, although it also functions as a suburb of the City of Pittsfield.

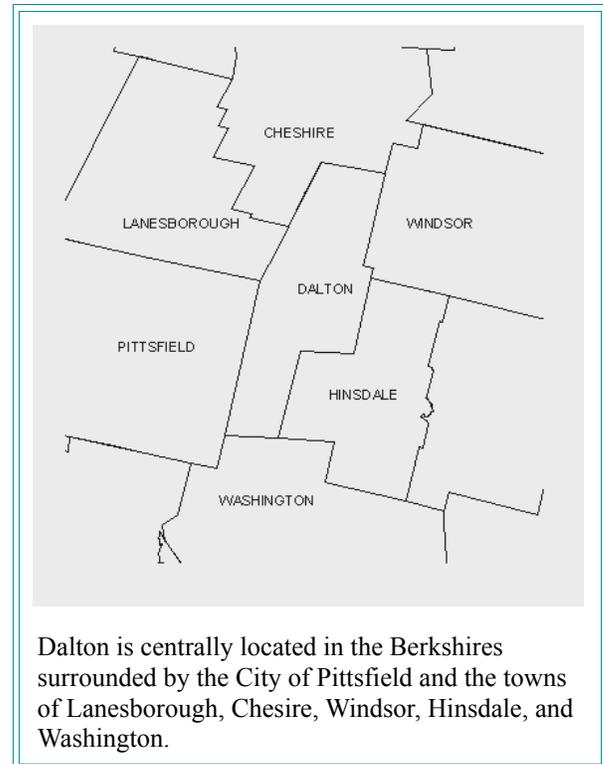
Dalton has an attractive, concentrated center roughly in the middle of the town. Dalton is nearly bisected by Routes 9 and 8. Both state roads are main collectors for travelers and commuters from the north, south and east (see Map 1).

Outside of the center of town, development in much of Dalton is constrained by steep slopes, bedrock close to the surface, and wetlands. Of land that has not been developed yet, roughly half is either completely or partially constrained for building, with a large percent dedicated to open space.

There has been a conflict in residents' desire to maintain Dalton as an attractive residential community with little change in its traditional non-residential base and their desire to have lower taxes. Dalton has one of the highest real property tax rates in Berkshire County. Unlike many Berkshire towns, Dalton does not have second home development that might decrease the fiscal impact of residential growth.

The Town's economic base is heavily reliant on one manufacturer: Crane & Co., Inc, which has been owned and operated by one family since 1801. This has led to a stable employment base but in the long-term, this reliance on one company, in one industry, is not fiscally wise. This was highlighted in 1999 with the closure of a significant industrial employer in Dalton, Beloit-Jones, a paper machinery manufacturer. Finding appropriate and suitable ways in which to strengthen and diversify the town's economic base is a critical issue.

In order to address current economic and fiscal issues, set goals, and develop an overall vision for the future development of the community, the town of Dalton has embarked on two separately funded planning projects: 1) a \$25,000 Municipal Incentive Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development, and; 2) a \$15,000 Town funded Comprehensive Master Plan process. The 1999 Economic Development Strategy funded by the DHCD provides a "jump start" to the master planning efforts. In addition to exploring economic strategies, the Town's Master Plan seeks to expand on past



efforts and develop a comprehensive vision, goals and objectives that address land use, environmental factors, transportation, housing, community and public facilities.

A Master Plan Committee, consisting of a broad representative group of dedicated and knowledgeable residents was appointed by the Select Board to develop the Master Plan document. An extensive public process highlighted by a community survey and public forums has guided this Committee through the master planning process. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has provided consulting services on both projects. In addition, LandUse, Inc provided facilitation of a community workshop.

B. Vision and Community Goals

DALTON'S VISION

Grow in an orderly and sustainable manner, consistent with long-term fiscal stability and the capacity to meet the social and economic needs of present and future residents, while retaining its small-town, New England character by preservation and enhancement of scenic, historic, environmental and community assets.

In 1961, the Town of Dalton prepared a Master Plan to identify present and anticipate problems of the physical community. Two updates to the original plan occurred in 1974 and 1989. In 1999, ten years since the last plan was updated, the Town began to create a new comprehensive Master Plan with greater public involvement. This Plan is a contemporary evaluation of the Town's past, present and future conditions informed by public opinion as well as the work of the three previous plans. In addition, this process was assisted by the simultaneous preparation of an Economic and Business Plan. Several area-wide organizations and business leaders also contributed toward the ultimate goal of helping build a sustainable plan for the area that is sensitive to the environment, community character, and economic base of the communities.

It is important for citizens and town officials to fully appreciate and understand the town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. The Dalton master planning process was intended to help direct public officials in determining how development should occur in order to respect the character of the community and its environment, and provide guidance on short, medium and long term land use development and planning decisions. In short, the vision developed by community leaders and other interested participants provides insight into for the development of this plan. The overarching goals of this plan provide a clear path for the development of this document.

Dalton Master Plan Document Goals:

- Develop an up-to-date community master plan that addresses pertinent growth management, environmental, economic and community character concerns;
- Provide the information contained in the up-to-date Master Plan to other local, sub-regional and regional planning efforts to aid in the development of growth policy planning, which is based on a town's areas of critical planning concern; and,
- Continue to foster planning by advancing and implementing the goals and strategies of the Master Plan and Plan for Business Development.

C. Summary of Findings

Dalton residents' responses to the community-wide survey and public workshop give a great deal of insight into the desired character for the town. A reoccurring theme was resident's desire to control the amount of growth to promote sustainable and fiscal stability. The town should seek to meet social and economic needs of present and future residents in a manner that is consistent with its environmental resources and historical development patterns.

One important theme that seemed to emerge from this process was that residents are open to building the tax base through non-residential development or use, as long as it does not significantly negatively impact the community.

Another theme identified by residents was the need to better accommodate certain groups within the population, specifically seniors and families. These two groups came up in discussions about both housing and recreation. According to the attendees of the forum, Dalton has a need for housing that is appropriate and affordable for both of these groups, although there is some concern about the fiscal impact of this kind of housing.

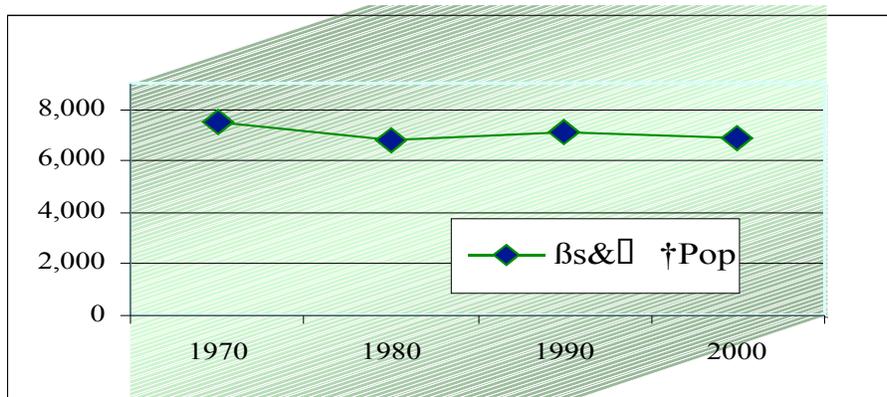
Lastly, it was determined that implementation of the Master Plan should be a priority for town staff and volunteers. Implementation of the actions strategies should take precedent with town officials and annual benchmarks should be achieved by those boards and commissions identified in Section X of this Plan. Success of the Master Plan depends on its receiving constant and repeated attention. No plan can be successful if it fails to produce positive and tangible results.

II. POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Population & Demographic Trends

Sixteen years after Dalton’s incorporation, the population of the town was recorded at 859 persons. By 1900, the population had nearly quadrupled to 3,014 persons. The highest population ever recorded in Dalton was 7,505 persons in 1970. Looking at the past three decades as a whole, Dalton’s population has remained at the same level (see Exhibit 1). The 2000 U.S. Census records Dalton’s population at 6,892 persons compared to 7,133 registered by the 2000 Town Census. Typically town census figures tend to be higher than federal census figures.

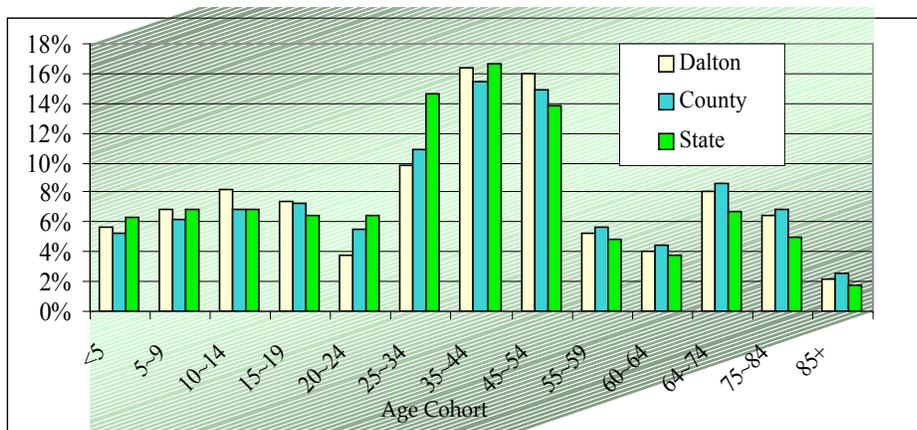
Exhibit 1: Modern Population Data and Trends



Sources: 1970-2000 U.S. Census

In the last two decades there has been significant shifts in the composition of the population in Dalton. As demonstrated in Exhibit 2, the majority of Dalton residents fall between the ages of 25-54 with above average spikes in the 10-19 and 65-84 age groups (see Exhibit 2). Looking back in time can provide some better understanding for the shifts in demographics.

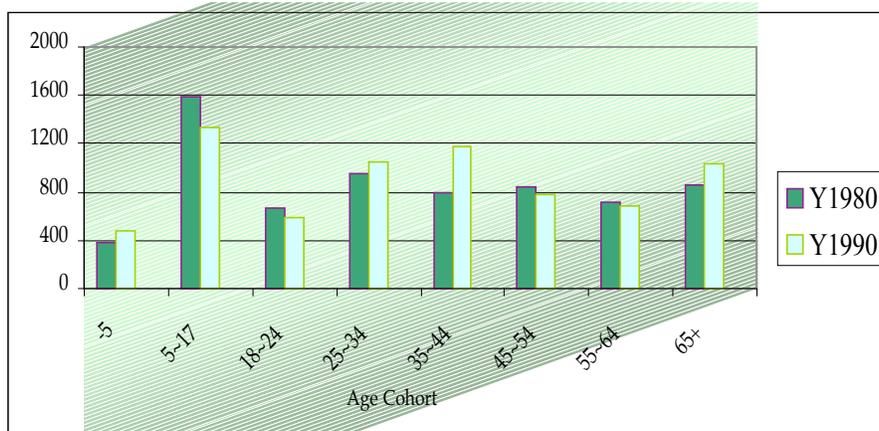
Exhibit 2: Demographic Trends



Source: U.S. Census 2000

In the 1980's, 29% of the population was under the age of 18 and 12% were over the age of 65. By 1990, 45% of the population was under the age of 18. This indicates that members of the Baby Boom generation were moving to Dalton and starting families during the 1980's. By 2000, the percent of children under the age of 18 had decreased to only 28% of the overall population. However, as these "first-wave" Boomers remain in Dalton as they age, they contribute to the significant increase (5% increase from 1980) of residents over the age of 65.

Exhibit 3: Historic Demographic Distributions



Source: U.S. Census

The resident population trends suggest little change in the number to be served by public services but significant variability in needs. Based on Dalton's age distribution and measures of wealth, public services and activities will need to be diverse. As the Baby Boomers who moved to town in the 1980's grow older, the town will need to focus more on the increasing needs of its elderly citizens. The trend toward an aging population is likely to last for the next few decades and accordingly community facilities and their access will need to be designed to accommodate those with mobility limitations.

The other major expense that a town is responsible for providing is education. For calculating the number of future school children in Dalton, trends and local input played an important role. The trend in recent decades had been of growing families with younger children, resulting in a 1990 average of 0.4 children in public school per household. According to the 2000 Census statistics the number of children in public schools per household has dropped to approximately 0.2.

B. Potential for Residential Growth

According to BRPC's projections, Dalton is expected to add over 800 new residents and 500 new households. The middle range BRPC Regional Economic Model (REMI) forecast indicates that Dalton's population will grow to 7,290 persons by 2010, and increase its rate of growth even more between 2010 and 2020. The middle population projection for year 2020 is 7,820 persons, an overall population increase of 11% over the next 20 years. The Model predicts a 20% increase in households of between 2000 and 2020, and a continued decline in the number of persons per household (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Town Population Projections

Year	BRPC Low Range Projection	BRPC Middle Projection	BRPC High Range Projection
2000		7,040	
2010	5,000	7,290	9,800
2020	5,100	7,820	10,500

Source Notes:

BRPC's population estimates are based upon a Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) Amherst, MA, forecast for Berkshire County using economic and U.S. Census population data from 1960 to 1990, and BRPC's addition of town population shifts using U.S. Census data. There is a 95% probability that the actual future population will be within the BRPC low and high range estimates.

In relation to the general Dalton area, the town of Dalton is 10% of the total population (see Exhibit 5). While this percent is not increasing Dalton is experiencing a rise in the over 65 age group percent. This trend is expecting to continue.

Exhibit 5: % of Dalton's Population vs. Dalton Area

Year	Dalton	Dalton Area	As a Percentage of Dalton	Under 18	Over 65
1970	7,505	79,025	9.5%	N/A	N/A
1980	6,797	75,074	9.1%	N/A	N/A
1990	7,155	71,480	10.0%	11.1%	8.6%
2000	6,892	68,265	10.1%	11.1%	9.4%

Dalton area includes:

Dalton, Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Chesire, Windsor, Hinsdale, and Washington.

While developable land is extremely limited there still exists a potential for residential growth. The southern and east-central portions of town appear to have some large areas with only partial or no identified constraints. If all this land were developed based on current zoning and other bylaws, it could result in close to 2,000 new housing units, nearly 13,000 in total population and over a 1,000 new students (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Summary of Dalton Buildout Analysis

	Additional from Buildout	Total at Buildout
Population	5,724	12,734
# of Housing Units	1,908	4,641
# of Students	1,908	3,078
Water Consumption (gallons per day) (4)	600,762	2,206,705

Source: 1999-2000 BRPC Build-Out, funded by the DHCD.

It is difficult to imagine that a complete buildout will occur. In fact, BRPC projections are that 547 housing units will be added in Dalton in the next 20 years. There is a limited supply of developable land in the center of Dalton (making space more valuable), and increasing the likelihood of sprawl to satisfy demand.

III. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. Historic Settlement

On August 24, 1778, Col. William Williams, Capt. Eli Root, and William Barber petitioned the Massachusetts General court for the “Ashuelot equivalent be set off as a District Town”. Chapter 64, Acts of 1783-1784 state “that all lands and inhabitants of the Ashuelot Equivalent aforesaid, bounded west partly of Pittsfield and partly on Lanesborough...be and hereby are incorporated by the name Dalton, March 20, 1784.” The town was named for Tristram Dalton, the speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representative. Mr. Dalton, a native of Newburyport, Massachusetts, was a well-respected politician in the primary years of the new nation.

Characterized by a rough landscape with some good farmland in its interior and a swift moving river, the Town of Dalton soon became a rural industrial community with many neighborhoods housing mill owners and their employees (see Map 2). Harnessing the power from the East branch of the Housatonic River, Dalton enjoyed the prosperity of many of the local mills. By 1829, the town was comprised of three paper mills, a gristmill, and five sawmills, all within a mile of the town meeting house. Farmland was limited in comparison to the towns lower on the Housatonic River, but some still remains, such as Burgner’s Turkey Farm.

Dalton’s largest industry, papermaking was started by Zenas Crane (1777-1845) in 1801 along the banks of the Housatonic River. Searching for nearly 2 years to discover the right location for a new mill, young Zenas bought 14 acres of land from Martin Chamberlain. Zenas felt the abundance of clean water, a swift-moving river, ample cordage, and nearness to major markets would provide for an ideal location. In 1844, the Crane’s developed its distinctive bank note paper, which was quickly accepted by banks from Great Barrington to Boston, for printing of bonds and bank note papers.

B. Community Identity & Strengths

Dalton is a rural suburb of Pittsfield. Route 8 & 9, well traveled scenic roads, traverse through the center of town. Residents of Dalton take great pride in their town’s environmental resources and beauty, New England mill town character and small town social fabric. Dalton boosts itself as an exemplary New England town with interesting public and private historic architecture, and cultural and family-oriented attractions. Dalton’s extensive forested areas, mountainous topography, agricultural lands and wetlands lend the town a distinctively vibrant aesthetic and natural beauty that is treasured highly by its residents. They recognize these strengths and are working to preserve and sustain them.

Many people make Dalton their long-term home (over 30 years)¹, contributing to a strong sense of community. It is also evident that residents care significantly for the future of their community as documented by the over 50% return rate on the community survey. Although the town has experienced a slight increase in its over 65 population and a decrease in persons under 15, there still exists an overall balance of household types and age groups. This family-oriented nature makes Dalton a neighborly place in which to live, where residents feel safe and welcomed. Community spirit generally runs quite high, and group associations and volunteerism have traditionally contributed to making the town work.

¹ Dalton Community Survey, 1999.

C. Historic and Cultural Resources

Before the establishment of a permanent fire company in 1899, blazes took many significant structures. A fire in 1914 destroyed the three-story Union Block. The Central Block, the former location of the town hall, burned in 1938. The Clark Block burned in 1937. Each of the blocks were rebuilt. Fire also plagued the papermaking industry with every mill in the village burning at least once.



Historic Photo of Main Street

Before 1900, there existed 8 school districts throughout Dalton. Student population divided the districts equally. Many of these school buildings still exist throughout the town. Many are being used as homes for Dalton residents. The new Nessacus Regional Middle School (opened in 1997), the Wachonah Regional High School (opened in 1961), Cranville Elementary School (constructed in 1961, renovated in 1989), and St. Agnes' Parochial School serve the current student population.



Historic Photo of Dalton's former Train Station

In 1826, F. Morgan of Stockbridge raised money to construct a railway from Springfield to the state line in West Stockbridge. By 1840 the line was complete. At the time, Boston & Albany Railroad was running six or seven trains a day between Dalton and Pittsfield. In 1888, the second depot was built with local granite. The railroad depot was operational until 1952. The building sat vacant until 1976, when a private owner renovated the structure to house a tavern and restaurant.

Dalton was also served by a trolley system, which ran exclusively from Pittsfield to Dalton. The Pittsfield Street Railway began operating a trolley service in Dalton around 1886. The service was renamed in 1890 when it switched from horsepower to electric power.

There still exists many historic structures in and around the business block areas. In 1976, The Town's Historic Commission had identified several significant structures built before 1820 as well as other notable homes. Dalton has many resources officially listed on the National Historic List. These sites such as the Old Stone Mill Rag Room, the Crane Museum, the Dalton Grange, and several cemeteries provide a sense of history for residents and visitors.

In 2000, in an effort to preserve on record the Town's resources they hired a consultant to conduct a survey and planning program, which will identify and catalog these homes for future listing on the state's Historic Preservation List. In July 2001, the Select Board considered expanding the work which was

originally slated to include three sections of Main Street in the Craneville, Dalton Flats, and East Main Street to also include side streets where mills and mill housing exists. Under the expanded plan, the number of structures under consideration for the historic designation would increase from 305 to 1,112. The object of the inclusion of the additional structures would be to document the social history of the west end of town, not just the imposing old houses on Route 9 (Main Street).

D. Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

Dalton's strong historical and cultural assets remain an important defining characteristic for the town. Historic and cultural assets and areas are interrelated with open space considerations, regional tourism, and other issues such as land use and reuse. These issues are also discussed throughout this Plan.

While each historic site should be considered on its own merits, the historic areas in town such as the traditional neighborhood areas and Main Street, need to be considered as a whole. All these areas combined give proof to Dalton's rich history and culture. Loss of areas of historic value in Dalton would be a detriment for future generations. The efforts of concerned individuals and groups to identify and revitalize the historic developed areas and allow for their continued use as they were intended should be acknowledged. The continuation of these efforts combined with innovative protection methods will help to maintain the historic areas' physical infrastructure and appeal.

Dalton has always been a town of locals where people live and work in the community. As the economy continues to change in the future, the influx of tourists and second homeowners to North County may potentially play a more significant role in the Town of Dalton. However, while this influx can help sustain the community it could also alter the character of the town. Active residents, town leaders, and organizations should continue to foster adaptation while protecting and preserving the historic, cultural and environmental features that are important components of Dalton's heritage.

The diversification of the economic base in the town is a high priority. Promoting and encouraging business growth to expand the nonresidential tax base must be done within a process that protects all important town resources. Business and light industrial growth must be encouraged while maintaining the "New England Village" atmosphere currently found in Dalton.

E. Goals and Long Term Strategies

Historic and cultural resources ideally preserve the best aspects of the past while striving to maintain their relevance to current and future situations. Residents, town leaders and organizations expressed their desire to save these resources while providing linkages to other activities such as economic development and natural resource protection.

Historic and Cultural Goals & Objectives

Preserve and protect Dalton's historic and cultural assets in order that they may be enjoyed now and in the future.

1. Preserve history through education, as well as public and private preservation endeavors.
2. Create and/or maintain zoning regulations that preserve the “small town” atmosphere while permitting change that is in keeping with the character of Dalton.
3. Create and/or maintain zoning regulations that promote business and light industrial growth.
4. Promote and encourage tourism.

IV. COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

The foremost purpose of any government is to serve the needs of its people. The major services are public education and public safety, though general government, recreation, and other services also contribute to the quality of life. Dalton continues to invest in providing a high level of quality public safety services including police, emergency, and fire protection. Currently, all municipal functions are funded by property, excise, and other taxes, service fees, licenses, and transfer payments from state and federal levels.

A. Town Facilities and Services

This section includes a summary of conditions and future needs pertaining to town facilities (see Exhibit 7 and Map 3).

Town Hall

The original Town Hall was moved in the 1890's to the corner of Main Street and Daly Avenue, where it became the Clark Block. A new hall was constructed in 1892, with the financial assistance of the Crane family, on the corner of Carson and Main Streets. At that time, the Town Hall building also housed the police station, Dalton Free Public Library, and an Opera House. In 1976, the Town expanded into the Opera House for additional office space.

The Town offices are housed on the main floor of the Town Hall building. The Callahan and Crane Rooms provide space for meetings of boards and commissions. Due to the age of the building and the multiple uses, it may become necessary to seek additional office space for Town Hall staff. In addition, repairs must be made to the windows.

Library

The Dalton Free Library is located at the front of the Town Hall. The Library provides many programs for all age groups and has expanded its offerings with access to the Internet. In 2000, a Planning Committee was formed to study the needs of the community and the capacity of the library to determine what, if anything can be done to improve the library's facility, offerings and programs. The overriding priority was the library's lack of space for collections, computers, staff, study areas, access, programs and parking.

Public Safety

The Police Station is located on the basement level of the Town Hall. Currently, the Town's public safety staff includes 10 full-time police officers, 6 reserve officers, and a volunteer Fire Department staffed with a full-time chief and 5 station personnel (3 full-time and 2 part-time). In recent years, the Police Department has worked steadily to improve relations with seniors and school-aged children. In addition to full-time staff, there are 34 volunteer staff members, all of whom are trained in CPR technique (1 Paramedic, 2 EMT'S, 15 EMT's and several RN's). As the town has grown, it has become more difficult to maintain the volunteer staff at the proper level, and it may become necessary to increase the professional staff.² The 24-hour ambulance service is maintained by the Fire Department.

² Dalton Master Plan, 1989.

Regional Services

Dalton participates in several regional programs, which include a town communications center which serves the Dalton Fire and Water District and the towns of Hinsdale and Windsor, a regional sewer contract with Pittsfield and Hinsdale, the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (30 towns & 2 cities) and a the Central Berkshire Regional School District. Participation in these programs allows the town the flexibility to consolidate resources while still offering Dalton residents with appropriate services.

Education

Educating Dalton's youth is a primary responsibility of the Town. Educational services are a large expense in Dalton, particularly the on-going operating expenses. In the last several decades, this expense, which includes state mandated service standards, has risen faster than the overall revenues of local governments, which are limited to a 2½ % increase annually. Educational expenses have thus become a larger percentage of overall taxpayer expenses in Dalton.

Enrollment as of October 1999 was 1,140 students. According to recent budget statements there was a 6.22% increase in the overall-operating budget for FY2001 from FY2000. At \$4,359,592, Dalton is the highest net contributor for school spending in relation to the six other participating communities. Overall, regular instruction programs (47.8% of total budget) decreased .3% while special education (13.5% of total) and operational services (22% of total) both increased by over 6%.

In the mid to late 1990's, the construction of Nessacus Regional Middle School was a large infrastructure project that was necessary to upgrade educational facilities. The new school represents a dramatic improvement that has raised the quality of life for many town families. The new school is also often used for community activities. However, school facility improvements are costly. The state of Massachusetts has funded approximately 67% of the Nessacus project costs. Dalton, as the largest community in the Central Berkshire Regional School District, will have expended over \$4,018,000 million dollars in principal and interest on the project, which will be paid off over the next 16 or 17 years. The recent improvements to school facilities, in Hinsdale as well as in Dalton, provide extra capacity for student enrollment growth in the District.

Exhibit 7: Town Community Facilities

Facility	Service Function	Built/ Rebuilt	Condition	Capacity
Town Hall/ Police Station	Government (2 nd - 3 rd floor), Meeting, Police (1 st floor)	1883	Renovated for handicap access, 1997. Roof and insulation repaired ~1995. Windows need replacing. Need auxiliary vault for permanent records.	Less than ideal size right now – would like more departments in the same building. Insufficient staff and equipment space. Lack of garage for police cruisers. Limited parking for town offices.
Library	Library	Addition and renovation 1975.	Leaks in Library roof. Facing of brick on library back walls needs to be replaced.	New library space needed. Limited parking for library services.
Fire Station	Fire & Water District			
Town Garage	Maintenance		New roof, 1997 New salt shed.	
Water System	Fire & Water District			An additional storage tank being proposed.
Sewer System	Inter-municipal agreement w/ Pittsfield.		Inflow & Infiltration reported in the 1980s.	Flow not directly metered. Handle flow from Hinsdale.
Craneville Elementary School	Elementary Education	1961 1989 renovation		469 students enrolled, 2001
Nessacus Regional Middle School	Grades 6-8 Education	1998		593 students enrolled, 2001
Wahconah Regional High School	Grades 9-12 Education	1961	New roof - c. 1997	694 students enrolled, 2001
Main St. Cemetery	Cemetery			Estimated to be at capacity by 2020
Ashuelot Cemetery	Cemetery			Estimated to be at capacity by 2020

B. Municipal Utilities

Public Water Supply

Sanctioned by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1844, the Dalton Fire and Water District immediately looked to Egypt Brook as a possible reservoir site. By the fall of 1844, water was flowing from the reservoir in newly constructed pipelines into Dalton. Today, Dalton still receives its water via the Dalton Fire and Water District, which is a separate entity from other town government. The District serves approximately 94% of the homes, with the remainder served through on-site wells (see Map 4).

The main source of drinking water for the Dalton Fire & Water District is the Windsor Reservoir, with the City of Pittsfield supplementing mills and some areas of the distribution system. The Fire District has an agreement with the City of Pittsfield, which allows the District to withdraw up to 45 million gallons per month from the City at no charge. The Windsor Reservoir, located on the south side of Route 9 on the Windsor/Dalton line, has a storage capacity of approximately 302 million gallons. The secondary and emergency high demand source, the Egypt Reservoir, is located on the north side of Route 9 behind the water treatment plant and has a storage capacity of approximately 8 million gallons. When needed, the Town can access the Anthony Reservoir, which has no storage capacity.

The mobile home park, located south of Route 9 near Waconah Falls, is also under the jurisdiction of the Fire & Water District. In 1993, a new bedrock well was put on-line at a depth of 440 feet and has a yield of 15 gallons per minute.

A slow sand filtration plant, located on the north side of Route 9, approximately two miles from the center of town, provides treatment of the District's surface water sources. Renovations to bring the plant into compliance with the Surface Water Treatment Rule were completed in 1995. A 1.2 million-gallon steel water storage tank was installed below the water treatment plant as part of the renovations in 1995. The distribution from this tank consists of approximately 20 miles of pipe systems ranging in size from 4 to 12 inches. Six pump stations distribute the water throughout town. A new tower is being proposed by the Fire & Water District off Pine Crest Road.

The last major upgrade to the system was in 1960, though there have been minor upgrades over the years to repair leaky pipes. There are two problem areas for future developments as regards water supply: these are the general South Street area and elevations above 1300 feet, which are difficult to serve by the present system. The South Street area is limited by the size of water mains coming in from central Dalton. It is already at capacity, and provision of water to some problem areas such as Greenridge Park and the Washington Mountain Road area have required permission from Pittsfield to tap into their lines in the affected areas. The increasing trend to construct homes at higher elevations will require many of them to depend on wells, which could pose future development problems.

As the consumption of water increases and as all prime surface water sources become utilized, the need to develop groundwater as an alternative becomes more real. The Town should take further steps to identify and preserve its groundwater resources. Any development on these aquifers should be carefully regulated, as to density and type, so as not to reduce their potential as future water sources for Dalton. Intense development in proximity to these sites should be avoided.³

³ *Dalton Master Plan*, 1989.

Waste Disposal

Currently, Dalton contracts the operation of its town-owned transfer station on Bridle Path Road to a private contractor. In addition, other private haulers operate on a case by case basis in Dalton. While residents are encouraged to recycle these private haulers often do not. Dalton should vigorously encourage stricter programs for recycling of wastes by private haulers. The town operate a composting facility adjacent to the transfer station.

Dalton's former landfill has been closed since the early 1990's. As a condition of the decommissioning, the Town is responsible for paying for monitoring wells, which have been placed on site to regulate groundwater infiltration.

Wastewater

In 1959, the Town constructed a multi-million dollar sewer line infrastructure to connect to Pittsfield, which was intended to eliminate the age-old problem of polluting materials flowing in the Housatonic River. Much of the town is sewerred, with all sewage traveling to Pittsfield's waster water treatment plan for treatment. The Pittsfield facility currently operates under its design capacity of 17 million gallons a day (MGD), with an average flow of 13.5 MGD⁴. Effluent (treated water) is released into the Housatonic River, and the leftover sludge is disposed of in a landfill. Dalton's cost for usage is based on flow.

The town has little in the way of detailed records on its wastewater infrastructure. There is interest in completing a total capacity inventory, as there are areas of concern – the North Street inteceptor is at capacity and other main lines are occasionally overloaded. Stormwater infiltration is also a reoccurring problem during high demand seasons.

Stormwater Management

In the Housatonic watershed, most remaining water pollution problems do not arise from easily traceable sources that drain out the end of a pipe directly into a waterway. Today's pollution is more likely to come from less precisely located "non-point" sources, such as stormwater runoff from streets and parking lots, failed septic systems, soil erosion from fields, construction sites, and stream banks, and seepage from abandoned dumps and landfills⁵. The Housatonic River Association and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission have been working with the assistance of local, state and federal funds to find creative solutions to addressing these real or potential contamination issues.

To date, the HVA East Branch Stream Team has inventoried the shoreline of the Housatonic from Muddy Pond in Washington to the Government Mill Dam in Pittsfield. This work has produced a list of special areas to be protected and problem areas to be addressed. Of greatest concern in this report are the repetitive runoff issues in Dalton from paved and non-paved roads, siltation from Windsor tributaries and Weston Brook, and erosion of banks (especially during spring run-off)⁶.

⁴ Pittsfield Sewer Plant Capacity Study, 1998.

⁵ East Branch Shoreline Survey Report, HVA

⁶ East Branch Shoreline Survey Report, HVA.

In 2000, BRPC completed a stormwater assessment of the Hoosic and Housatonic river watersheds. This report supported the findings of the HVA study. In addition to the assessment, BRPC determined that the following are impediments to addressing stormwater issues:⁷

- Stormwater improvements are **not required**.
- No clear **cause and effect** data.
- "Can't **see** the problem; can't **fix** the problem."
- Long-range planning for stormwater infrastructure is simply not done.
- Difficult distinction between **natural** erosion and **man-made** erosion

It is important that Dalton continues to develop and participate in programs that address stormwater and other non-point runoff contaminants. Dalton must also concern itself with the need to comply with the Environmental Protection Agencies standards for stormwater by March 2003. By taking voluntary measures now using EPA funds, the town can prepare more effectively with the need to comply. The town should also consider using other grant sources that could assist in investigating source and groundwater issues.

C. Government and Fiscal Conditions

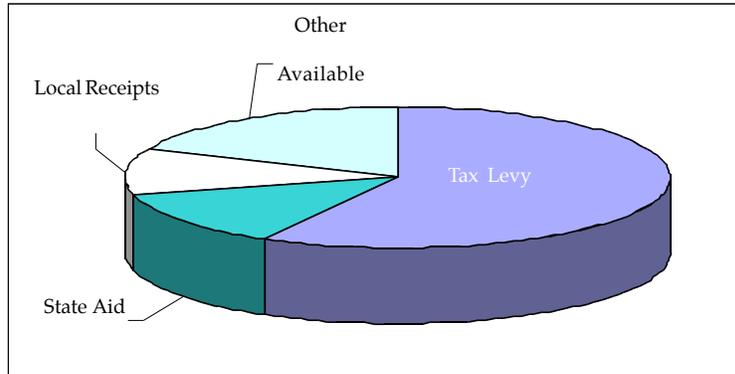
Dalton has an open Town Meeting form of government, an elected body of three Selectmen, other elected and appointed officials, and boards and commissions. As of July 2001, the Town had hired their second Town Manager in the town's history. The town voted at a special town meeting to petition the state legislature to request that the Select Board increase from three to five members. A decision is expected to be handed down by spring 2002.

Revenues

Currently property, excise and other taxes, service fees, licenses and state and federal transfer payments fund all municipal functions. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 the Town levy on residential, commercial and industrial real estate property was \$17.74 per one thousand dollars of valuation. Property taxes provide the bulk of town revenue, comprising 58.1% of the revenue base for FY2001. State aid provides another 12.8%, with other available revenue making up the remaining 29.1% (See Appendix A: Massachusetts Department of Revenue "At a Glance" Report). Compared to similar towns in western Massachusetts, Dalton receives a slightly higher percentage of its revenue base from the property tax levy rather than from state aid and other sources of revenue.

⁷ Stormwater Assessment in the Hoosic and Housatonic Watersheds, BRPC, 2000.

Exhibit 8: Revenue Sources for FY 2001



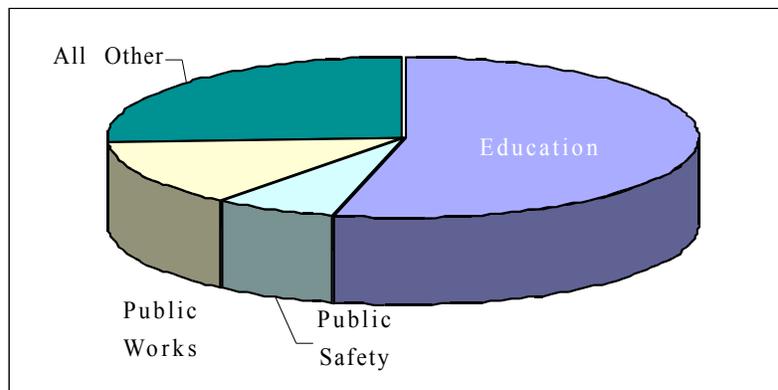
Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Property tax revenues for FY2001 were \$6,355,259 with nearly 80% of this revenue derived from residential assessments. Industrial properties made up 12.6% of the tax base, commercial 5.6%, personal property 2.7%, and open space contributing 0%. Properties have recently been reassessed which has enabled to the Town to reduce the tax rate to less the \$18 per one thousand. In FY2001, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue statistics identifies 1,898 single-family parcels with a single-family average tax bill of \$2,231.

Expenses

General fund expenditures for FY2001 were \$9,077,294. The largest General Fund operating expense in Dalton, as in most towns, is public education, which makes up 57% of the budget. Dalton receives fire protection through the Dalton Fire & Water District, which is paid for through a separate tax levied on residents within the district, rather than through the General Fund. The assessment for Fire & Water was 56 cents per each \$1,000 in property value in 2000. This has held steady in recent years. In general, Dalton’s expenditures for public safety, education, and public works are in the middle range among comparable towns in western Massachusetts (See Appendix B: Socioeconomic Community Comparison Reports).

Exhibit 9: Actual Expenditures in FY 2001



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Fiscal Trends

The Town has completed a reassessment of private properties, which has led to an increase in overall valuation due mainly to inflation. This has caused the tax rate to go down but when applied to a higher valuation, the average single family tax bill has not been affected as this bill is related to spending not overall valuation. The current trend is summarized in the table below.

Exhibit 10: Historic Tax Rates vs. Assessments

YEAR	NON-RES ASSESSMENT	RESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT	TOTAL ASSESSMENT	NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY AS % OF TOTAL ASSESSMENTS	RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY AS % OF TOTAL ASSESSMENTS	TAX RATE	AVG. SINGLE FAMILY TAX BILL
FY90	76,561,610	264,090,248	340,651,858	22.5%	77.5%	12.60	1,504
FY93	72,956,506	239,580,505	312,537,011	23.3%	76.7%	16.24	1,759
FY96	71,565,795	240,997,564	312,563,359	22.9%	77.1%	16.48	1,803
FY99	70,407,535	260,466,281	330,873,816	21.3%	78.7%	18.15	2,137

D. Other Community Facilities & Support

While the Dalton Select Board formally acts as the Town's Park Commission much of the responsibility of running and maintaining the town parks is contracted with the Community Recreation Association (CRA). The CRA, a non-profit quasi-public organization, was initiated in 1916 by the Crane family to administer public recreation programs. The CRA works in cooperation with the Town of Dalton to administer town-wide recreation programs. Much of the recreational areas and facilities are owned and maintained by the town while the CRA supervises, controls maintenance and develops recreation programs. The CRA also is a member agency of the Berkshire United Way.

The CRA headquarters are located in a community center built for the town in 1923 by Winthrop Murray Crane, former Governor and U.S. Senator. This building has been used by the town as a community house for the enjoyment of all Dalton residents since there was no municipal building that had the capacity to serve as a community center. Today this center still serves as a community gathering point.

Health programs are offered under a contract between the Town and the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association. A public nurse provides regular health clinics at Town Hall, the Community Center and three senior housing developments. In addition, the Berkshire Mental Health Outreach Program provides in-home mental health assessments and treatment services to Dalton residents.

A regional Needs Assessment conducted in 1993 by the COA, provided information which has been used to base short and long-term planning. Of greatest importance were issues related to home repair and maintenance, transportation and homemaking. One potential project which has generated some support is the creation of a regional transportation program which may be eligible to access funds from the Executive Office of Transportation & Construction (EOCD) at the state level. Administratively, the COA has a need for a senior center and improved office space.

E. Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

For towns that currently have a relatively high tax burden but wish to provide high quality services, several questions involving fiscal responsibility commonly arise in dealing with development and land

uses. One key question for the town is: Does Dalton want to encourage growth of its tax base, or fight increases in expenditures, or a balance of both?

Each year the town manager, Select Board and the Finance Committee work diligently to prepare their annual budget. The initial process includes individual meetings with each of the boards and commissions to review budget requests. The Select Board and Town Manager finalize the proposed budget and submits it to the Finance Committee. After review, the Finance Committee and Select Board conference to attempt to resolve any differences prior to Town Meeting, where the Finance Committee presents its recommendations.

At present, there is no community-wide plan that outlines a long-range capital planning process. The Town's budget is currently solvent with adequate reserves, however, it has experienced some severe distress during the last economic downturn in the early 1990's. Listed as one of the recommendations in recently completed Fiscal and Economic Plan for the Town of Dalton, was the need for a more comprehensive approach to determining the annual budget in relation to medium and long-term planning. Some communities also choose to involve all lead staff, chairs and other department heads in joint budget discussions as a way to efficiently discuss budget needs.

The analysis conducted as part of the Business and Fiscal plan process shows that in Dalton, residential land uses cost more for services than they return in revenue (ratio of 91 cents revenue for one dollar cost), while non-residential uses return much more than they cost (ratio of \$1.80 revenue to one dollar cost). These ratios are similar to ratios produced in other studies throughout the region and the state.

To some extent, the cost of services is also linked to the location and patterns of development. Net public cost for a low density residential community is higher than for a comparable but compact development due to inefficient expenditures for public school operational, instructional, and transportation services, and also because sprawl creates potentially higher public liabilities for road maintenance and future provision of public water and sewer. However, many of the costs of sprawl are largely borne at the state and federal level.

It is relatively easy to estimate potential property tax revenues from growth. If a large new home or non-residential building is built at an assessed valuation of \$250,000 and is then taxed at the FY 2001 local residential property rate per of \$17.74 per \$1,000, the annual expected tax revenue would be \$4,448.

Using the fiscal spreadsheet information, we can derive an approximate cost for non-residential properties using an average pro-rated to the portion of funding for a \$250,000 property assessment: \$2,471. We can also derive an approximate cost for a \$250,000 residential property assessment: \$4,888. Thus, every \$250,000 in non-residential tax value can be estimated to produce an average fiscal benefit of \$1,977 while every \$250,000 in residential tax value produces an average fiscal loss of \$440.

F. Goals and Long Term Strategies

Residents consider Dalton as having a high quality of life. In part, this feeling is a result of the town's ability to provide its citizens with proper and adequate services at an appropriate cost. To date, Dalton's tax rate has been high. Residents would not like this trend to continue; however, they also would like to maintain a high level of community services.

1.

Community Services, Utilities and Support Goals and Objectives**Provide high quality town services in a cost-effective manner.**

1. Encourage additional cooperative regional arrangements for providing necessary municipal services.
2. Investigate budget strategies to reduce costs, including financial forecasting and review of prior forecasts establishing a financial plan, implementing a performance based budget system, limiting borrowing to capital projects or revenue anticipation, and educating voters on the long term effects of their decisions.
3. Investigate combining provisions of all services (town services and the Fire & Water District) in order to meet all Town needs and costs and allocate resources accordingly.

Provide orderly and cost-effective maintenance and extension of facilities and infrastructure, including roads, consistent with fiscal and growth objectives.

1. Satisfy the requirements of the Town Manager Act which requires the creation of a Capital Budget Plan. Coordinate this work through the Manager and Select Board and consider the formation of a formal Capital Planning Committee to outline predicted and anticipated future capital expenses, guide public investment, and secure grants.
2. Reduce capital costs by sharing equipment and buying materials cooperatively with neighboring municipalities.

Insure the adequacy and lowest cost of domestic water, fire protection, and sewer services provided by other quasi-municipal departments.

1. Encourage coordination of operating performance and system planning of Dalton Fire & Water District in supplying water to Town properties.
2. Guide development projects to areas where growth can be accommodated by existing infrastructure to minimize overall capital costs.
3. Monitor the capacity utilization, operating performance, and fiscal impact of sewer services provided by the City of Pittsfield regional plant.

V. NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

A. Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Dalton's natural features, including forests and habitat areas have long instilled a sense of pride amongst residents (see Map 5). Important natural elements include the Town's nestled location between mountain ranges to the north and west and the Housatonic River, the major water resource in central and southern Berkshire County.

Dalton presently contains a large amount of open space. A portion of this land is preserved open space, i.e., protected from development through acquisition of land by the public or conservation restrictions (see Map 6). However, some sections of these lands are protected only by constraints imposed by location, such as steep slopes, shallow soils, wetlands, etc. (see Map 7). One of the issues which the Planning Board has identified is the development potential of the hill sides and hill tops which do not enjoy the protection afforded by public ownership of the land or its development rights. Although much of the mountainous property in the R-1 zone is thought to be unsuitable for development due to steep slopes, poorly drained soils, and substantial distance from existing roads, the possibility exists that some of those areas will someday be developed⁸.



A View of Holiday Farm

In 1977, the Town of Dalton, in cooperation with the Community Recreation Association, completed a Park and Recreation Plan. The purpose of this plan was to: 1) increase the effectiveness of the CRA in recreation related programs and policy making efforts that were truly responsive to public needs; 2) insure more effective coordination and correlation between planning and project activities; and 3) fulfill the requirements set forth by the Department of Environmental Affairs for eligibility in state and federal funding programs. This Master Plan builds on the prior plan to bring to light the need to support environmental conservation and recreation options. The Town should also consider an update to the Open Space Plan.

B. Environmental Inventory

Water

The historic settlement pattern in Dalton centered around the river still plays a powerful role in development and recreation in the town. Agricultural, industrial, passive and active recreational users have and continue to utilize the river and the town's other water bodies. In a recent survey, residents placed their highest priority on the protection of water resources.

⁸ BRPC Build Out Analysis.

The combinations of uses, while beneficial in all communities as part of its social and economic stability, have in some instances been at odds with each other. As discussed in other parts of this plan, contaminants from source and non-point source pollutants have entered the surface and non-surface water bodies in Dalton which have degraded water quality. In the last few years, leaders have began the process of educating residents and participating to enhance the quality of water and its affected environments.

Flood Plains

The flood danger is increasing due to more rapid runoff, which results when swamps are channeled and roads, parking lots and buildings are constructed which reduce the absorption capacity of natural surfaces. Flood plain management through flood plain zoning should be continued to minimize potential flood damage and the need to construct expensive flood control structures. New construction in flood plains is not desirable and therefore land that is within a flood plain should not be considered as part of the square footage requirements for each of the zoning districts. Proper management of flood plains also makes Dalton eligible to use the National Flood Insurance Act. Under this program, private flood insurance at subsidized rates is available for property that lies in a flood area and cannot be adequately covered by conventional flood insurance.⁹

Wetlands

Though there are few large wetlands in Dalton, these areas can act as small reservoirs and hold storm runoff which might contribute to downstream flooding. Preservation of wetlands also helps to maintain the water table and the yield of groundwater used for public and private wells. The Conservation Commission works to implement the Rivers Protection Act and Wetlands Protection Act. These efforts focus on the need to retain wetlands for the purpose of encouraging natural drainage and recharge areas as opposed to removal by pipes and technical treatment. Therefore, wetlands should be conserved and development guided to more suitable land. Since wetlands are generally not to be disturbed or built upon as per commonwealth and federal statutes, these areas should not be considered as part of square footage requirements for each of the zoning districts.

Slopes & Soils

There are extensive areas within Dalton, along North Mountain in the north and Day Mountain in the south, which present severe restrictions for development. These areas contain nearly 70% of the land in Dalton and are predominated by steep slopes of greater than 15% and elevations greater than 1300 ft. (height of water reservoir). Development of these areas would be expensive as would be the cost of providing and maintaining municipal services and facilities. Further, these areas are predominated by poor soil conditions such as ledge outcroppings, impermeability, and wetness which are not suited to on-lot septic tank disposal. Appropriate use of these lands could include forestry, natural resources extraction, public water supply, recreation and conservation, and low density residential. A new zone requiring five to ten acres per lot should be considered for these areas.¹⁰

Between the mountains and the level valley there is land which, though difficult to develop, can be utilized if certain precautions are taken. These areas contain moderate slopes of less than 15% but poorly drained soils. If these areas are not provided with good sewage and drainage systems, they would likely require approximately two acres per lot for septic tanks to function properly according to the Soil Conservation Service. Furthermore, municipal water may not be available in these areas. Therefore,

⁹ *Dalton Master Plan*, 1989.

¹⁰ *Dalton Master Plan*, 1989.

moderate density residential use might be suitable within this area. Residential lot sizes in this region should be at least two acres with increases to three acres if either municipal sewer or water is not available and four acres if neither is available.¹¹

C. Outdoor Recreation Opportunities and Areas

There is access on some town conservation lands and state land as well as the Appalachian Trail, which runs north/south and nearly bisects the town. Numerous town and neighborhood playgrounds and ball fields are available to residents and visitors for passive and active recreation (see Exhibit 11). While these provide an outlet for recreation, it is the desire of the town to investigate ways to improve access to over abundant mostly forested, protected lands for additional recreational purposes. Wahconah Falls State Park also provided residents and visitors with a location for picnicking, hiking and swimming.

Also important to any town's recreation base is access to and utilization of available water resources. For decades residents and visitors have enjoyed places like the Housatonic River, Windsor Reservoir and Wahconah Falls. As of spring 2001, the Fire and Water District have provided access along the Windsor Reservoir. Limited passive recreation has been approved for the acreage that surrounds the Reservoir. While access to this land is a valuable and added benefit to the communities of Windsor and Dalton, it is to the benefit to the leaders involved to plan for current conditions and potential water and environmental quality issues.

The possibility that some of the privately owned areas of Dalton which are used by the public for recreation, (i.e. Country Club and American Legion) may some day not be available for public use. Since these areas could be sold to a developer for residential development as currently allowed by zoning of these properties, a designated recreation zone should be established to retain these areas for recreation.

¹¹ *Dalton Master Plan*, 1989.

Exhibit 11: Inventory of Public or Quasi-Public Recreation Lands

Site or Facility	Acres	Amenities on Site	Comments
Pine Grove Park (Town Owned)	7.9	Baseball field Softball fields Basketball Courts (1 night lighted) Football Field Children's Playground Picnic Area & Shelter Field house for maintenance	Installed safety fencing near kiddie playground on Curtis Ave. Need new bleachers.
Chamberlin Neighborhood Park (Town Owned)	12-15	Baseball field Picnic tables Children's playground Field house for maintenance New shed.	New playground equipment needed. Total site is approx. 19+ acres but most of the land is wet and not appropriate for use at this time.
Greenridge Neighborhood Park (Town Owned)	10.3	Little League field Basketball court Playground equipment	New playground equipment needed.
Craneville Playground (Owned by Crane & Co.)	100' X 100'	Small children's play equipment	New equipment is needed.
American Legion Park Area (Owned by American Legion)	6	Babe Ruth field Little League field Soccer field Outdoor swim area Kitchen and bath house Playground area for small children	Major limitations for parking and circulation. A buffer along Deming Street leading to the swimming area is needed. Area lacks formal picnic area.
CRA Outdoor Facilities (Owned by CRA)	1	Tennis courts Winter skating	.
Dalton Youth Camp (located next to Town Hall)		Summer camp	
Duncan Brook Conservation/Recreation Park (Town owned – used by Boy Scouts)	7.6	Hiking trails Picnic facilities	
Crane Conservation Trust Land (Semi-public) (Owned by DEM)	1,900	Appalachian Trail	
Wachonah Falls State Park		Operated by the state's Department of Environmental Management.	

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural lands, although difficult to farm profitably, provide valuable open space and historical resources that promote Dalton's rural heritage. Farmlands, limited due to topographical and soil quality reasons, are most abundant in the north and south parts of town. Burgner Farm and Holiday Farm are two of the most prominent and active agricultural establishments still remaining in Dalton today. The Holiday Farm on Route 9 near the Windsor town line has worked to place conservation restrictions on 908 acres, with another 1,135 acres going to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The part of the farm that abuts Route 9 has also been placed in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. Another 167 acres are in Chapter 61.

The conversion of remaining agricultural lands to residential developments could threaten the rural landscape and scenic views that still exist in all sections of town, aside from the town center. These lands are actually well suited for development, and Dalton officials, residents and groups should work together in order to preserve these lands for the enjoyment of future generations. Possibilities for doing so include the direct acquisition of land and increased use of the state agricultural preservation restriction program.

D. Opportunities, Threats & Needs

In Dalton there is a great need for strong conservation policies to protect the quality of life in town. An appropriate balance between conservation and aggressive efforts to promote economic development, which also have popular support among residents, must be achieved. The rationale for such a balance is that a vital economic base will maintain and increase our quality of life by respecting and contributing to our social and physical setting. It is this balancing act that poses the greatest challenge for the community and underlines the importance of the master and open space planning process.

One of the most important factors to consider in evaluating the town's resource protection needs is the declining amount of buildable land. A buildout analysis conducted as part of the Town's economic development planning study in 1999 revealed that there is currently very little easily accessible, buildable land left in the community that is not subject to some developmental constraint. As a result, much of the future growth will occur on marginal lands possibly straining already vulnerable areas.

The protection and management of the Dalton's open spaces should be broadened to protect wildlife habitat and natural resources, provide recreational activities that respect their natural surroundings, maintain scenic views and preserve Dalton's rural character. In addition, many of the factors involved in resource preservation and habitat protection generally cross municipal borders, necessitating that Dalton in cooperation with other communities.

E. Goals and Long Term Strategies

Dalton's rolling terrain, extensive farmland and pastures, parks, and residential areas are aesthetically pleasing to resident and visitor alike, and are important to maintain the quality of life desired by residents and tourists. Though the town is quite handsome, it faces potential threats from over-development, traffic congestion and pollution due to pressures from residential housing needs, industry and other key components of the local and regional economy. For example, the somewhat haphazard development of the "gateways" to town has diminished the impression made on those entering this area. Strip commercial and residential development along scenic roadsides and hilltops is a potential degradation that can and should be minimized. The town has already made numerous efforts to improve entrances to the town and

protect these scenic resources through initiatives and by-laws. These must be continued and expanded so that the town does not lose its characteristics that make it so attractive.

Natural Resources, Open Space & Outdoor Recreation Goals and Objectives

Maintain and improve the quality of water resources and riparian habitat.

1. Strengthen and support the activities of the Conservation Commission

Protect sensitive natural areas and resources such as mountain ridges, steep slopes, rare-species habitat, forested areas, and prime agricultural soils.

1. Encourage educational programs which foster a spirit of preservation.
2. Implement zoning overlays and restrict use of sensitive areas.

Preserve and support agricultural uses in order to maintain scenic areas, economic diversity and community character.

1. Town incentives to support the fiscal soundness of area farms in the form of:
 - Infrastructure including, but not limited to, water, electrical, sewer
 - Tax incentives, such as Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B designations

Provide and maintain non-motorized outdoor recreation opportunities, including a linked system of accessible trails.

1. Set up a system for donations of land and rights of way to the Conservation Commission.
2. Promote and enhance a consolidated work with water districts to add trails.

VI. HOUSING

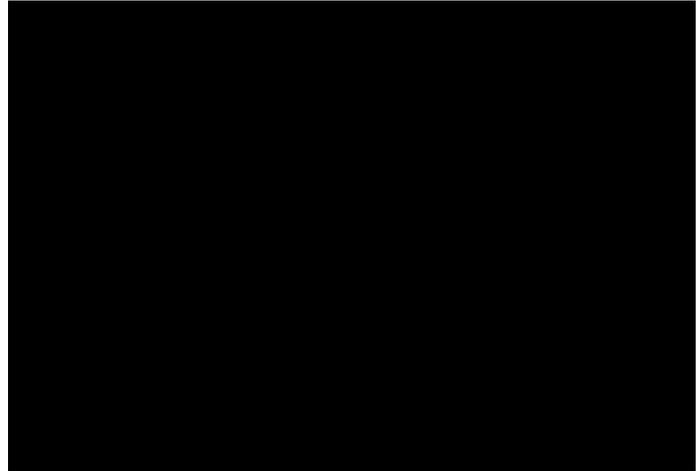
A. General Characteristics and Conditions

Available, affordable, and safe housing is a key ingredient in a community's ability to accommodate growth and economic development. This section provides a link between town population, economic development goals, land use and fiscal responsibility. If a town wants to have population growth and economic development diversification, then housing will be needed for residents of differing income levels who seek to own or rent in single-family and multi-family units¹².

Dalton's housing began as a result of the "mill town philosophy". Employers of mills built single and multi-family dwellings for their workers close by the mills. Over time Dalton had neighborhoods spotted along the waterways and major transportation networks (now Routes 8 and 9).

During the height of Dalton's paper and woolen mill days (mid 1800's and early 1900's) settlements grew in sections near Wahconah Falls (or Windsor Falls), the Gulf (a rugged hilly area on the Lanesboro side), Bartonville in the vicinity of Grange Hall Road, Cottontown near the old Renfew Mill on the road the Hinsdale, Kittredgeville near the existing Wahconah Regional High School, Westonville on the eastern side of the center of town near the Central Block and the Weston Mill, and Cranville on the lower west section of town where the Crane offices are today (see Map 2). In many ways these areas still support current neighborhood patterns while many of the original structures are no longer standing.

People are attracted to Dalton due to its location to employment centers (i.e. Dalton, Pittsfield, Adams and North Adams) and its participation in an excellent school system. Additionally, Dalton offers many styles and types of housing at relatively affordable rates. The mix in Dalton includes newer and historic single family and multi-family homes, low and high end converted mill building condominiums or apartments, second story and downtown apartments, and mobile home trailers.

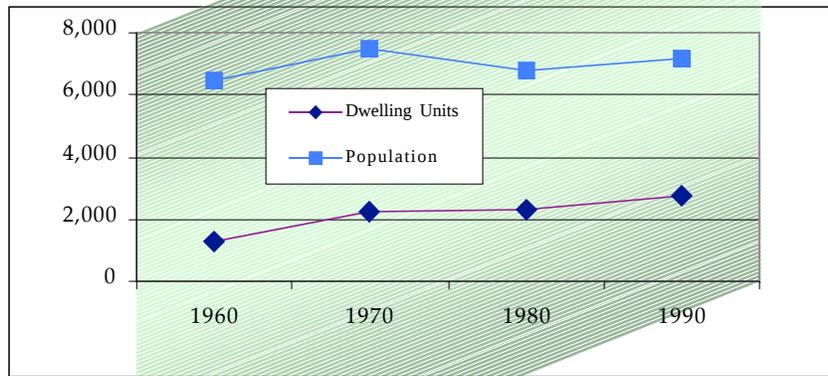


Former Mills Converted to Residential Uses



¹² The Small Town Planning Book, 2nd edition.

Exhibit 12: Comparison of Population and Dwelling Units



Source: U.S. Census

While the full-time population has only increased 10% from 1960 the number of housing units has more than doubled. This trend is similar to other Berkshire communities. In most cases, Dalton’s trend is based on the fact that while household size is decreasing new construction continues to occur. In 1980, the number of people per household was 2.93. This number fell to 2.68 in 1990 and 2.50 in 2000.

B. Housing Supply and Affordability

The amounts and costs of Dalton’s housing stock represents a majority of structures built before 1940. In fact, nearly 40% of the housing units were built before 1940. Large home construction continued in Dalton and the Berkshires through to 1970 when it died down. Home construction picked up again during the mid 1980’s. In many cases the construction of homes related to the development of subdivisions.



Historic Dalton Home



New Home Construction on Steep Slope

In 2000, there were 2,712 occupied dwelling units of which 2,018 are owner occupied. The average household size for owner occupied is 2.69 person. The majority of these dwellings are single family (71%) in neighborhoods outside of the downtown core. There is a mix of multi-family and rental units in the Central Block area. Rental units exist in 694 or 26% of the total units. The average household size of renter-occupied units is 1.94 persons.

Exhibit 13: 1990-2000 Housing Data

Community	Total Units		Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Seasonal		Other Vacant	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Dalton	2,733	2832	1,944	2,018	683	694	13	1	93	120
County	64,324	66,301	35,413	37,490	18,902	18,516	6,324	6,255	3,685	10,295
State	2,472,711	2,621,989	1,331,493	1,508,052	915,617	935,528	90,367	93,771	135,234	178,409

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Dalton and Berkshire county on the whole have had a 3% increase in the total number of units while the number of total units state wide have increased over 6%. In Dalton, the percent of owner-occupied units remained the same at 72%. The number of owner-occupied units in relation to total units is much higher in Dalton than that of the county and surrounding towns. Also significant is the rise of vacant units at the local, county and state levels. Berkshire county increased the most with 5% of its units vacant in 1990 to 15% in 2000.

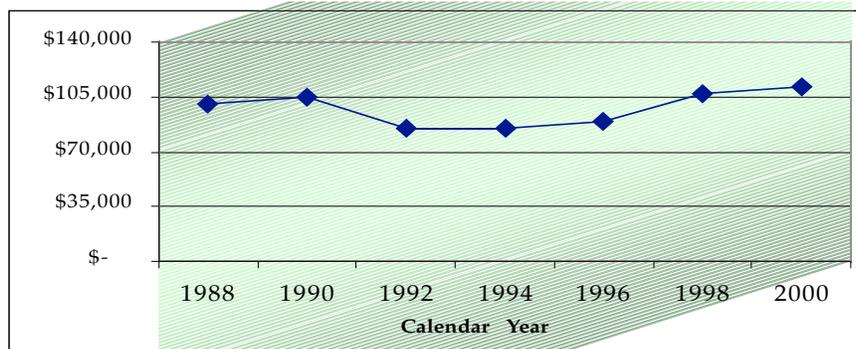
Dalton has low seasonal residences as opposed to much of south county, which is inundated with seasonal and second home residences. Dalton has a solid base of owner-occupied housing with a lower renter population. Of the total occupied units, 1,837 are single family with a median value of \$122,400 and the median contract rent being \$373 per month. The median housing value is slightly higher than the county median. Dalton is tied for 24th place out of 32 communities for percentage of households occupied low or moderate-income persons. Selling prices have dipped during the early nineties, however, they currently seem to be heading back up (see Exhibit 14).



New Subdivision Off Grange Hall Rd.

by

Exhibit 14: Housing Sale Prices



Source: Warren Group

At this time, it has been discovered that a gap exists in the housing market where the numbers of moderately priced homes (\$160,000 - \$225,000) do not exist as compared to the availability of low and high end homes for sale. As a result, buyers do not buy in Dalton, or they settle for less in smaller homes, or overspend for much larger homes.

Actions Taken

In FY2000, The Town of Dalton's housing stock increased by 5 additional ownership units. Of these new units, four were in the range of \$130,000 - \$214,000. During this time, the town has taken many other steps to proactively encourage the maintenance and creation of affordable housing units in Dalton. The following is a list of steps taken by the town:

- Held a local open forum in March 2000 on the housing needs at the Wahconah High School in which 35 people were present.
- Identified two sites for the creation of affordable housing - Sugar Hill 55 (assisted living) units and Old Dalton High School 50 (assisted living) units.
- Issued one multi-family housing special permit to approve 23 dwelling units in a conversion of the former single family Crane Estate to an assisted living facility for people 55 years of age or older.
- Have historically adopted zoning provisions such as the Home Occupation bylaw (1950), Assisted Living Residence bylaw (2000), and the Mobile Home Park bylaw (1960).
- Have adopted zoning bylaw amendments such as Zoning Bylaw §5.9.A.4 - Conversion of an existing dwelling on 10/20/97; §5.9.A.5 – Conversion of existing non-residential building on 10/20/97; and, §5.9.A.10 - Assisted living residence on 6/21/99 to allow redevelopment and reuse to occur for residential purposes.

In addition to the above actions, the Town of Dalton takes an active part in monitoring the affordability of homes for its residents. The Mobile Home Rent Control Board settles disputes and controls costs for units in Town. There are approximately 36 mobile home units in town. The Housing Authority also controls housing especially for seniors and those of greatest need. The Housing Authority manages and operates subsidized housing complexes as a means to provide assistance to older residents and those who require financial aid. Pine Grove Manor contains a mix of younger families and seniors and Pomeroy Manor houses seniors. In addition, the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation has renovated an old mill, River Run, for the purposes of housing families and seniors.

C. Concerns and Needs

Although Dalton's population is not predicted to grow as much as many other towns in Berkshire County, the rate of growth predicted is still somewhat greater than the rate that would be preferred by current residents, according to the Community Survey. The majority of survey respondents would like fewer than 80 new homes to be added in the next 10 years, while the UMass Regional Economic Models Inc.'s model predicts an average of 250 households added every 10 years. This presents a potential conflict between the desires of residents regarding growth and the demand for housing in Dalton.

Dalton will likely continue to be a desirable place to live for many families. A slow increase in new housing, as well as availability within the existing housing stock, should maintain an adequate supply of places to live that are varied enough to accommodate a diversity of new residents. If a continued vibrant employment base is sustained, it will serve those with roots in Dalton, helping to ensure community cohesiveness.

A dilemma exists as to how to encourage a full range of housing prices for home sales while minimizing pressures on the existing infrastructure, services and character of the town. According to the recent build-out analysis there is approximately 4,000 acres¹³ remaining as not currently developed. However, of the 4,000 acres only about 2,000 acres have no physical or environmental constraints. As a result, only half of the remaining land in Dalton is available for development. Much of this land is located both in the southern section of town and within the R-2 zone. It seems logical that much of the new construction will occur in this area, while housing sales and infill will occur in other parts of town.

With development in the southern portion of town there exists a potential strain to the municipal finances as new homes will require sewer and water. In the 1950's much of the sewer system was replaced or improved. However, extensions to the system without improving the existing system may put an unanticipated burden on the system causing it to break down.

In addition, if the trend continues for young families to move to Dalton there may be a strain on the educational systems.

There may be a correlation between the lack of moderately-priced homes and a lack of ability to attract businesses to Dalton. Often businesses require a certain level of incentives for new employees. These quality of life items may include:

- Quality of Schools
- Proximity to shops or other services
- Housing types and price options
- Open space and recreation

D. Goals and Long Term Strategies

The results of the Community Survey indicate that the majority of residents prefer that the town grow at a slow rate in a manner that does not greatly impact the existing roadways and town services. Dalton residents show a preference for minimizing impacts to sensitive environmental areas and visual impacts of additional development.

Housing Goals and Objectives

Provide for a variety of housing options that meet the current and future needs of Dalton's population, while avoiding undue fiscal impacts.

1. The type of development in permitted areas should be determined more on the impact that the development will create on community services (and the cost of those services), as well as on visual and environmental impacts.
2. Local regulations should promote a variety of housing types and price ranges.
3. To encourage seasonal or second home developments, zoning should reflect innovative techniques such as common land ownership.

¹³ BRPC Build Out Analysis based on Massachusetts GIS land classification data.

VII. ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

The Town's economic base is heavily reliant on one manufacturer: Crane & Co., Inc. This reliance has historically proven to be successful, however continued dependence can lead to uncertain future conditions for the town and its residents. The Town has taken an active role in planning and devising innovative programs that will provide a stable and steady economic condition in order to serve the public's interest now and in the future.

In 1999-2000, a group of volunteers worked on a plan funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development's Municipal Incentive Grant program to address economic issues, set goals, and develop an overall vision for the future development and conservation of the community. This plan combined with continued public participation has provided a "jump start" for the Master Plan.

The results of the Plan were that business development does not have to occur at the expense of the community but rather should be an overall enhancement. The results of the plan were to:

- maintain/improve important business areas
- create opportunity for economically disadvantaged residents
- maintain/improve the quality of public services
- maintain/improve the overall quality of life

A. Local Employment and Income

Although many people in Dalton work in nearby Pittsfield, Dalton cannot be considered merely a suburb, as it continues to be home to industries and businesses of its own that provide employment, goods, and services to its residents. Crane & Co., Inc., which is the oldest operating firm in the Berkshires, has been the major employer in the town since the mid-1900s, and is still owned and operated by the Crane family. To an extent, Crane & Co. has buffered the town from the economic hardships other Berkshire industrial areas have faced. Dalton is also home to many smaller manufacturing operations, retail stores, service industries, home businesses, and farms, most owned and operated by Dalton residents.



Center Block



View of one of Crane & Co., Inc. mills

Crane & Co. remains the largest employer in the town, with the Regional School District and the Center for Optimum Care a distant second and third. Of the 3,454 residents of Dalton who were employed in 1990, about 72% commuted to work in Pittsfield or other communities. Approximately 38% of the 2,574 persons employed in Dalton in 1990 were residents of the Town. The most recent figures show that the total number of people employed in Dalton decreased slightly through 1998 (See Exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15: Employment in Dalton – Recent Trends

Total Employment	1990	1994	1998	# Change 1990-98	% Change 1990-98
Agriculture, Forestry, Mining	**	**	17	+17	100%
Construction	196	123	115	-81	-41%
Manufacturing	1,325	1,360	1,317	-8	-.6%
Trans., Comm., & Public Utilities	**	31	75	+44	141%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	**	**	6	+6	100%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	234	194	196	-38	-16%
Services	415	342	353	-62	-15%
Government	379	391	370	-9	-2%
Total Employment	2,574	2,455	2,449	-125	-5%

Source: Mass. Dept. of Training and Employment (ES-202 Series)

** Data suppressed due to confidentiality.

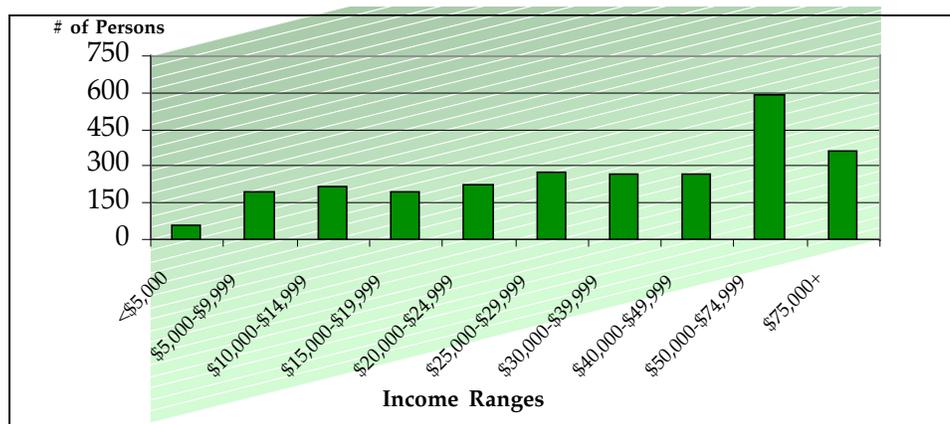
With the 1999 closing of the Beloit-Jones, the employment base shrunk by over 10% in the 1990's. Employment numbers can sometimes be misleading, in that some sources do not differentiate between full and part time jobs. The loss of good paying manufacturing jobs means that the overall payroll sources in town have decreased. There can be a ripple affect from this throughout the local economy. Although Dalton has a relatively high household income for the Berkshires, the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the region since 1986 has led many families to leave the region and eroded the middle class. Regionally most job gains have been in services. Beyond Crane, there is a fairly diversified base of small employers in Dalton (see Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16: Major Employers in Dalton

Business Name	Description	Employees
Crane & Company, Inc.	Paper Manufacturing	900
Central Berkshire Regional School District	School	100-250
Center for Optimum Care Dalton	Nursing Home	50-99
Town of Dalton	Government	50-99
Berkshire Clean-Way, Inc.	Recycling	20-49
Bruce Transportation Group, Inc.	Bus line/ Charter/ Rental	20-49
County Concrete Corp.	Concrete products	20-49
Dalton Community Recreation Association	Club	20-49
Hill Engineers, Architects, & Planners	Engineers	20-49
L.P. Adams Co., Inc.	Hardware, Building materials	20-49
Protech Armored Products of MA., Inc.	Medical Instruments & Supplies	20-49
Four Seasons Heating and Cooling	HVAC contractor	20-49
The Studley Press, Inc.	Printing	20-49
EDM	Engineering	15+

As noted elsewhere in this Plan, Dalton residents are generally representative of the County in terms of skills and educational attainment however, they earn a higher annual wage. Income ranges in 1990 showed that there were almost 1,000 people earning over \$50,000 in Dalton (see Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 17: Household Income Ranges



Source: 2000 U.S. Census.

In 1999, the Division of Employment and Training calculated Dalton’s average annual income at over \$35,000 a 27% increase from 1990 (see Exhibit 18). This figure represents a significantly higher average income than other Berkshire communities. The 2001 Pittsfield area median income, which includes Dalton, is \$35,400¹⁴.

Exhibit 18: Dalton Area Average Per Capita Income

¹⁴ Massachusetts Housing Partnership

Town	Major Employment Sector	1990	1999	% Change
Dalton	Manufacturing	\$ 25,848	\$ 35,249	27%
Pittsfield	Service	\$ 26,059	\$ 33,297	22%
Hinsdale	Service	\$ 16,264	\$ 19,655	17%
Lanesborough	TRADE	\$ 11,064	\$ 15,027	26%
Cheshire	TRADE	\$ 17,124	\$ 29,311	42%
Windsor	Construction	\$ 22,090	\$ 27,605	20%
Washington*	Service	\$ 15,556	\$ 30,941	50%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.

*The Town of Washington has had a large decrease in its population which could explain the 50% increase in average income.

B. Regional Economic Factors of Importance to Dalton

Dalton's economy is partly dependent on the regional economy. Regionally, the future of traditional manufacturing and processing industries in the Berkshires does not appear bright. However, the trend of continued manufacturing job losses will probably be partially offset by higher technology service jobs. Some evidence of this trend is seen in job growth in "Niche" services between 1990 and 1995, including a 15% increase in Engineering fields, employing nearly 1,000 persons, a 14% increase in Research and Testing, 46% growth in Human Resources, and 18-22% growth in Consulting, Management and Public Relations.

Dalton offers many benefits for doing business. As such, it contributes to the region's success for business development:

- Good access to a small metropolitan labor market
- Crane and Company
- Good local and regional setting
- Regional paper and plastics clusters
- A base of experienced machinists in the area
- Adequate utilities: sewer, water, electric and improving telecommunications infrastructure
- Major railroad
- A local tradition of manufacturing and business
- Consumer market large enough to accommodate many medium-sized commercial businesses

There are many advantages to doing business in Dalton. The setting is friendly, safe, uncongested and non-stressful. It is very advantageous to live and work in town, and many people operate home businesses. Convenience and friendly service are likely strong factors in favor of existing businesses. It should also be noted that commercial uses and the non-residential tax base have the opportunity to expand due to expected growth of the consumer base and increase in local purchasing power.

However, Dalton has some weaknesses:

- Access to/from Dalton to the Interstate is poor
- Property tax rates are relatively high compared to many locations in Western Massachusetts
- Limited land ready for development
- Limited effective regional business promotion organizations outside of tourism
- Town does not have strong existing business organization(s)
- The proximity of a much larger retail market in Pittsfield and the Lanesborough serve to greatly diminish the attraction of Dalton as a location for a competitive retail based business

C. Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

At its broadest and simplest, business development is the creation of wealth. Wealth is the community's capacity to produce goods and services of value to its residents. This includes those goods and services that are bought and sold, as well as public amenities. Community-based business development involves the following results that are important to individuals and the community as a whole:

- sustaining/increasing the number of jobs thereby sustaining/increasing incomes
- sustaining/increasing the tax base

A generalized fiscal analysis done as part of the MIG project, consistent with other studies, indicates that while residential land uses are generally a fiscal drain, non-residential land uses in Dalton generally provide a significant fiscal boost. For more information reference the "Dalton Planning Projects - Fiscal Issues Report".

What are the fiscal impacts of new development? It is relatively easy to project actual increases in property tax revenues. If a new commercial or industrial building is built at an assessed valuation of \$250,000 and is then taxed at the current FY 2001 local property rate per \$1,000, the annual expected tax revenue would be \$4,448. ($\$250,000 * \$0.01774 = \$4,448$)

Growth of any type can lead to increased costs to the general government. Costs for specific types of development can only be roughly estimated, because it is very difficult to assign specific costs for general services that cover the whole town. Costs may not be triggered until a cumulative threshold of growth is reached. Examples of operating costs are the hiring of additional personnel or increases in the hours of existing personnel. For instance, after a certain point, an additional full-time policeman may be required. For non-residential development, additional costs can be related to several factors, such as number of employees, volume of water usage, extent of wastewater treatment required, and traffic generated.

Another fiscal factor to consider is how the developed and undeveloped components of the community affect overall property values. This is difficult to calculate, but many communities that have built new facilities or amenities, revitalized or improved the appearance of key developed sections of town, or preserved key undeveloped sections of town, have experienced increased valuations for existing properties above that of nearby towns that have not done so.

D. Goals and Long Term Strategies

Economic development is a priority element for the Town of Dalton. This has been proven with their efforts to develop long-term business and fiscal strategies that provide a positive benefit to residents and the environment.

Economic Development Goals and Objectives

The following goal(s) have been identified as significant for economics and business both during the Business Plan and Master Plan processes.

Retain and encourage growth of Dalton's existing businesses.

1. Create an office of community/economic development within Town Government to perform the functions of data gathering on space and available locations, communications, procedural guidance and contact referrals.
2. Produce a complete list of Dalton businesses and inventory of business space.
3. Encourage greater cooperation and self-promotion among local businesses and the Town by Town Hall "outreach" and reactivating the Dalton Business Association. Coordinate activities with Chamber of Commerce.

Increase/enhance sites for business development.

1. Conduct a site by site analysis of vacant or underutilized business parcels to determine the best use and seek to enhance viability. Document and map sites for further planning and analysis.
2. Complete review, including public input, of potential non-residential development sites initially surveyed in the M.I.G. grant report and decide upon a prioritized list of sites to promote for business uses.
3. Pursue action by the Planning Board and the Town to modify zoning and regulations to facilitate actual developable status of the priority sites.

Establish a local entity to advocate for current enterprises and attract suitable new businesses.

1. The Town should actively work with community leaders to create a permanent local community/economic development organization, such as a Community Development Corporation or Industrial & Development Commission, as a method to foster progress on the sites to be enhanced or newly constructed.
2. Through the local development function, pursue resource options and incentives to businesses to expand or locate in Dalton.
3. The local development organization is to recruit desired types of businesses to locate in Dalton in conjunction with state and regional efforts.
4. Create a business development guidebook and other promotional materials to assist and educate developers who may desire to do business in Dalton.

Several action strategies have been identified in the Business Development Plan (see Appendix C: Business Development Plan Action Strategy). These strategies align with the results of the master plan and should be instituted as action items under the implementation process.

VIII. TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

A. Road Inventory and Motorized Transportation

Capacity

Dalton has 41.5 miles of paved town roads and 2.5 miles of unpaved roads (see Map 8). In addition, there are 6.75 miles of state roads (Routes 8 & 9). All through traffic flowing West toward Pittsfield is constrained to the main roadways (Routes 8 & 9) and one secondary road (South Street). The amount of traffic handled on Route 9 is steadily increasing, probably due to an expanding retail base in Pittsfield and population in Dalton and the surrounding towns. Other routes are experiencing fluctuations in their traffic patterns (see Exhibit 19). Commercial vehicles traverse Housatonic Street since much of the land along this road is used for commercial and industrial purposes.



View of East Housatonic Street

Exhibit 19 - Traffic Counts Data

	Route 9 Pittsfield TL	Route 9 Windsor TL	Route 8 S. of Main St.	South St. S. of Crane Ave.
2001	19,027	N/A	N/A	N/A
1999	N/A	3,800	3,600	7,400*
1996	N/A	4,100	4,000	9,200*
1992	15,000	4,000	4,200	7,600

Source: BRPC traffic counts.
*1998 and 1995 traffic data.

The temporary loss of the East Street Bridge into Pittsfield in 1988 underscored the vulnerability of the existing road system. A major accident or disaster on Route 8/9 into Pittsfield could paralyze ingress and egress from the west, preventing access to jobs, emergency medical services, stores, etc. In addition, the existing overload conditions at the Coltsville intersection in Pittsfield are forecast to worsen. Another major access route westward is needed. One possibility is the re-routing of Route 9 before it enters the center of Dalton. In addition, there should be concerted effort to restrict the creation of more travel lanes into the center of Dalton from the south, which would detrimentally affect the character of town.

Heavy equipment and the resultant increase in traffic should not be encouraged on local streets which may be damaged and where pedestrian safety may be compromised. Development and increased traffic should also be discouraged where it may cause increased congestion at key intersections. For this reason, commercial zoning should not be extended to the intersection of North and Main Streets. However, commercial and industrial development should have good access and be in proximity to major roads.

Maintenance

As is all too common throughout the area, Dalton streets are deteriorating at a faster rate than they are repaired. Currently, South Street and Housatonic Street are slated for resurfacing. The Public Works Department has done an outstanding job of clearing streets in the winter and is increasing the restoration rate in the summer season, but their budget is far short of that necessary to achieve equilibrium. A long-term maintenance program should be continued with a permanent budget commitment to a certain amount of street mileage to be restored each year. Assuming an average life of a town street of twenty years, one twentieth of the street mileage should be budgeted for repair every year.

B. Pedestrian, Non-Motorized and Transit Transportation Connections

Walking and Cycling

There exists approximately 91,250 linear feet of sidewalks maintained by the municipality. These walks provide safe travel to and within neighborhoods and the downtown core. There are, unfortunately, many streets with no or deteriorating sidewalks which reduces pedestrian safety.

Currently, there are no formal bicycle networks in Dalton although many informal routes exist in town for both recreation and ride-to-work purposes. In the neighboring town of Lanesborough local town leaders working with Bike advocacy groups, have constructed the Ashwilticook Rail Trail. Due to its close proximity, Dalton should consider ways to promote linkages to this trail into the town. In addition, the town should consider formal bike lanes along the major thoroughfares (Routes 9 & 8) in order to promote bicycling and make drivers aware of their presence.

Dalton should seriously promote walking and biking in town as a means of reducing congestion and helping to promote better sense of community. This of course demands a commitment to maintenance, repair and construction of safe ways. An important long-term approach is to improve degraded portions of sidewalks or shoulders, increase safety at intersections and provide improved amenities such as bike lanes, trees, lighting and benches.

Transit

At the turn of the 20th century, Dalton residents could travel to Pittsfield and places beyond on the Pittsfield trolley service. Today, the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), formed in 1974, provides public transportation services for Dalton and 16 other Berkshire communities. BRTA's service area has grown to include a network spanning the county from Williamstown in the north to Great Barrington to the south.

BRTA provides a fixed route on weekdays and Saturdays from Pittsfield's downtown district, Berkshire Medical Center, and Berkshire Crossing shopping plaza to Dalton. Stops in Dalton include the downtown business and retail district, the Crane Museum and Park Street on the Appalachian Trail. The service continues into the Town of Hinsdale's center.

In addition to a fixed route system the BRTA employs other transit options. Disabled person may take advantage of a voucher program, which operates in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This program is provided through a private chair or taxi vendor contracted with the BRTA to provide limited transportation access for those persons who are unable to access or navigate the fixed

route service. In addition, Dalton's COA provides a similar transportation services mostly for elderly persons in town.

Lastly, BRTA participates in the state and federally supported program Access to Jobs. This program ensures that those persons transitioning from public assistance can access transportation for employment purposes. BRTA's programs include an extended service to the Berkshire Mall and the Lee Outlet Shops from Pittsfield, free bus passes for a limited period of time, and limited subsidized transportation when bus service does not meet the need.

C. Goals and Long Term Strategies

A well-maintained road system provides for an improved quality of life for any community. The town should, both locally and regionally, comprehensively evaluate current actions and future needs of the town's transportation networks. Transit options in Dalton are also necessary since it serves the needs of senior, lower income persons and provides commuters and families with children or teenagers with transportation options.

Transportation Goals and Objectives

Improve the flow of traffic through the Town, while preserving the scenic appeal and character of the gateways and main corridors of the Town.

1. Complete design, obtain funding, and finish construction of Housatonic Street by 2006.
2. Complete design, obtain funding, and finish construction of South Street by 2008.
3. Review adequacy of Hubbard Avenue (Pittsfield) and Division Road (Dalton) for identified potential economic development parcels.

Encourage walking, bicycling and transit as transportation options.

1. Participate in regional Transit Study in order to understand needs and opportunities.

Insure necessary public transportation services to individual parcels for residential and business development

1. Review proposed development sites with the regional provider (BRTA) for inclusion in that organization's service plans.

IX. LAND USE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development in Dalton is constrained by steep slopes (greater than 15%), bedrock close to the surface, and wetlands. Of land, which has not yet been developed, roughly half is either completely or partially constrained for building. A negligible amount of land in this category is swamp or water bodies. This steep high land is covered with trees and underbrush. Future use of these non-buildable lands need to be addressed since this land, if developed using new technology, can have significant impacts on the community.

A. Land Use Patterns

Developed Areas

Generally development has occurred within the Center Block and Main Street area. Both commercial and residential development continue to spread out from the center (Route 8/9) towards the more “rural” areas of town. Steep slopes and bad soil conditions also play a significant role in the trend of development in Dalton since much of the outer ring of land has grades of greater than 25% and has poor draining soils. However, as new technology advances so too will the ability to develop these properties.

According to a UMass Land Use Survey update in 2000, the majority of land is used for forest with residential uses and agricultural uses playing a major role. Commercial and industrial uses are less than 1% of the total uses in Dalton (see Exhibit 20).

Exhibit 20: Land Use Classification

Land Use Categories	Percent of Total
Commercial	0.59%
Industrial	0.87%
Institutional	0.91%
Recreation	1.26%
Agriculture	5.77%
Residential	10.81%
Forest	76.27%

Source: 2000 Landuse Survey, UMass

Taking into consideration the slope and soil conditions of the town, Dalton has only approximately 2,000 acres of potentially developable land available. In regards to the total acreage of 14,100 Dalton is nearly land poor. The northern portion of town has many constraints due to natural features, however, the southern and east-central portions of town appear to have some large areas with only partial or no identified constraints. An additional factor to consider is the future demand for municipal water use in Dalton. At present, not all development is hooked in the town’s water lines. Much of the remaining developable land is in hilly or rocky areas. It is assumed that development at elevations of 1,300 feet or

more will not be served by town services. Even at this rate, nearly 75% of future development will require public water and sewer.

B. Land Use Strategies

Managing growth is essential to the future of Dalton. Placing limits on new dwelling growth implies reducing the negative affects with unplanned development and its possible irreparable damage of the town's special qualities. This can be achieved through (1) acquisition of land and conservation restrictions so that less land is available for construction (2) designation of specific areas that are most desirable for growth to occur, and (3) changing zoning bylaws in order to reduce the total number and size of dwellings that can be built on buildable private land.

C. Potential Land Uses and Regulatory Options

Existing Regulations

Land use in Dalton is controlled through the Zoning Bylaw (adopted 1951 and amended 2000) and subdivision controls (adopted 1954). Zoning regulations in Dalton are fairly typical of other communities its size, and are generally not complex. Dalton is comprised on 8 zoning districts and a floodplain district. There are four residential districts (R1,2,3, and 4), two business districts (B1 and B2) and two industrial districts (I1 and I2). Much of the northern and southern halves of town are in the R1 district, with the northern district comprised mostly of state land (see Map 9). Many of the established neighborhoods are in the R3 districts (see Exhibit 21). Dimensional requirements in this zone are in keeping with the existing pattern of the neighborhoods: 7,500 square feet minimum and 70 feet of frontage required.

Exhibit 21: Zoning

Zone	Zone Description	Minimum	Frontage	Building Coverage	Total Coverage	Estimated
		Require (sqft)				Stories*
R-1: Res. & Agric.	Single family detached dwellings	3 acres	150	20%	30%	2
R-2: Residential	New Two-family conversions to up to 6 units w PA	15,000	100	25%	30%	2
	For two units per structure in R-2	20,000	100			
R-3: Residential	New Multi-family(<6 units per lot) allowed with PA	7,500	70	30%	35%	2
	For two units per structure in R-3	11,500	70			
	For six units per structure in R-3	27500	100			
R-4: Residential	Camping by PA, earth removal, sawmills by PB	60,000	150	25%	30%	2
	For six units per structure in R-4	110,000	250			
B-1: Business	Restaurants, offices, stores	20,000	100	60%	75%	2
B-2: Business	Rest., auto uses, rinks, hospitals allowed by PA	7,500	70	80%	95%	1
I-1: Industrial	Wholesale P, manufacturing by PA	20,000	150	50%	80%	1
I-2: Industrial		40,000	80	70%	90%	1
FP: Flood Plain	100 year floodplain as shown on the Flood Insurance					

Abbreviations: P=Permitted by Right
 PA= Special permit from Board of Appeals
 PB= Special permit by Planning Board

Zoning Notes: All residential zones allow mobile home parks with
 Allowed in R zones with PA: schools, hospitals, businesses

Commercial and Industrial Zones

For the most part, businesses and industries are located along the major arterial though the town (Route 9) and along Housatonic Street. Because easily-developable land is scarce, it should be maintained and utilized efficiently and there should be a prudent allocation of land between residential and business uses. Over-zoning for either use should be avoided as it could be deleterious to the other use and to the town in general. Dalton's Master Plan attempts to balance future opportunity for business and industry while striving to maintain the amenities of a rural New England community.¹⁵

Industrial activity is producing or processing which adds to or re-configures a material or item for distribution and/or sale. Dalton's industrial districts are well established and generally abut rail and/or state highways. There is no urgent demand to expand current inventory of industrial district land.

However, for any additional industrial areas the following criteria should be considered:

- Availability of sewer and water facilities
- Access to railroad facilities.
- Access to major roads which are in good repair and adequate to handle truck traffic.
- Effect on adjoining neighborhoods. That is, industrial development should not occur at the expense of nearby residential areas, such as by drawing heavy truck traffic through them.
- Adequate buffers and screening to protect residential areas which are abutting.

¹⁵ Dalton Master Plan, 1989.

Business activity is the rendering of professional services or other services which involve stocks of good, wares or merchandise in limited quantities for on premises trade, or on or off premises services. Dalton should maintain its central business district, and possibly three or four small neighborhood-oriented, satellite business districts. As opportunity arises, an attempt should be made to reduce the number of existing singular business lots. In addition, cluster arrangements of business versus strip arrangements should be encouraged.

Expansion of, or additional, potential commercial areas should meet the following standards:

- Availability of sewer and water facilities
- Adequate access.
- Minimal impact on traffic flow; over-development and traffic congestion at key intersections should be avoided.
- Avoidance of strip development, which can cause repetitive highway entrances, impede the flow of traffic, and adversely affect the appearance of the Town; deeper sites with more concentrated development are preferable.
- Adequate buffers and screening to protect abutting residential areas.

Housing Development and Zoning

The growth and pressures within and beyond Berkshire County increasingly impact Dalton, a residential community with a limited industrial base. To achieve the objective of retaining its small town New England character, the following should be considered:

- Limit new multi-family housing to 6 units per building, per lot, and require Planning Board approval for each submission to determine the impact on the existing neighborhood.
- Allow for possible conversion of structures for residential use by a special permit from the Board of Appeals to determine the impact on the existing neighborhood.
- Redefining the zoning districts in accordance with the recommendations made in Section 5 concerning the limitations of the various land resources for development. This may require the establishment of a new residential district and/or changing the dimensional standards of the existing districts.
- Provide for potential improvement in housing mix, consideration should be given to a provision for new multifamily dwellings in each residential zone, but that it be evaluated on a project by project basis to determine its impact on town services, the environment, and the existing neighborhood. Either the Planning Board or the Board of Appeals would make this evaluation through the Special Permit process. Thus, strong developmental standards and requirements could be imposed on multi-family development, or the request denied.
- Inclusion of a Cluster Zoning provision in the Zoning Bylaw. Mere inclusion of Cluster Zoning in the Bylaw will not encourage developers to use this zoning method. The Planning Board should work with developers to create incentives for cluster projects as opposed to typical subdivision projects.
- Encourage common-ownership of land and greater preservation of open space for common use by residential development.

Future Trends

The largest amount of available land for development is in the R1 zone. This zone is mostly comprised of land outside the core areas of Dalton. Another large land area that can be developed for residential lies off Route 8 and Cleveland Rd. This area is zoned R4. Both areas, in general, do not have current water and sewer connections and also consist of the greatest slope and soil constraints. In order to balance the desire to allow slow residential growth the Town should consider how to offset the costs of this development.

Maintaining and enhancing commercial and industrial zoned lands, as well as investigation of new mixed-use areas will provide this desired balance (see Map 10).

D. Goals and Long Term Strategies

The priority item for the town is that all new construction must occur in a planned and cost-effective manner that respects the historic and natural elements treasured by its residents.

Sustainable Land Use Goals and Objectives

Promote efficient land use that balances community needs, while minimizing fiscal, environmental, neighborhood, and scenic impacts.

1. A series of overlay maps should be developed to indicate locations of important areas of critical environmental concern and areas of preferred development locations.
2. Dalton's Subdivision Controls should be modified so that developers would be required to identify important natural resources in the preliminary and definitive application processes and prepare fiscal and environmental development impact reports.
3. Dalton's Zoning bylaws should be amended to better encourage development practices that create and preserve open space and are costs effective.
4. Investigate ways that would permit the town to buy or protect land from future development.

X. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Public Investment and Planning

The general purpose of this Plan is to help the Town of Dalton manage growth and change in order to comprehensively minimize negative fiscal, environmental, social and other impacts, while guiding allowed development and redevelopment to meet the needs of the community, and when possible the region. This plan has explored some of the linkages between different aspects of the community and how certain actions can have predictable direct and indirect affects on the community. In summary, this plan has identified the need to manage residential growth so that it grows in a fiscally sound manner so that resident's services are not over-burdened. It was also determined that due to the scarcity of developable land, the Town should consider business development tactics to promote Dalton as a place to do business thereby reduces the continued need to rely on the residential tax base to support town services.

All implementation strategies of this plan are based on the community vision, goals and objectives identified in the master plan sections. These goals and objectives (see Appendix D) were the result of the community survey (see Appendix E), public forum (see Appendix F) and numerous public meetings over the last two years. The recommended strategy is to encourage sustainable growth and development in keeping with community desires to help maintain and promote the overall high quality of life, while diversifying the tax base.

The overarching principles of the implementation plan consist of the following items: (1) historic, natural and resource protection; (2) business development; (3) managed growth and fiscal responsibility; and, (4) zoning and other regulatory items.

Participation in implementation is a powerful way for stakeholders to contribute to the future quality of life in Dalton. In addition, the Town government has an active role to play in the implementation of this Plan. Not only will it be the responsibility of the Town to garner continued support for the implementation of this plan it also is the responsibility of the Town Manager to monitor the progress of the implementation strategies by the many participants of this Plan and the Business Development Plan.

Lastly, the Master Plan will need to be updated to remain a viable document. The soonest logical time to review and prepare modest updates to the Plan will be within 5 years after approval. In addition, subsequent plans such as a Capital Outlay Plan or an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan may need to follow this Plan

B. Priority Action Strategies

This Master Plan sets out three categories for implementation. This section, the Priority Action Strategies, plays the most important role since these are the items identified by this and the MIG process as being essential to the success of the town in the immediate future. These action items should be acted upon within the next two years or less.

The action strategies listed in Exhibit 22 are listed in order for how they were ranked and prioritized by the Master Plan Steering Committee. More specific detail can be found in the plan sections identified.

Exhibit 22: Priority Action Strategies

Plan Section	Suggested Strategy	Suggested Leadership
<i>Section IV</i>	Create a Capital Outlay Plan that informs town expenditures out to at least FY2007 (see sample Capital Improvement Plan in Appendix G).	Select Board, Town Manager, Finance Committee, and department heads.
<i>Section V and Section VI</i>	Amend zoning bylaws to bring into compliance with state code and draft new zoning to improve the subdivision control, address the need for greater open space, flexible zoning requirements, cluster zoning and any other issues as they may arise.	Planning Board and Conservation Commission
<i>Section VII</i>	Create, in town hall, an economic development commission for implementing the action items in the Business Development Plan.	Town Manager and Select Board
<i>Section VII</i>	Inventory and promote existing business locations, opportunities and the town in general as place for doing business.	Town Manager & Town's Economic Development Commission
<i>Section VII</i>	Participate in the creation of a Community Development Corporation or the like for continued business development and promotion.	Select Board, Town Manager & Town's Economic Development Commission
<i>Sections V, VI, VII, and VIII</i>	Participate in the state's Community Development Plan under EO418 in order to begin Secondary Priority Action items.	Select Board, Town Manager, and Planning Board

C. Secondary Priority Strategies

The second list of action strategies should be conducted from 2 to 6 years. These items are not listed in priority order however, all combined they play a significant role in the growth management needs of the town. These items will require longer terms for development and adoption. It should be the responsibility of the Select Board, Town Manager and Planning Board to ensure that these items are being conducted and moving forward.

Exhibit 23: Secondary Action Strategies

Plan Section	Suggested Strategy	Suggested Leadership
<i>Section III</i>	Investigate the creation of an Overlay District along the commercial corridor on Main Street centering on the need to protect historic resources and promote economic development.	Planning Board and Historic Commission
<i>Section IV</i>	Investigate joint purchasing or other cross-departmental or agency coordination to increase efficiency and cost effectiveness.	Town Manager
<i>Section IV</i>	Develop a Request for Bids to secure an engineer to investigate the condition and capacity of the town's sewer infrastructure.	Select Board and Town Manager
<i>Section V</i>	Update Open Space Plan in order to access grant funds.	Planning Board
<i>Section VI</i>	Update zoning regulations that address affordability and clarify the desired residential development type including cluster zoning, accessory apartments, village/mixed use, phased growth and improved subdivision controls.	Planning Board
<i>Section VII</i>	Update zoning to include commercial corridor performance standards for new development or reuse.	Planning Board
<i>Section VIII</i>	Initiate and/or complete those infrastructure improvements outlined in this plan.	Department of Public Works and Town Manager
<i>Section VIII</i>	Actively participate in region transit and bicycle planning studies in order to improve local amenities.	Town Manager

D. On-going Strategies

Finally, the last portions of implementation process are those items that are identified as on-going or those that should be conducted 6 or more years. These items include all efforts to balance the community's land use and fiscal condition. Continued evaluation of action strategies should occur and additional strategies should be considered if they improve on those identified in this Plan. Public funds should be sought to aid in the continued implementation of this Plan.

Plan Section	Suggested Strategy	Suggested Leadership
<i>Section IX</i>	Prioritize needs and continually update and clarify zoning and other regulations to encourage greater open space protection, protect natural and historic resources, and limit negative fiscal conditions. Consider such items as cluster zoning, flexible zoning, performance standards, wetland bylaws, and common ownership.	Planning Board
<i>Section IX</i>	Annually benchmark the progress on all efforts to implement the strategies of this Plan.	Town Manager

Oversight and updating of the Plan and the corresponding activities should be the responsibility of the Select Board, Town Manager, and to some extent the Planning Board. BRPC is committed to providing continued support to the town of Dalton. Through the Community Liaison program, BRPC will assist the town in reviewing and/or implementing the priority, secondary and on-going strategies.

XI. APPENDICES

Appendix A: At A Glance Report

Appendix B: Socioeconomic Comparison Report

Appendix C: Business Development Plan Action Strategies

Appendix D: Goals and Objectives

Appendix E: Survey Results

Appendix F: Forum Information

Appendix G: Capital Improvement Plan Information