



TOWN OF HUBBARDSTON

MASTER PLAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



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Introduction: Over time most communities grow whether through an increase in population, housing, and/or economic development activity. Managing growth has always been a challenge for local governments. Hubbardston planners recognize the need for an updated community Master Plan in order to help local officials act in concert on a common agenda for the long-range good of the Town. Without planning and structure, the chances of optimizing the best and highest value of human, natural and capital resources is diminished.

This Economic Development Element consists of an inventory and analysis of economic data, town goals and objectives, and recommendations to identify policies and strategies for the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities. This economic development element was funded through the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's (MRPC) District Local Technical Assistance Program. The DLTA program was established by Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006, which enables staff of Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) such as MRPC to provide technical assistance to communities for projects meeting certain criteria determined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MRPC is a unit of regional government created under the General Laws (MGL Chapter 40B, Sections 1-8). Regional planning commissions (agencies) provide planning advisory services and technical assistance to its 22 -member communities.

Section 1: Assessment Of Hubbardston's Current Economic Base

Hubbardston's Labor Force

As shown in Table ED1 that follows the number of employed Hubbardston residents fluctuated very slightly overall between the year 2005 (2,437 persons employed) and the year 2017 (2,498 persons employed). Hubbardston's unemployment rate saw a big jump in unemployment between 2008 (5.5%) and 2009 (8.1%). The unemployment rate was at its highest in 2010 (8.3%) and now rests at 3.3%, lower than it was previous to the great recession.

Of course, Hubbardston's unemployment rate is closely tied to that of the state and the nation as a whole, both of which saw similar increases in unemployment during the economic recession. There has been improvement in the national and state unemployment rates and this is expected to hold steady.

Table ED1
Hubbardston Labor Force
Employment Numbers and Unemployment Rate over Time
versus the State Unemployment Rate

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate	State Unemployment Rate
2017	2,584	2,498	86	3.3%	3.7%
2016	2,493	2,411	82	3.3%	3.7%
2015	2,503	2,393	110	4.4%	4.9%
2014	2,485	2,351	134	5.4%	5.8%
2013	2,446	2,284	162	6.6%	6.7%
2012	2,424	2,272	152	6.3%	6.7%
2011	2,426	2,243	183	7.5%	7.3%
2010	2,441	2,223	218	8.9%	8.3%
2009	2,494	2,275	219	8.8%	8.1%
2008	2,454	2,315	139	5.7%	5.5%
2007	2,496	2,270	126	5.0%	4.6%
2006	2,482	2,355	127	5.1%	4.9%
2005	2,437	2,317	120	4.9%	4.8%

Source: MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Measures of Wealth

There are measures of wealth that reflect the health of the local economy by describing the incomes of local residents: per capita, median household and median family incomes, as well as the percent of people for whom poverty status was determined. Per capita income is equal to the total incomes generated by a population divided by the number of persons in that area. Communities with higher number of persons per household or smaller household incomes would likely have smaller per capita income figures. As depicted in Table ED2 on the next page, the per capita income for the State of Massachusetts was \$36,441, while that of Hubbardston was \$32,857, below the State average. This could be explained in part by the size of households in Hubbardston (2.8) which is more than the state (2.48). Hubbardston's per capita income was also lower than that of Ashburnham, Princeton, and Westminster but higher than Barre, Oakham, Phillipston and Templeton.

Table ED2
Measures of Wealth
Hubbardston and Neighboring Communities

Community	Per Capita	Median Household	Median Family	Below Poverty
Hubbardston	\$32,857	\$81,757	\$94,485	5.8%
Ashburnham	\$37,469	\$87,615	\$106,352	7.4%
Barre	\$29,877	\$67,536	\$87,500	5.0%
Oakham	\$31,977	\$80,313	\$85,682	5.7%
Phillipston	\$29,592	\$78,523	\$81,198	4.0%
Princeton	\$48,739	\$114,167	\$127,043	7.5%
Templeton	\$28,562	\$65,194	\$82,813	10.4%
Westminster	\$36,956	\$88,902	\$98,008	3.4%
Massachusetts	\$36,441	\$68,563	\$87,085	11.6%

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates

Another measure of wealth in a community is its median income, which is based on the type of household. In Table ED2, family incomes are differentiated from other household incomes. For example, a single student living alone is considered a household but not a family. According to the American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates, Hubbardston's median household income is less than that of Ashburnham, Princeton, and Westminster but more than Barre, Oakham, Phillipston, Templeton, and the state. Hubbardston's median family income is also less than Ashburnham and Westminster but more than Templeton, Phillipston, and the state. Also, on the positive side, there is relatively less poverty in Hubbardston; the percentage of individuals living below poverty in Hubbardston (5.8%) is lower than Ashburnham (7.4%), Princeton, and substantially lower than Templeton (10.4%) and the state (11.6%).

The Number and Types of Jobs in Hubbardston

The Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is the State entity in charge of tracking the changes taking place in the various sectors of the State's economy at both the state and local levels. Employment and Wage data are derived from reports filed by all employers subject to unemployment compensation laws, both state and federal. Table ED3 on the next page presents the changes that took place in Hubbardston's local economy from 2010 to 2016. The number of establishments decreased just slightly during this seven-year period by 1 (or - 1.4%).

While total wages held steady, the average weekly wage increased by 20.8% during the period from 2010-2016. In contrast, the Consumer Price Index for the nation increased by about 9% during the period, indicating that wages in Hubbardston increased faster than inflation. As a result, employed consumers might have a little more disposable income to spend locally and spread more dollars throughout the economy.

Table ED3
Employment and Wages in Hubbardston

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change	
Establishments	69	75	68	69	70	67	68	-1	-1.4%
Total Wages (Million \$)	\$14	\$15	\$15	\$14	\$13	\$13	\$14	0	0.0%
Average Employment	478	500	492	454	379	360	387	-91	-19.0%
Average Weekly Wage	\$587	\$588	\$597	\$597	\$677	\$705	\$709	122	20.8%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance

Table ED4 provides information on the types of jobs found in Hubbardston. The largest number of jobs is in the Health Care and Social Assistance category, with 89 jobs in Hubbardston. This is followed by Construction (48 jobs), Manufacturing (44 jobs), Professional and Technical Services (19 jobs), and Retail Trade (16 jobs). Professional and Technical Services jobs had the highest average weekly wage (\$810) and retail trade had the lowest (\$423).

Table ED4
2016 Average Employment and Wages by Industry

Industry	Establishments	Total Wages	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage
Total, All Industries	68	\$14,262,887	387	\$709
Construction	14	\$1,967,887	48	\$788
Manufacturing	3	\$1,635,483	44	\$715
Retail Trade	5	\$351,757	16	\$423
Prof. and Tech. Services	6	\$800,630	19	\$810
Health Care, Social Assistance	18	\$2,596,612	89	\$561

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance

Table ED5 that follows compares the number of jobs (average employment) in neighboring towns. The Table also provides 2016 employment and wages to compare Hubbardston with neighboring communities.

Table ED5 also illustrates that Hubbardston has more establishments, total wages, average employment, and average weekly wage than Oakham and Phillipston with less than Westminster, Ashburnham, and Templeton.

Table ED5
Employment and Wages
Year 2016 Comparison

	Hubbardston	Ashburnham	Barre	Oakham	Phillipston	Princeton	Templeton	Westminster
Establishments	68	131	133	45	28	86	146	216
Total Wages (Million \$)	\$14	\$48	\$45	\$7	\$5	\$25	\$64	\$134
Average Employment	387	1,096	1,150	193	246	772	1,380	2,584
Average Weekly Wage	\$709	\$853	\$765	\$706	\$401	\$638	\$893	\$1,004

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance

Education

As portrayed in Table ED6 below, residents with a high school diploma but no higher education, represent the largest segment of the Hubbardston population in terms of educational attainment (32.4%). This is higher than the neighboring communities of Ashburnham (26.0%), Oakham, Princeton, and Westminster (19.7%), and lower than Barre (40.4%), Templeton (39.2%) and Phillipston (39.4%). However, it is significantly higher than the state percentage of 25.4%. The second largest group (24.0%) has some college education, followed by residents with a bachelor's degree (16.0%).

The state percentages reveal how the population in Hubbardston compares to the overall state population in terms of educational attainment. Overall, the state data contains higher numbers in the groups at both the upper and lower echelon of the educational attainment spectrum than the Hubbardston data since more than 10.2% of the state's population is reported to have less than a high school education – more than the rate of Hubbardston (5.7%) and the state has a considerable higher percentage of those with a Graduate/Professional Degree (17.7%) than Hubbardston (11.7%).

Table ED6
Educational Attainment
Population 25 Years and Over

Amount of School	Hubbardston	Ashburnham	Barre	Oakham	Phillipston	Princeton	Templeton	Westminster	State
No High School Diploma	5.7%	3.9%	4.8%	6.9%	5.6%	0.8%	9.6%	6.2%	10.2%
High School Diploma	32.4%	26.0%	40.4%	26.7%	39.4%	17.6%	39.2%	19.7%	25.4%
Some College, No Degree	24.0%	16.0%	19.0%	18.5%	21.9%	10.9%	23.3%	18.5%	16.2%
Associate's Degree	10.1%	12.8%	11.3%	10.5%	12.4%	9.7%	12.2%	12.9%	7.7%
Bachelor's Degree	16.0%	29.2%	15.1%	22.2%	13.6%	31.4%	9.1%	27.9%	22.8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	11.7%	12.1%	9.5%	15.3%	7.1%	29.6%	6.4%	14.8%	17.7%

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 Estimates

There are numerous public-school districts within the region educating young persons from pre-kindergarten through high school and private schools educating residents at approximately the same age levels. Montachusett Technical Vocational High School is located in Fitchburg offering trade school curriculum at the high school level. Located in Gardner, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) offers two-year programs while Fitchburg State University offers four-year programs. In addition, the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Inc. promotes the economic and social welfare of the region through education, employment and training programs that increase employability of young people and adults.

Economic Sector Contribution to Local Tax Base

In fiscal year 2017, Hubbardston levied a total of \$6,787,098 in taxes, based on a local tax rate of \$15.23 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Hubbardston homeowners accounted for roughly 94.27% of the total tax base while the business and industries accounted for 3.42%. The remainder (2.31%) was derived from taxes on personal property. It should be noted that Hubbardston's average FY17 single family tax is just \$3,751, lower than just about 70% of all Massachusetts communities (Hubbardston was ranked 245 lowest out of 351 Massachusetts communities).

The next two tables look at how Hubbardston compares to some of its neighbors in terms of commercial and industrial tax base.

Table ED7
Commercial Tax Base Comparison

Community	FY2017 Tax Rate	Commercial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% Total Tax Levy
Hubbardston	\$15.23	\$148,944	\$9,779,618	2.19%
Ashburnham	\$22.97	\$311,372	\$13,555,600	2.36%
Barre	\$18.70	\$483,599	\$25,860,915	6.28%
Oakham	\$14.25	\$73,285	\$5,142,810	2.65%
Phillipston	\$16.68	\$106,525	\$6,386,403	3.43%
Princeton	\$17.78	\$101,784	\$5,724,646	1.28%
Templeton	\$16.12	\$574,644	\$35,647,890	5.96%
Westminster	\$18.19	\$1,081,441	\$59,452,504	6.51%

Source: Department of Revenue

The previous table indicates that Hubbardston's commercial sector raises a higher amount of tax dollars when compared to Oakham, Princeton, and Phillipston, but less than Ashburnham, Barre, Templeton, and Westminster. Hubbardston's Assessed Valuation is higher than the nearby communities of Oakham, Phillipston, and Princeton. Hubbardston has a larger percent (2.19%) of commercial taxes contributing the overall percentage of tax levy than Princeton (1.28%) and is similar to Ashburnham (2.36%), Oakham (2.65%), and Phillipston (3.43%), and less than Barre (6.28%), Templeton (5.96%) and Westminster (6.51%).

Table ED8
Industrial Tax Base Comparison

Community	FY2017 Tax Rate	Industrial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	%of Total Tax Levy
Hubbardston	\$15.23	\$83,820	\$5,503,600	1.23%
Ashburnham	\$22.97	\$98,571	\$4,291,300	0.75%
Barre	\$18.70	\$169,186	\$9,047,400	2.20%
Oakham	\$14.25	\$11,438	\$802,700	0.41%
Phillipston	\$16.68	\$4,922	\$295,100	0.16%
Princeton	\$17.78	\$26,764	\$1,505,300	0.34%
Templeton	\$16.12	\$299,379	\$18,571,900	3.11%
Westminster	\$18.19	\$800,938	\$44,031,800	4.82%

Source: Department of Revenue

The table above indicates that Hubbardston raises more tax dollars from its industrial sector than the neighboring towns of Ashburnham, Oakham, Phillipston, and Princeton but less than

Barre and Templeton. Hubbardston's combined commercial and industrial annual tax levy makes up about 3.42% of the overall tax base, which could be considered about average for a rural community such as Hubbardston.

Table ED9
Hubbardston's Tax Levy 2013-2016 (with rate)

Fiscal Year	Tax Rate	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property	Total
2013	\$13.64	\$5,314,758	\$203,284	\$75,975	\$100,402	\$5,694,419
2014	\$14.52	\$5,558,948	\$135,622	\$73,002	\$100,046	\$5,867,618
2015	\$14.92	\$5,747,712	\$137,564	\$78,314	\$159,953	\$6,123,543
2016	\$15.90	\$5,876,411	\$152,770	\$81,974	\$178,298	\$6,289,453
2017	\$15.23	\$6,398,282	\$148,944	\$83,820	\$156,052	\$6,787,098

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

The previous table highlights the change in tax rate and change in total levied taxes for Hubbardston from 2013-2017. Since 2013, Hubbardston's total tax levy has increased each year. From 2013- 2017 the tax rate increased from \$13.64 to \$15.23, while the Town was able to generate increases in overall levied taxes. Currently, Hubbardston's tax rate is \$15.23, a slight decrease from the 2016 tax rate of \$15.90.

Home Occupations and Accessory Retail Uses

It is a trend of our modern-day economy that more people are establishing home businesses and/or working from their homes. Increased numbers of people are employed by a company and yet spend a good deal of their workweek working from home or "telecommuting." The Internet and advances in home computers have created conditions where people can be quite productive working out of their homes. In fact, according to the 2015 American Community Survey about 4.5% of Hubbardston residents worked at home. There are no definitive rules or regulations that govern telecommuting and the practice is still evolving. Hubbardston may see an increase in the number of people working from their homes, whether they are starting home businesses or simply telecommuting.

Section 2: Goal, Objectives, and Recommendations

Below is a listing of a goal, objectives and recommendations to enhance economic development in the Town of Hubbardston in a variety of ways. However, it should be noted that Hubbardston is a rural community lacking public water/sewer and without highway access. Therefore, objectives and recommendations are based on the premise that it is unlikely for major commercial/industrial development to locate within the community into the foreseeable future.

Goal:

- Promote economic development that is consistent with the Town's rural character.

Objectives:

- Maintain the Hubbardston Economic Development Committee and facilitate the Town's existing permitting process.
- Support existing business operations – large and small – to make certain that local businesses can evolve and continue to provide jobs and revenue to the town in future years.
- Support the local economy and the sustainability of existing businesses and attract new ones that fit in with the community while protecting environmental values.
- Promote smart growth and sustainability by strategically planning to improve infrastructure in appropriate areas.
- Promote Hubbardston's many resources that may be of interests to visitors.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the Economic Development Committee:

An Economic Development Committee was established in Hubbardston with seven members. The mission of the Committee is to "improve the community's quality of life through an expanded local business base that respects and contributes to Hubbardston's community character and improves the economic well-being of all its residents". This Committee should continue to meet on a regular basis.

The Economic Development Committee could also continue to ensure that current economic development information is listed on the Town's website. This is the easiest and least costly

way to market the community. Most business owners who are searching for information about Hubbardston will look here first. Because it represents the community, and “you only get one first impression,” it should be of high quality.

It should also be noted that the Economic Development Committee does not have an operating budget and this could limit its ability to be an effective advocate on the Town’s behalf as this Committee moves forward and begins to play a larger role in the town’s economics. At some point in time, the EDC could consider requesting an annual needs-based budget from the Town to cover the cost of and mailings, outreach, advertising, and training that could include workshops such as Citizens Planner Training Collaborative. However, funding for large-scale initiatives would still need to be funded through Town Meeting funding requests.

Responsible Entity: Economic Development Committee.

2. Prepare and Distribute a Promotional Brochure:

The Town could proactively promote itself to the outside world by preparing a brochure (both paper and web-based) that highlights Hubbardston’s many resources that may be of interests to visitors. The Economic Development Committee could work on such a brochure that could contain content on town and civic events, recreation resources, historic resources, dining, lodging, health and wellness, arts and crafts, and agriculture. There could be a map showing where these places are located in town and a brief description of each resource.

Recreation, history, arts, and culture should be considered economic development activities. Hubbardston has abundant, attractive open space resources which includes trails, woodlands and conservation lands generating an opportunity for multi-season uses, including hiking, cross-country skiing, etc. with potential to draw visitors to Hubbardston from as far away as Nashua, Boston and Worcester.

Responsible Entity: Economic Development Committee.

3. Sponsor an Annual Festival:

The Town of Hubbardston does and should continue to have frequent special events and fundraisers throughout the year to help promote local businesses, organizations and community. The Town could also investigate what it would take to sponsor an annual festival that would attract tourists and regional residents. Consider the success that some of the other regional festivals have had, such as the Red Apple Festival in Phillipston, the Oktoberfest in Gardner, the fall music festival at Wachusett Mountain or the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival held in Orange. Hubbardston has some recent experience holding successful public events, such as the Town’s 250th Celebration. Items to consider when planning such an event would include: when to hold it, how to market it, what events to host (concert on the Town Common, parade as some examples), what would be needed for resources (materials, supplies, etc.), what would be required for public safety, the overall cost of the event, and how to secure the funding necessary to host it. It needs to be understood that such events must be carefully

planned and marketed and will undoubtedly take a significant amount of time to come to fruition. However, having a successful first event could create momentum for subsequent events.

Responsible Entity: Economic Development Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, and public safety officials.

4. Support Local Business:

The town should work hard to support existing business operations – large and small – to make certain that local businesses can evolve and continue to provide jobs and revenue to the town in future years. A good starting point would be for the town to develop a survey instrument that can be used to solicit information from existing businesses as to their level of satisfaction with Hubbardston as the location for their operations. Such a survey - whether a mailed document, web-based form, phone call, or a simple and informal personal visit to a business site - can be used to determine future business needs in the community and help local officials to plan ahead for necessary changes or improvements.

The town could also host a meeting of business owners in town to hear from Hubbardston business owners and/or representatives of businesses. The meeting could focus on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges that Hubbardston's businesses face. The meeting could also focus on how the town can work with its local businesses to identify municipal gaps in service. Participants should be directly involved in the discussion to identify key issues for the Town to address.

Hubbardston should also work to boost consumer demand and support for local businesses by instituting "buy local" initiatives. The type of program would depend on the capacity of the Town or other implementing organization but could include "made in Hubbardston" stickers for local goods, and a "stay local" website. A listing of all businesses located in Hubbardston could also be made available on the town's website to let residents and businesses alike know what the community has to offer.

While some town residents do not need convincing that supporting local agriculture is important, others may not be as aware of the issue or may not know what they can do about it. The Town should identify and develop ways for residents to support local agricultural businesses. One possibility could include establishing connections between farms and institutional partners such as schools to strengthen and stabilize agriculture in Hubbardston. In addition, educational programming in local schools around the importance of local/regional farming and the connection between local food production and ecological and personal health would be an important contribution to support and advocate for local farming, both in Hubbardston and beyond.

The town could also research and consider applying for any grants that may provide opportunity to support local business such as the USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program. Grant funds under this program can be used for a variety of purposes including rural business incubators or even a capitalization of revolving loan funds, including funds that will make loans for business start-ups and working capital. Another resource is the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation (NCMDC). The NCMDC works in partnership with local banks, credit unions, chambers of commerce and area nonprofits to support emerging microenterprises, small businesses, and community projects with loans and business assistance. Click on the following link for more information. <http://northcentralmass.com/lending/#toggle-id-5>

Responsible Entity: Economic Development Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Planning Board

5. Work to Facilitate the Existing Permitting Process:

The Town could work to facilitate its existing permitting process by developing a comprehensive development permitting guidebook to assist all customers with projects of any type and scale or that need to obtain any permit and develop separate handouts for more substantive processes that require additional detail or guidance. The Town could also consider the identification of a development liaison in Town Offices to walk customers through the process and serve as a point of contact for questions and progress.

Some communities have even formed Pre-Application Review Committees to review pre-applications during regular business hours. The purpose of a preliminary consultation meeting is to help applicants and potential applicants through the development review and permit process by identifying regulations that apply to the project, identifying site design issues that are of concern and discussion of potential solutions, identifying permits that will be required and the process for obtaining them, clarifying procedures, and establishing relationships early in the process.

Responsible Entity: Economic Development Committee could spearhead this project and work with other boards/departments/commissions involved in the permitting process.

6. Aggressively seek funding for road improvements.

Road conditions are directly related to the promotion of economic development in a community and should be part of an integrated capital improvement plan. Town officials should seek out federal and state funds and participate in the transportation planning process at MRPC. (The Hubbardston Board of Selectmen's appointment to the Joint Transportation Committee is currently vacant.) Further, they should ensure that key road projects are listed on

the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and actively press for regular funding of local projects.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen and the Department of Public Works.

7. Identify New Areas for Economic Development Opportunities:

It should be noted that Hubbardston does not have the infrastructure capacity in terms of proximity to major transportation routes, with no sewer/water infrastructure or highway access to attract large scale commercial/industry and therefore the town should focus on smaller scale business that fit in with the small-town character of Hubbardston.

The identification of any new and appropriate areas may be best accomplished through a charrette. A charrette is basically a design focused public meeting where boards, committees, departments and the public get together to brainstorm ideas. Those in attendance are divided into small groups to develop ideas and proposal. The groups will then present their schemes to the larger group for discussion. Ultimately the goal is to have at a minimum two possible alternatives for Hubbardston's planners to explore more in depth prior to making any final proposal or recommendation. By holding a charrette all the stakeholders will have the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns, public officials will have the opportunity to respond and the possibilities of reaching a consensus are increased.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Planning Board and Economic Development Committee.