
APPENDIX C – PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

APPENDIX C – PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The following list of potential Preservation Partners and Stakeholders was prepared to identify organizations with interests in and/or influences upon historic preservation and historic resources in Webster. The list was also used to guide outreach during preparation of the Historic Preservation Plan. Through outreach and discussion, the planning team sought to coordinate with entities that have interest in Webster's historic properties and identify mutually supportive roles that the entities might play in the Preservation Plan's development and implementation.

This list of Preservation Partners and Stakeholders has been divided into various groupings, including statewide partners; regional partners; Town governmental departments; Town boards, commissions, and committees; and non-profit and other types of local entities. Brief descriptions have been prepared for each entity noting how their work may influence or relate to historic resources. Information describing the partners and stakeholders has been drawn from their websites, published reports, and other publicly available sources.

STATEWIDE PARTNERS

Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is the designated State Historic Preservation Office in Massachusetts, as required by the National Historic Preservation Act, a governmental entity responsible for managing the Commonwealth's historic preservation program in partnership with the National Park Service at the federal level. Among its many programs, the MHC maintains a Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund, which is a major source of preservation and rehabilitation funding for public facilities of historical significance.

This Historic Preservation Plan for Webster was funded in part through a grant from MHC and is being prepared in partnership with MHC staff. See Chapter 1, *Introduction to Historic Preservation Planning* and Appendix A, *National and State Historic Preservation Programs*, for additional information on MHC's organization, responsibilities, and programs.

Preservation Massachusetts

Preservation Massachusetts is a statewide non-profit historic preservation organization dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth's historic and cultural heritage. Preservation Massachusetts is an advocacy and educational organization working with individuals, organizations, and businesses to revitalize their communities, historic buildings, and landscapes through historic preservation. Among its initiatives most important to communities is its Circuit Rider program through which Preservation Massachusetts provides technical assistance to municipalities.

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife)

MassWildlife is responsible for the conservation of freshwater fish and wildlife in the Commonwealth, including endangered plants and animals. MassWildlife restores, protects, and manages land for wildlife to thrive and for people to enjoy, managing state-owned wildlife landscape areas throughout the Commonwealth. In Webster, MassWildlife manages the Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area in the Douglas Woods, the northeast portion of the Town with 1,062 acres of conserved land featuring scrub oak, mountain laurel, and lowbush blueberry swamp habitats. The Mine Brook/Douglas Woods landscape is a key conservation resource in Webster.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

The Department of Conservation and Recreation is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts state parks agency and is steward of one of the largest state parks systems in the country. Its 450,000 acres is made up of forests, parks, greenways, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds. Near Webster, DCR manages the Douglas State Forest, which borders the Town to the east and is contiguous with the Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area in Webster. DCR is committed to its mission of identifying and preserving historic resources within the landscapes under its management.

Massachusetts Cultural Council

The Massachusetts Cultural Council is a state agency promoting excellence, inclusion, education, and diversity in the arts, humanities, and sciences fostering a rich cultural life for Massachusetts residents and contributing to the vitality of communities and the economy. The Cultural Council receives an annual appropriation from the state legislature and funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, and others. In turn, the Massachusetts Cultural Council makes thousands of grants directly to non-profit cultural organizations, schools, communities, and individual artists.

Webster participates in the Massachusetts Cultural Council's *Local Cultural Council Program* through which the Town receives an annual grant, which it in turn distributes to local organizations through the Webster Cultural Council, discussed further below under Boards, Commissions, and Committees. The Massachusetts Cultural Council's *Cultural District Program* is particularly relevant to many heritage tourism communities, providing educational and interpretive programs to residents and the general public. The Council also manages a *Cultural Facilities Fund* that might be applicable to projects such as the proposed Samuel Slater Performing Arts Center.

Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism

The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) is the Commonwealth's destination marketing organization and promotes Massachusetts as a year-round leisure and business travel destination. MOTT manages the state's official visitor website, Visit Massachusetts, publishes materials promoting areas of the state, and provides visitor information and support to regional and local visitor bureaus. Publications include the state travel guide and special guides based on theme and location.

Community Preservation Coalition

The Community Preservation Coalition is an alliance of open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation organizations working with municipalities to help them understand, adopt, and implement the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act. The Coalition was formed in the 1990s with the goal of achieving passage of the Community Preservation Act. With leadership and help from a diverse Steering Committee, the Coalition works to preserve Massachusetts communities' unique character by advocating for and supporting the Community Preservation Act, advancing smart growth and sustainable development for communities across the Commonwealth. The Coalition is a statewide reference to local communities for guidelines and use of the Community Preservation Act.

Webster has not yet adopted the Community Preservation Act but is being encouraged to do so through this Historic Preservation Plan and in coordination with other local open space, recreation, and affordable housing partners.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) is a regional planning entity serving the Central Massachusetts Planning Region, which includes Webster. Founded by the Massachusetts legislature in 1963 as one of 13 regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth, the CMRPC provides a variety of planning services to its 40 municipalities. CMRPC's planning programs include Transportation, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Regional Collaboration and Community Planning.

CMRPC's Regional Collaboration and Community Planning team works with partners to develop and implement a regional approach to planning and economic development. The CMRPC provides technical planning assistance to each of the 40 municipalities through community master plans, open space and recreation plans, economic development plans, village strategic plans, housing production plans, and other planning documents. The CMRPC has assisted Webster with preparation of numerous planning strategies and documents over the years.

Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organizations

The Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization (SWC EDO) is an entity lead by the CMRPC and made up of board members from communities throughout the Southern Worcester County region. The SWC EDO

and CMRPC further regional economic development activities through coordination of longer-term planning activities, collaboration and partnerships, and the implementation of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CED), prepared by the CMRPC under the guidance of the SWC EDO and with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

The CED provides the foundation for Webster's economic development strategy and includes a focus on its historic assets.

Discover Central Massachusetts

Discover Central Massachusetts is the region's convention and visitors bureau and is based in Worcester. Formed in 2015, Discover Central Massachusetts represents 35 cities and towns, has a staff of five, and is governed by a 28-member Board of Directors comprised of professionals from the tourism and hospitality industry. The bureau undertakes activities and makes promotional investments supporting visitation and increased tourism revenue within the region.

Discover Central Massachusetts publishes a travel guide for Central Massachusetts funded by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. The bureau offers its own website promoting the region, in which Webster is mentioned along with Auburn, Oxford, and Dudley as part of the 395 Corridor—recognized for their small-town charm. Webster Lake, Samuel Slater Experience, Indian Ranch, Douglas State Forest, and the Blackstone River Valley are among the attractions listed.

The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor

The Last Green Valley is the popular name given to the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor which was designated by Congress in 1994 and reauthorized in 2009. It is also the name of the non-profit organization (TLGV) that manages the National Heritage Corridor.

The Last Green Valley receives funding from federal, state, and local governments and a variety of private sector partners to implement its preservation, conservation, and outreach programs. The Last Green Valley is significant for its relatively undeveloped character amid the sprawling coastal metropolitan Boston-to-Washington corridor—the most urbanized region in the nation. The corridor encompasses 35 towns within the Quinebaug and Shetucket River watersheds in Connecticut and Massachusetts, including Webster. The French River is a tributary of the Quinebaug River.

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was designated by Congress to serve the 25 communities along the Blackstone River extending from Worcester to Providence, RI. Managed by the non-profit Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc. the National Heritage Corridor receives federal and other funding to collaborate with local partners in economic development and tourism, education and interpretation, resource conservation, and community planning.

Though not located within the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Webster is historically significant for its founding and development by Samuel Slater and can collaborate with Blackstone in his interpretation.

Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park

Located in Pawtucket, RI within the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park preserves and interprets the Old Slater Mill founded by Samuel Slater in 1790. Inspired by the success of the Slater Mill, entrepreneurs built new mills and mill villages throughout the Blackstone River region and New England. A National Historic Landmark, the historic Old Slater Mill provides programming and interpretation about Samuel Slater, mill villages in New England, and stories of the people associated with them.

Webster's close association with Samuel Slater, the Slater family, and mill development through the 19th century provides the basis for support and collaboration with the National Historical Park.

Federal and State Recognized American Indian Tribes

The federal government officially recognizes the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), and the Narragansett Indian Tribe who have monitored and investigated indigenous historic and cultural resources in eastern and central Massachusetts to advocate for their protection and preservation. Federally recognized tribes designate Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to consult on a government-to-government footing with federal agencies under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Nipmuc Nation was historically predominant in central Massachusetts. Though not federally recognized, the Nipmuc Nation is a recognized tribe by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and consults with the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

TOWN OF WEBSTER – DEPARTMENTS

Municipal policy in Webster is implemented and managed by an array of Town departments under the direction of the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator and in support of other Town boards, commissions, and committees. A number of Town departments or offices are directly involved in support of municipal policy on historic preservation issues.

Town Administrator

The Town Administrator is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and is responsible for the management of all Town departments and staff. The Town Administrator is responsible for overseeing all budgetary, financial, and personnel administration activities of the Town. This includes preparing the annual budget, appointing all staff and setting compensation, formulating and implementing personnel policies, and negotiating all contracts. The Town Administrator is responsible for the physical maintenance of all Town-owned properties, including historic properties.

Administrative staff in the Town Administrator's office serve as liaison between the public and the Board of Selectmen, handle all phone calls, visitors, and correspondence directed to the office, and maintain all records of Board meetings. The office staff prepares the warrants for all Annual and Special Town Meetings, election notices for all elections, and coordinates the Town's Annual Report.

Town Clerk

State law provides that the Town Clerk is the official keeper of the Town Seal and serves as custodian of Town records and other official documents filed in the Town Clerk's Office. The Town Clerk is responsible for the maintenance, preservation, and disposition of Town records in the Town Clerk's custody including historic archives.

Town Assessor

The Town Assessor is responsible for determining the value of every property in Webster and maintains a complete listing of current property assessments for property tax and other purposes. Property Record Cards listing the assessment of each property may be accessed online.

Planning, Conservation, and Economic Development

The Webster Department of Planning, Conservation, and Economic Development undertakes community-based planning that guides the future of the Town. It provides technical planning guidance and assistance to public and private entities in the areas of land use planning, zoning, economic development, as well as public outreach and engagement.

The Department implements projects and programs designed to improve the economy, environment, and physical infrastructure of the Town. It is committed to providing dependable, cost effective, high-quality customer service while assisting the public in achieving their land use goals without compromising the ordinances of the Town of Webster. The Department provides staff support to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Historical Commission. It reviews site plans for proposed land development and subdivision and provides guidance and support in Planning Board reviews. The Department is staffed by the Town Planner with administrative assistance.

Community Development / Webster Redevelopment Authority

Webster's Office of Community Development undertakes infrastructure improvements and redevelopment projects focused on downtown revitalization and the rehabilitation of affordable housing in targeted areas. It is particularly important as the lead entity revitalizing Webster's historic downtown Main Street core over the past two decades. The Office manages the Town's Community Development Block Grant and other federal and state redevelopment grant programs. The Office has a staff of two and is overseen by a Redevelopment Authority with five members made up primarily of Town staff.

Redevelopment Authorities are legal entities established by municipalities under Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 121B to act as urban renewal agencies to eliminate and redevelop substandard, decadent, or blighted open areas for industrial, commercial, business, residential, recreational, educational,

hospital or other purposes. Redevelopment Authorities have the power to acquire or dispose of land (including through eminent domain); establish rehabilitation and design standards; rehabilitate and/or demolish substandard structures; participate in real estate development and commercial revitalization; issue bonds and borrow money; seek grants and loans; and accept gifts.

Redevelopment Authorities are particularly effective in large scale and complex redevelopment projects and in land assembly. They are powerful tools for commercial revitalization, industrial park development, infrastructure improvements, facilities renovation, and brownfield site remediation. The development and approval of an urban renewal plan is necessary for a Redevelopment Authority to undertake specific projects.

A Redevelopment Authority is an independent legal entity and is not an agency of a municipality. This affords the Redevelopment Authority more autonomy in planning and implementing redevelopment and revitalization projects. The Webster Redevelopment Authority focuses primarily in revitalization of the Town's downtown core.

Conservation Agent

Webster's Conservation Agent is responsible for managing activities of the Town's Conservation Commission, which administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act within the Town. The Conservation Agent works closely with the Town Planner.

As outlined in the Town's 2014 Master Plan (p 6-9), the Town of Webster owns very little conservation land on its own (two parcels in the vicinity of the Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area – a 24-acre conservation area on School Street and 27 acres in and around Memorial Beach). The majority of conservation land in Town – 948 acres out of 1,040 acres – is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, primarily in the Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area. A number of privately owned parcels have "limited protection" status through the state's Chapter 61 taxation program that offers a lower tax rate to property owners who keep their land in agricultural use and manage it in accordance with an approved forest management plan or as private recreation land. An example is the 200 Sportsman's Club, a private hunting organization and significant owner of open land in the northeast corner of Webster.

Parks and Recreation

It is the mission of the Webster Recreation Department to create leisure opportunities enhancing the quality of life for Webster residents. It provides access to Town parks that are welcoming and safe, and it manages a program of events and activities that are diverse and affordable for residents. The Recreation Department implements aspects of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Memorial Beach on Webster Lake is a primary recreation resource in the Town, and the implementation of French River Park in the downtown core has been a primary initiative in recent years.

Building Department

Webster's Building Department is responsible for issuing building, electrical, plumbing, and gas permits. Building permits are required for all construction

that is not an ordinary repair as defined by the latest edition of the Massachusetts State Building Code. The Department has a staff of four, whose work involves plan review; permit issuance; and inspection of all building, electrical, plumbing, gas, and mechanical construction in the Town.

The Building Inspector is also the Zoning Enforcement Officer for the town, which includes provisions impacting historic buildings and landscapes under the Demolition Delay Bylaw.

Highway Department – Cemeteries

Webster's Highway Department serves as the Town's Department of Public Works with responsibility for construction and maintenance of the Town's roads and maintenance of Town properties, including Town Hall and Webster's public parks. **IS THIS CORRECT?** A separate Town Water Department and Sewer Department operate and maintain public water and sewer facilities.

The Highway Department also has responsibility for operation and maintenance of the two Town-owned cemeteries, Mount Zion Cemetery and Lakeside Cemetery, both of which are of historical significance. Mount Zion Cemetery is located on Worcester Road just north of the historic former East Village. Webster's earliest burials are located here, including and most prominently Samuel Slater and his family. Lakeside Cemetery is a smaller facility located on Lower Gore Road on the east side of Webster Lake.

Only residents of the Town of Webster may purchase a lot or lots in Mount Zion and Lakeside Cemeteries with limited exceptions for family members of residents. The Highway Department performs interments and other services according to established fee rates and undertakes overall maintenance of the two cemeteries.

Gladys E. Kelly Public Library

The Gladys E. Kelly Public Library was constructed between 2016 and 2018 adjacent to Town Hall in Webster's downtown core and is a significant part of the Town's revitalization and community development program. The Library has a staff of eight librarians, is overseen by a Board of Trustees, and is supported by the Friends of the Library.

The Library has a borrowing membership of 9,506 and circulation of 37,379 volumes (2022). 78% of users are Webster residents. The Library offers programs for children and adults to engage and serve residents.

The Board of Library Trustees oversees operation of the Gladys E. Kelly Public Library. Its seven members are elected by Town residents. The Trustees establish policies with respect to the Library's programs and services. They receive and administer all funds and personal property bequeathed to the Library. The Library Director manages the Library under the direction of the Trustees.

School Department

Webster's School Department is led by a five-member School Committee chaired by a member elected from the body. The School Committee, which does

not have sub-committees, meets twice monthly during the school year and once each month during the summer.

A Superintendent manages operations at Webster's three schools: Park Avenue Elementary School, Webster Middle School, and Bartlett High School, none of which are housed in historic buildings. A major renovation of Bartlett High School is currently underway under oversight of a School Building Committee.

The district leadership team includes the Business Manager and a Director of Student Support Services. The schools are led by three Principals, each of whom has an Assistant Principal. Two Deans support student behavior in the district. A Curriculum Committee works to ensure the effective implementation of a high-quality, aligned curriculum that meets Massachusetts grade-level standards.

The School Committee works with the Superintendent and with Town officials to establish a budget and regularly reviews the budget at public meetings. The Committee annually evaluates the Superintendent and approves annual goals for his/her performance. The School Committee regularly reviews student performance data and is aware of improvement efforts underway in the district.

Webster Housing Authority

The Webster Housing Authority was established in 1949 to develop and operate subsidized housing for elderly, disabled, and veteran residents. The Authority operates three facilities.

Their veterans' development is located on Second Island and Thompson Road and contains thirty units of family housing with two- and three-bedroom units and is funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Eligible local residents and veterans receive preference for these units.

Golden Heights I is the Authority's state-aided elderly/disabled housing development and was built in 1978 off of Slater Street just east of the historic North Village. Buildings are garden and row style with 72 apartments, eight in each building.

Golden Heights II is adjacent to Golden Heights I and was built in 1983 with federal funding from the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. The six residential buildings are also garden and row style and contain ten units each.

TOWN OF WEBSTER – BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

The Town of Webster has established a number of volunteer boards, commissions, and committees to oversee and manage different aspects of the Town's interests. Several of the boards and committees are required or inferred in the Town's charter, which was adopted by Town Meeting in 2019. Others have been established by the bylaws approved at Town Meeting over the years. Several of these are required by the Town's participation in state-sponsored programs.

Twenty boards, commissions, and committees are listed on the Town's website. The individuals serving on these entities are volunteers selected for their

interests and expertise. A number are elected as required by the Town charter. Most, however, are appointed to their positions by the Board of Selectmen.

Entities managing aspects of municipal policy with potential impacts on historic resources include those listed below.

Board of Selectmen

The Board of Selectmen consists of five members, each of whom is elected for a three-year term. The Board of Selectmen serves as the primary policy-making body of the Town and sets strategic direction for the Town. It coordinates the activities of other boards, commissions, and committees, and it hires the Town Administrator, who reports to the Board and is responsible for all Town departments, staff, and activities.

The Board of Selectmen provides oversight for matters in litigation, acts as the licensing authority for a wide variety of licenses, and enacts rules and regulations for a variety of Town related activities. Board members serve without compensation.

Staff in the Board of Selectmen's Office accept articles for Town Meeting, prepare Town Meeting Warrants, and produce the Town's Annual Report. Staff also serve as liaison between the public and the Board, handle phone calls, visitors and correspondence directed to the Office and maintain all records of Board meetings. They also maintain the database of all Board and Committee appointments and resignations.

The Board of Selectmen is responsible for Town-owned properties, a number of which are historically significant. The policies and programs the Board of Selectmen establish have significant impact on individual historic properties and Town-owned sites, and the character and quality of life of the Town.

Planning Board

The Planning Board is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Town's zoning, subdivision, and land development bylaws and regulations. It is instrumental in implementing the Town's growth management policies. The Planning Board reviews and approves zoning and land development applications, has overall responsibility for writing and implementation of the Town's Master Plan, and recommends amendments to zoning, subdivision, and land development bylaws and regulations. Many proposed projects and issues addressed involve historic resources and landscapes.

The responsibilities of the Planning Board are varied and governed by the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Board is comprised of five members and two associate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. One member represents the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

Economic Development Committee

The Webster Economic Development Committee promotes, encourages, and facilitates the development of commercial and industrial growth in Webster with the goals of expanding and strengthening the local economy and diversification of the Town's tax base. Its work seeks to provide Town's residents

with more opportunities to live, work, and thrive in an economically focused and financially stable community.

The Economic Development Committee has nine members, two of which are Town staff representing interested departments, one representing the Board of Selectmen, and two representing local business organizations.

The Economic Development Committee encourages and supports new businesses seeking to locate in Webster and existing businesses seeking to remain or expand in Webster. It establishes and maintains strong communication with business owners and owners of commercial and industrial properties in an effort to support these individuals in the achievement of their long-range business plans.

The Committee reviews Town bylaws, regulations, and zoning for consistency with the Town's economic development goals and makes recommendations to improve permitting, licensing, and regulatory functions. It promotes streamlining of the Town's regulatory processes related to commercial/industrial development. It works with staff to obtain federal and state grant funds to further the Town's economic development strategy. The Committee develops and implements an aggressive marketing campaign designed to promote the Town of Webster as a business-friendly community.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals is a quasi-judicial body that reviews applications for relief from aspects of the Town's Zoning Bylaw. Most applications are in the form of appeals, requests for special permits, and requests for variances related to proposed building and land development projects. Applications may relate to or have an impact upon historic resources, villages, neighborhoods, and landscapes.

The Zoning Board has five members and two alternate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Historical Commission

The Historical Commission was established by Town Meeting in 1974 under Section 8D of Chapter 40 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth and has the duties and responsibilities enumerated there-in. It is comprised of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

The Historical Commission advises Town boards, committees, and commissions on issues related to historic preservation; is responsible for the preservation, protection, and development of the historic or archaeological assets of the Town; and oversees maintenance, treatment, and use of Town-owned historic buildings and properties.

The Historical Commission is the local governmental entity responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning. It is responsible for the Town's identification and inventory of historic and archaeological resources and is the contact or consulting party in state and federal historic preservation statutory review processes. The Historical Commission also administers the Demolition Delay Bylaw adopted at Town Meeting in October 2023.

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is responsible for administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act in Webster. Its work is supported by the Town's Conservation Agent. In accordance with the Act and as outlined in Chapter 636 of the Town's Regulatory Bylaws, the Conservation Commission reviews applications for subdivision and land development projects impacting wetland resources.

Wetland resource areas help prevent storm damage, reduce flooding, protect groundwater, prevent pollution, support fish and shellfish, and provide wildlife habitat. Webster's Conservation Commission is not involved in other land conservation and protection activities and does not manage any Town-owned conservation properties.

Recreation Committee

Webster's Recreation Committee is intended to be a volunteer entity supporting the Town's Recreation Department in development and management of recreational sites and programming for residents. However, the committee does not appear to be functional and has no members.

Bylaw Committee

The Bylaw Committee is established by Chapter 14, Section 14-1 of the General Bylaws with five members appointed by the Town Moderator. Its duty is to review and make recommendations to the Town concerning all proposed changes in the Bylaws. The Bylaw Committee reports to Town Meeting on proposed changes to bylaws included on the warrant for Town Meeting. It may request proposals for bylaw amendments from official bodies and inhabitants and may itself submit articles to amend the bylaw on the Warrant for Town Meeting action.

Webster Cultural Council

The Webster Cultural Council is a Town committee administering Webster's participation in the Local Cultural Council Program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Annual funding to the Town from the Massachusetts Cultural Council may be used to provide small grants for support of grassroots cultural community-based projects in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Projects may include those of historical interest.

The Webster Cultural Council has six members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Two of the members are Town staff. The Massachusetts Cultural Council's budget is determined annually by the state legislature in July and applications to the Webster Cultural Council are generally accepted in October. The total amount of grant funding awarded in Webster in fiscal year 2024 was \$16,000 spread among 19 awards. The largest single award was for almost \$7,000.

PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-PROFITS

A variety of organizations collaborate with the Town in programs and initiatives relating to historic resources, historic landscapes, and community character.

Samuel Slater Experience

The Samuel Slater Experience opened in March 2023 and is an innovative and high-quality museum attraction telling the story of Samuel Slater through high-tech media: video, audio, motion, wind, and scents, to create an immersive experience. The presentation covers two time periods, the early 1800s, when Slater traveled to America and created the American factory system, and the early 1900s, where Slater and his descendants owned and operated six cotton and woolen mills.

A compelling experience for visitors of all ages, the Samuel Slater Experience is especially important as an educational and entertaining attraction for student groups within the region, informing students about Slater's legacy and the history of Webster and the region. The Samuel Slater Experience is located on Ray Street near downtown Webster in a former National Guard Amory. It is a premier attraction that can be supported, promoted, and built upon to help increase tourism in Webster.

Webster-Dudley Historical Society

The Webster-Dudley Historical Society is a small, volunteer organization operating a museum in The Little Red Schoolhouse at 451 School Street, Webster's first school built in 1853. The schoolhouse is owned by the Town and provided to the Historical Society. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Webster-Dudley Historical Society is a non-profit membership organization that protects and preserves donated historic objects relevant to Town history. The organization accepts articles on history for posting and sponsors presentations on the history of the Town and region.

French River Connection

The French River Connection was a non-profit environmental organization founded in 2005 in Webster but no longer appears to be active. The French River Connection was dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of the French River corridor in the towns of Webster, Dudley, and Oxford. The vision of the French River Connection was for the French River and its shoreline to become a resource that is used, enjoyed, and treasured by residents and visitors to the region. The organization has partnered with other entities in undertaking planning and environmental studies of the French River, including water quality monitoring.

Webster Lake Association

The Webster Lake Association (WLA) Inc is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing, preserving, and protecting the quality of Webster Lake and its watershed through the promotion of responsible, effective environmental and educational policies. The WLA works to strengthen and unite the lake community through recreational, social, and civic activities.

WLA members participate in a wide variety of activities for the benefit of the lake, including lake and stream water quality testing, invasive plant management, storm water management, environmental cleanups, and public programming and events.

Webster-Dudley Business Alliance

The Webster Dudley Business Alliance is a non-profit membership organization offering resources and support for businesses within the two towns. With 75 participating businesses, the Alliance offers opportunities to collaborate and network with other businesses, promotes businesses on its web presence and social media, conducts training seminars, and hosts a variety of special programs. The Alliance serves as a clearing house through which to connect to the region's business community.

Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce

The Webster Dudley Oxford Chamber of Commerce represents businesses within the three towns and connects them with regional and statewide business resources and organizations. The Chamber advocates on behalf of the region's business community on critical issues at all levels of government – local, state, and federal – focusing on creating a favorable economic climate for existing businesses. It provides members with direct access to public agency representatives, financing programs, confidential site searches, and individualized business development assistance. The Chamber is affiliated with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

TOWN OF DUDLEY

Information on organizations in Dudley are outlined below and should be considered partners with Webster because of the close, overlapping focus on the French River and the Main Street corridor.

Dudley Historical Commission

The Dudley Historical Commission works on historic preservation issues within Dudley as authorized by MGL Chapter 40, Section 8D similar to Webster's Historical Commission. Opportunities exist for cross boundary collaboration supporting historic preservation, community character, and economic vitality.

Dudley Historical Commission administers a Demolition Delay Bylaw within the Town. Dudley has two National Register Historic Districts, including the Stevens Linen Works, which is a major proposed rehabilitation site on the French River adjacent to Webster.

Dudley Planning Board

The Dudley Planning Board was established by Town Meeting in 1959 and consists of five members who are elected by the voters. Dudley's Planning Board is charged with overseeing the orderly growth and development of the Town as established by state law. As in Webster, the Board reviews and approves land development and subdivision projects, prepares the Town's Master Plan, and recommends changes to zoning and other bylaws.

Because of the close physical relationship between Webster and Dudley, opportunities exist to undertake coordinated growth management and development policies enhancing community character and economic vitality.

Dudley Economic Development Committee

The Dudley Economic Development Committee promotes Dudley's identity in Massachusetts and the region as a desirable and convenient location for new and existing businesses. The Economic Development Committee supports businesses seeking to locate within the community by facilitating review processes. The Committee promotes Dudley for its historical, agricultural, and industrial potential, while preserving the rural aspect of the town. Dudley embraces its geographic location and inclusion in the Last Green Valley. This has helped to maintain its rural, natural image.

As with Historic Preservation and Planning, opportunities exist to undertake coordinated growth management and development policies in Webster and Dudley, enhancing community character and economic vitality.

