

Envision Duxbury: Comprehensive Master Plan

# Duxbury Today Element

## Location and Regional Context

The Town of Duxbury, Massachusetts is a coastal community located 35 miles southeast of Boston in Plymouth County. It is well connected to the Boston region due to its location along the Route 3 corridor, a controlled-access highway connecting Cambridge with Cape Cod, and Route 31, a state highway connecting southern Plymouth to Tyngsborough at the New Hampshire state line. The South Shore town is bordered by Marshfield on the north, Pembroke on the west, Kingston on the south, and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The easternmost part of Duxbury is a seven-mile-long barrier beach on Massachusetts Bay which shelters Duxbury Bay.

Duxbury has a geographic area of almost 38 square miles, 24 of which is land and 14 of which is water. It is characterized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) as an Established Suburb within the Maturing Suburbs. Established Suburbs are lower density suburbs that are approaching buildout with limited amounts of vacant land. They consist predominately of owner-occupied single family homes on  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 acre lots. New growth is primarily teardowns, with some small-scale greenfield development and some redevelopment. Population in Established Suburbs is stable or growing moderately.<sup>1</sup>

Duxbury is generally lower density compared to its neighbors, particularly Kingston and Plymouth. Those communities are considered Maturing New England Towns, which tend to have mixed uses and densities, as well as compact neighborhoods on  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre lots. Outlying areas are mostly low-density and there are large amounts of vacant developable land. New growth in these communities consists primarily of conventional subdivision development on vacant land. Compared to Established Suburbs like Duxbury, population and households are growing more rapidly in Maturing New England Towns.<sup>2</sup>

## Historical Context

Duxbury is a seaside town with a rich history. Wampanoags first inhabited the area as early as 12,000 years ago, and they were drawn to the area's vast resources for fishing, hunting, and farming. Duxbury's colonial inhabitants were the earliest Europeans to establish a farming community on Wampanoag lands. They lived amongst the Native Americans and then purchased the land from them by deed. The town's colonial history started when settlers at Plymouth began to spend summers farming Duxbury's lands and eventually establishing a year-round farming community. "Duxborough" became the second incorporated community in Massachusetts in 1637.

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<sup>1</sup> MAPC (2008), "Massachusetts Community Types," [www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Massachusetts-Community-Types-Summary-July\\_2008.pdf](http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Massachusetts-Community-Types-Summary-July_2008.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Duxbury was a quiet farming and fishing community. The population grew after the King Phillip's of 1675-1678 and inland neighborhoods were established. Duxbury's shipbuilding industry began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, bringing great wealth and fame to the town. By 1840, Duxbury had become one of the largest and most famous shipbuilding centers in the world and many grand homes were built along Duxbury Bay.<sup>3</sup>

Duxbury began an economic downturn around the middle of the 1800s when trade in China flourished and demanded faster clipper ships, which were too deep for Duxbury Bay. Boston then became the shipbuilding center of the area and sailing vessels were made obsolete by other modes of transportation like steamships and railroads. Duxbury's shipbuilding and wealth steadily declined, and its appearance did too. The Duxbury Rural Society was formed for the purpose of beautifying the town. The Society, now known as the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, continues to preserve historical properties and documents today.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1870s, Duxbury was supporting a budding tourism industry and began attracting many summer visitors for its rural character and unspoiled bay. Rooming houses, inns, and hotels were built, providing a large source of income for Duxbury. Vacationers also began constructing their own private residences. This pattern continued until the 1960s when Route 3 was constructed, connecting Duxbury to Boston by highway. With the expedient automobile access to Boston, Duxbury's population exploded with the arrival of thousands of year-round residents.<sup>5</sup>

## Government Structure

The Town of Duxbury is located in Massachusetts' 9<sup>th</sup> congressional district. As of 2018, it is represented by Josh S. Cutler and Thomas J. Calter in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Patrick M. O'Connor in the Massachusetts Senate, Bill Keating in the U.S. House of Representatives, and Edward J. Markey and Elizabeth Warren in the U.S. Senate.

Duxbury is governed by an Open Town Meeting form of government, and is led by a Board of Selectmen and Town Manager. The Board of Selectmen are the Chief Elected Officials and Executive Officers of Duxbury. The Board consists of three members, residents who are elected by the community to three-year terms. According to Massachusetts General Laws, all municipal authority not delegated to other elected boards or retained by Town Meeting is vested with the Board of Selectmen. The Board appoints a Town Manager for managing the day-to-day business of the Town within its policy direction, and employs a Town Counsel for handling the Town's legal affairs.<sup>6</sup>

Town Meeting represents Duxbury's legislative branch. According to the Town Bylaws, Annual Town Meeting is held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of March. Special Town Meetings during other months of the year may also be called. During Town Meeting, all registered voter residents vote on the budget and other articles in the Warrant. The Town Clerk maintains all Town records and documents the votes and actions of the Town Meeting. The Town Moderator directs the progress of the meeting and appoints a number of boards and committees, including the Fiscal Advisory Committee and Duxbury Beach Committee.

There are over 20 Town departments that manage the day to day operations of Duxbury. These departments listed on the Town's website include: Animal Control, Assessing Department, Board of Health, Building Department, Cemetery & Crematory, Conservation, Council on Aging, Department of Public Works, Duxbury Free Library, Emergency Management, Facilities Department, Finance Department, Fire

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<sup>3</sup> Leslie A. Lawrence, "Town History," Duxbury Historical Commission, <https://www.town.duxbury.ma.us/historical-commission/pages/town-history>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, "Local History," <http://duxburyhistory.org/local-history/>

<sup>6</sup> Town of Duxbury, "Board of Selectmen," <https://www.town.duxbury.ma.us/board-selectmen>

Department, Harbormaster, Highway Department, Human Resources, Lands & Natural Resources, Municipal Services, Planning Department, Plumbing/Gas Inspector, Police Department, Procurement, Recreation Department, School Department, Treasurer/Collector/s Office, Veteran's Office, and Water & Sewer. Duxbury also has almost 50 multiple-member appointive and elective organizations including the Board of Health, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission.

## **Planning Initiatives**

### **Past and Recently Completed Efforts**

#### ***Comprehensive Plan (1999)***

The last Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Duxbury was completed in 1999 and presented a series of widely-shared community goals. These goals include preserving the semi-rural, historical, and residential character of the town, focusing on providing top quality education, protecting Duxbury's water supply, maintaining and improving environmental quality, ensuring a sound fiscal basis for the Town while minimizing the tax burden on residents, and providing and enhancing recreational facilities. The plan also called for supporting and strengthening local businesses and integrating new or expanded housing into existing residential districts.

#### ***Hall's Corner Economic Development and Transportation Plan (2014)***

In October 2014, the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), the regional planning agency for 16 communities in Southeastern Massachusetts, completed an Economic Development & Transportation Study for the Hall's Corner area. Major economic development recommendations from the OCPC report include marketing and promoting Hall's Corner, developing and recruiting additional business for the area, enhancing the public realm through improved streetscaping, updating wayfinding and directional signage, undergrounding utility wires, and developing a façade improvement program.

Major transportation and safety recommendations from the plan include increasing the functionality of the rotary in Hall's Corner through re-locating some of the current parking, installing and upgrading signage, and incorporating pedestrian amenities such as crosswalks and sharrows. OCPC conducted a parking study and determined that there is ample parking in the area, but in order to best make use of that parking they suggested improving the parking enforcement program and investigating the possibility of constructing a public parking lot.

#### ***Hall's Corner Economic Development Analysis (2014)***

MAPC completed a Hall's Corner Economic Development Study in 2014, which complements the findings and recommendations from the OCPC plan. The plan identifies a set of strategies to enhance the Hall's Corner business district, the most significant concentration of retail stores in Duxbury. To get a sense of the local market conditions in Duxbury and Hall's Corner, MAPC staff and members of the Economic Advisory Committee interviewed local business owners, property owners, brokers, and developers. MAPC also conducted a market analysis for the housing, retail, and office sectors and developed recommendations to enhance the area in order to better support current local businesses, broaden the current customer base, and attract additional targeted development. Strategies offered in the plan include creating a Hall's Corner Zoning Overlay District to encourage desired development, developing a Duxbury Business guide, and creating a Main Street Organization.

## ***Housing Needs Assessment (2014)***

The Town of Duxbury Housing Needs Assessment was completed in April 2014. The assessment lays out a number of strategies to increase the production and preservation of affordable housing in Duxbury. The report recommends encouraging affordable housing development in close proximity to retail and services such as the Hall's Corner area. It also notes significant demand for family and age-restricted units for households earning at or below 80% of area median income, as well as a need for affordable rental housing. Stakeholders that were interviewed for the Housing Needs Assessment also mentioned a need for more affordable housing for young professionals, seniors, and middle to lower income families with children that would like to move to the area.

## ***Beach Management & Habitat Conservation Plan (2016)***

Duxbury completed a Beach Management & Habitat Conservation Plan in 2016 to serve as a reference document for use by managers of Duxbury Beach. The plan provides a management program that is consistent with federal, state, and local laws and regulations for the various existing and potential uses of the beach, and provides guidelines that are flexible enough to be adapted, refined, and implemented on a daily basis by the on-site management staff of the beach. This comprehensive document also describes the Beach and Dune Maintenance and Restoration Program for Duxbury Beach and explains the Endangered Species Program to balance the protection of piping plovers and other rare species with the recreational uses of the beach.

## **Current and Ongoing Efforts**

The Town of Duxbury is currently in the process of finalizing a number of other planning efforts. These include an Open Space and Recreation Plan Update, Energy Reduction Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Climate Adaptation Plan. **Get language from Val about current efforts - will update later so it is current at the time the plan is finished in summer 2019.**

## **Population Characteristics and Projections**

### ***Population Size and Age***

Duxbury is a medium-size town whose population has almost doubled since the 1970s. At the time of the last U.S. Census in 2010, Duxbury's population was 15,059. This number has likely increased further, and the population was 15,297 according to 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. While the population has been growing steadily over the past few decades, growth rates do not compare to those seen between 1970 and 1980 when the population size grew 55%, from 7,636 in 1970 to 11,807 in 1980 (see Figure 1). Since 1990, the population growth rate has been between 3% and 6% per decade. According to MAPC projections, Duxbury's population is expected to remain stable moving forward with small growth.

While the populations of the under 20 and 20-24 age groups have remained relatively stable since 1990, the population of the 25-34 age cohort—young professionals and young families—has shrunk by almost 50%. This is the only age group that has seen a decrease in population, as shown in Figure 2. The 35-64 age cohort has seen modest growth while the 65 plus group has seen substantial growth, increasing 80% between 1990 and 2015. These patterns show that the population in Duxbury is aging and that families with dependent school-age children in the household remain relatively stable.

Figure 1: Population Trends, 1970-2010

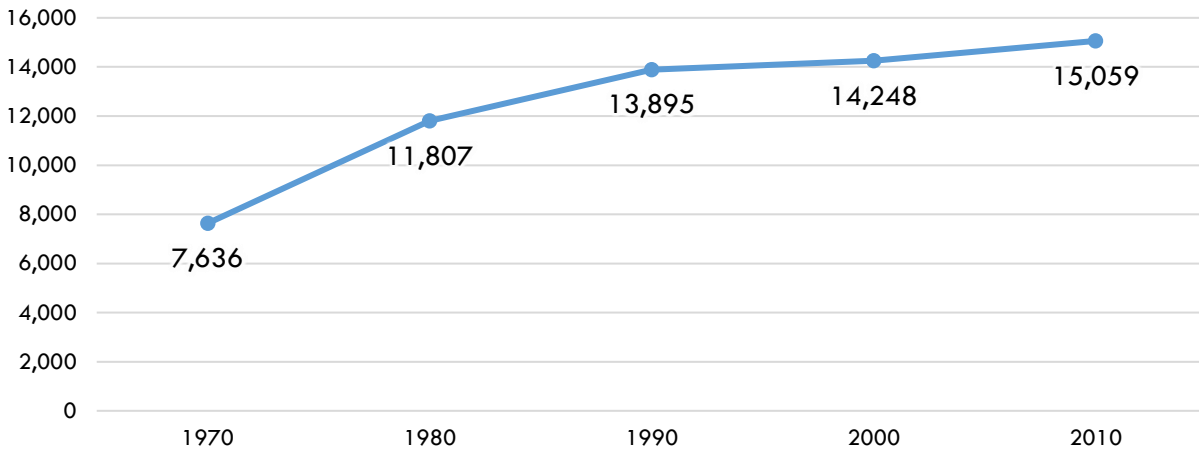
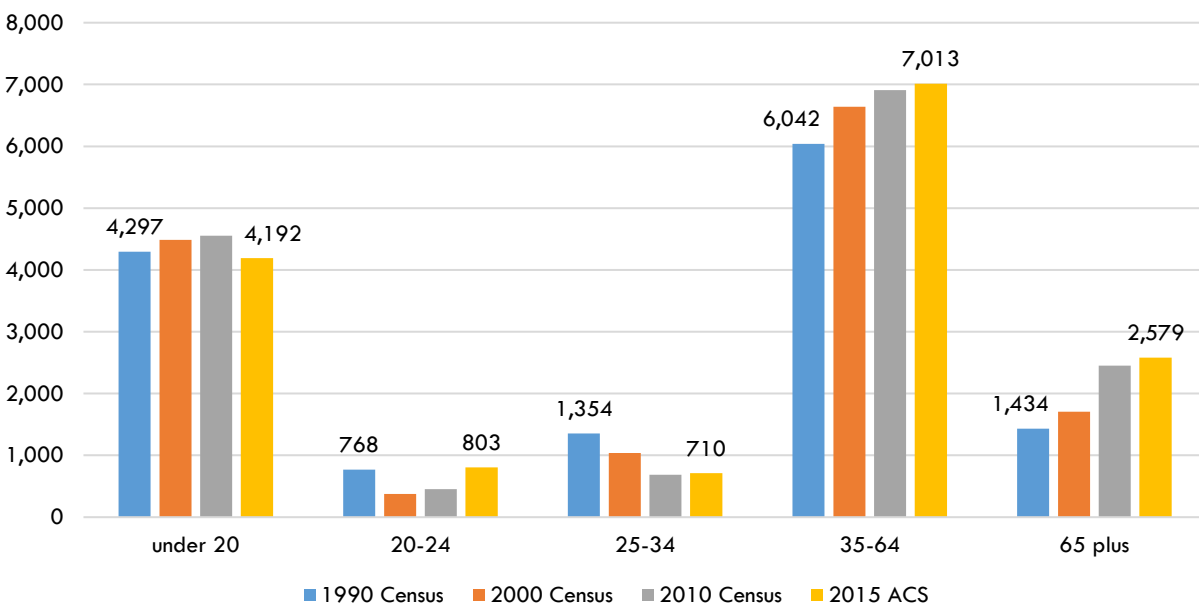


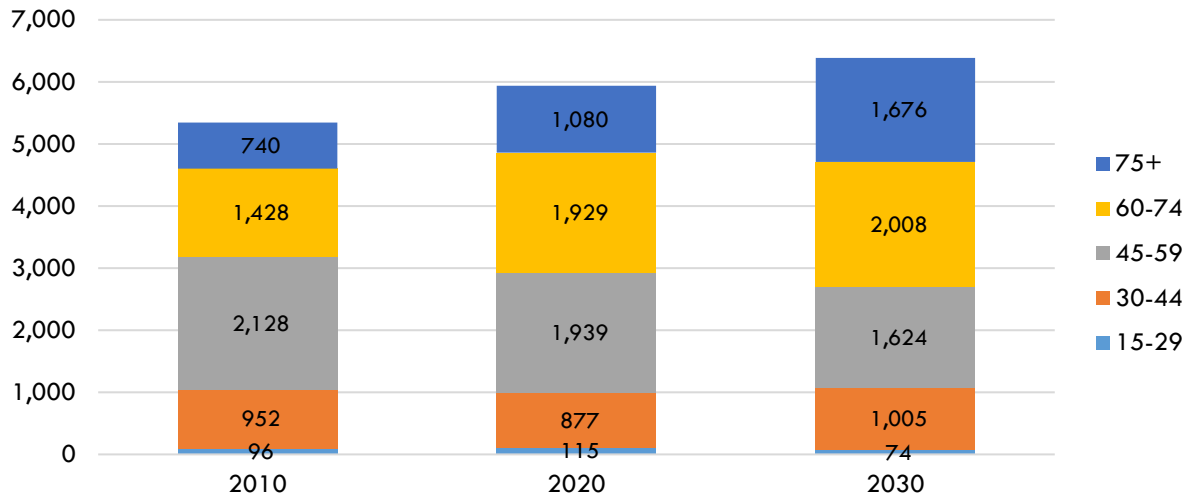
Figure 2: Population Change by Age Group, 1990-2015



## Households

While Duxbury’s overall population is expected to remain stable, its number of households are projected to grow 20% (1,043 households) by 2030, from 2010 counts. This is on top of the 8% growth in households seen between the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census. Like with population growth, household growth will mainly come from increases in older households, particularly those with a householder over 75 (see Figure 3). Alternative housing types will be needed to support this growth in households, as well as the needs of Duxbury’s aging population. Today, 78% of the town’s 5,406 households are families, according to 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates. In comparison to other nearby communities, Plymouth County, and the state, Duxbury has the highest percentage of family households.

Figure 3: Household Projections by Age

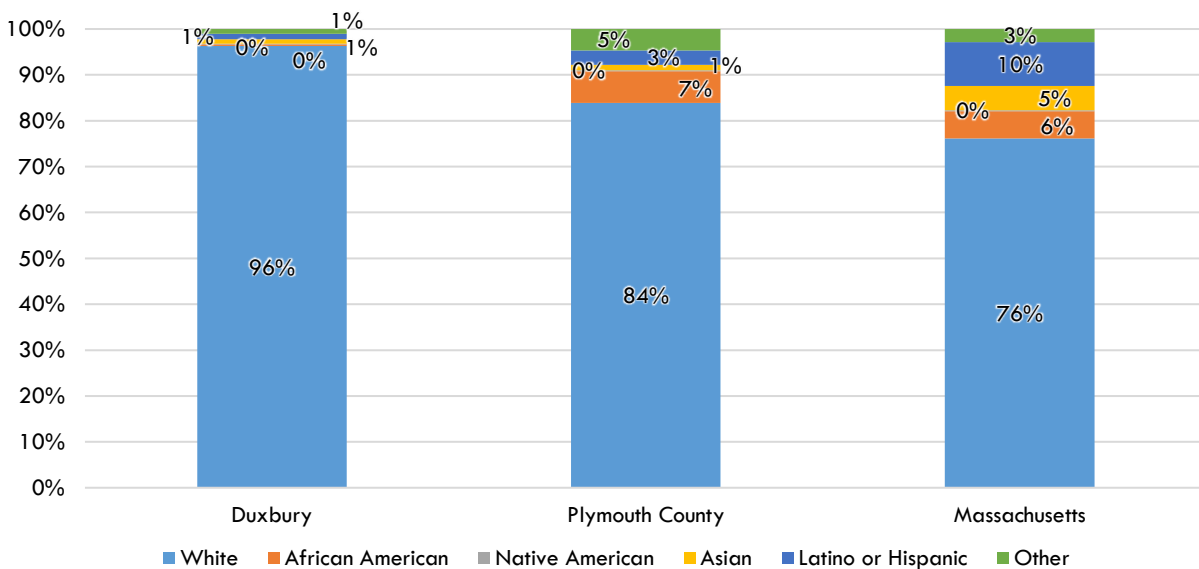


### School Population

Duxbury is known throughout the state for its excellent public education system, and it attracts many families with children to the town. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, during the 2016-2017 school year, the school district enrollment in the Duxbury Public Schools was 3,121. This is a slight decline from ten years ago when the enrollment was 3,372 for the 2006-2007 school year. Demographic trends and anecdotal observations suggest that the school age population and households with children remain relatively constant in the town due to a transitioning of families into and out of Duxbury around educational milestones. Since Duxbury's population is overall aging, school enrollment would likely decline further if not for this pattern of in and out migration of families.

### Race & Ethnicity

Figure 4: Racial and Ethnic Share

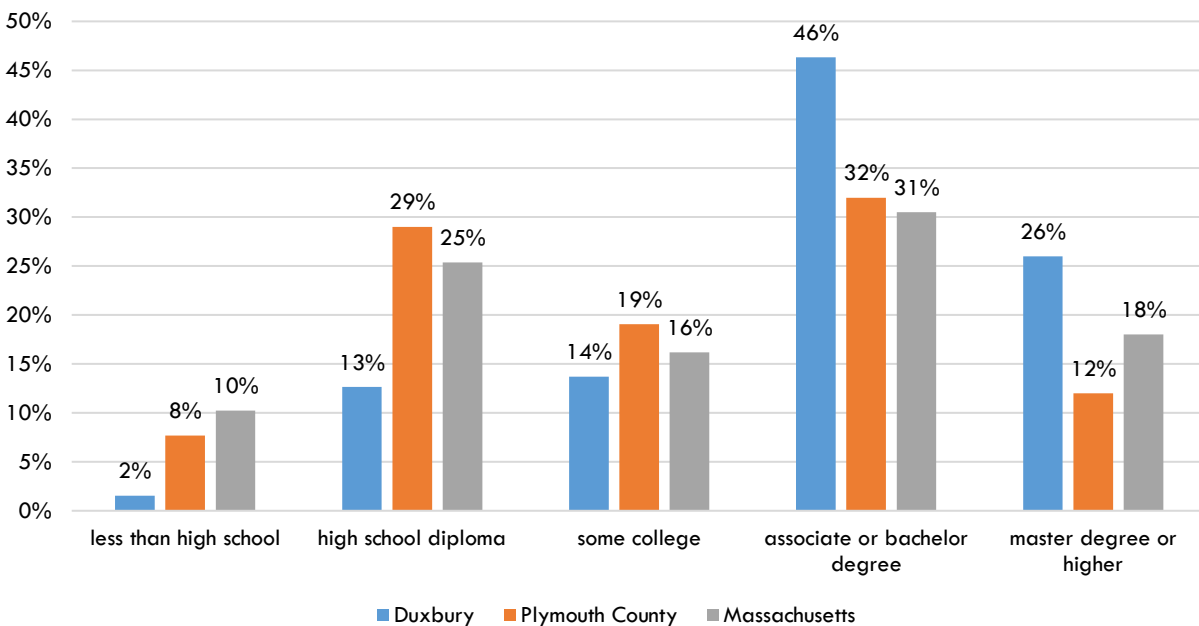


The population of Duxbury is relatively homogenous from a race and ethnicity perspective. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the racial makeup of the population is 98% White, 1.4% Asian, 0.8% two or more races, 0.6% Black or African American, 0.5% other races, 0.3% Native American, and 0.1% Pacific Islander. Hispanic or Latino residents of any race make up 1.20% of the population. Compared to Plymouth County and the Commonwealth, Duxbury is much less racially and ethnically diverse (see Figure 4).

### **Educational Attainment and Income**

Duxbury residents are well educated, which is illustrated by the fact that 72% of those 25 and older have completed an associate’s degree or higher, compared to 44% of those in Plymouth County and 49% of those Massachusetts (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Educational Attainment

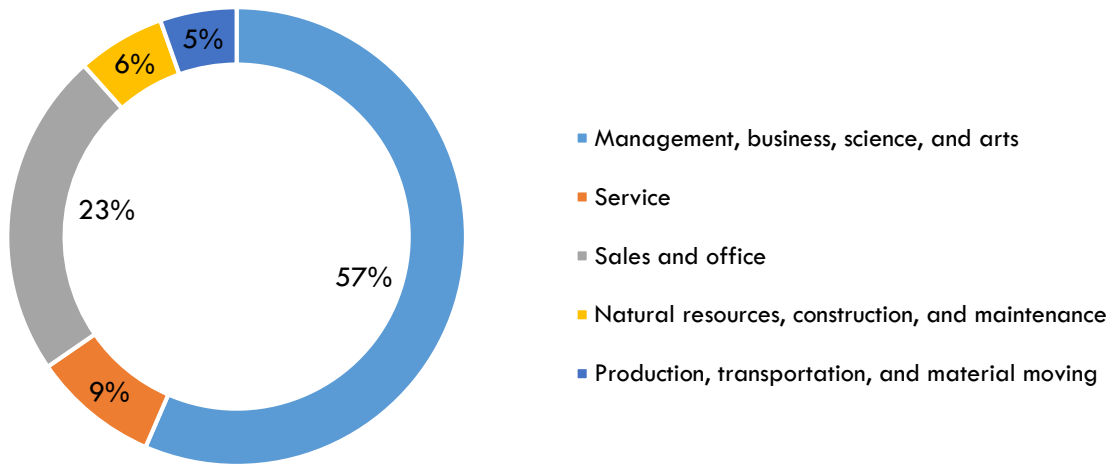


Income tends to be correlated with educational attainment, and this is no exception in Duxbury. Almost 60% of households in town earn more than \$100,000 annually, compared to 36% of county households and 34% of state households. According to 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the median household income of \$120,267 in Duxbury is much higher than that seen in Plymouth County (\$75,835) and the Commonwealth (\$68,563), as well as in neighboring municipalities. It is important to note that the median household income for families of \$138,938 is more than three times that of non-family households (\$44,063) in Duxbury.

### **Employment and Transportation to Work**

As of the 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates there Duxbury’s civilian employed population 16 years and over consists of 7, 168 workers. More than half (57%) of this population works in management, business, science, and art occupations; another 23% works in sales and office occupations; and 9% works in service occupations (see Figure 6). A quarter (24%) of Duxbury’s labor force population works in the educational services, health care, and social assistance industry; 16% works in the professional, scientific, and management industry; and 14% works in the finance, insurance, and real estate industry. These are all industries associated with higher than average incomes.

Figure 6: Resident Occupations



Almost 80% of Duxbury residents drive alone to work. Another 3.2% of working residents drive in a carpool with other riders, 3.5% take public transportation, and 2.2% walk, bike, or use another means of transportation. A fairly high proportion (11.6%) of the town's labor force works at home when compared with the rest of the state (4.5%). The mean travel time to work for Duxbury residents is 34.6 minutes, with over a third (34.1%) of the labor force population commuting 20 minutes or less, and quarter (22.4%) commuting 60 minutes or more.