

DUMMERSTON COMMUNITY PROFILE

Geography

The Town of Dummerston, approximately 31 square miles (19,815 acres) in size, is located in Windham County in southeastern Vermont. The Town is bordered by five Vermont towns—Brattleboro, Marlboro, Newfane, Brookline, and Putney—and by Chesterfield and Westmoreland in New Hampshire. Brattleboro is considered the region's major growth center, providing the bulk of services and employment for Dummerston residents.

The physical characteristics of Dummerston are dominated by two rivers: the Connecticut River, which forms the eastern boundary to the Town, and the West River, which flows through Dummerston before joining the Connecticut River in Brattleboro.

The topography of Dummerston is varied, being relatively flat in the Connecticut River Valley and quite hilly elsewhere in the Town. Black Mountain, at 382 meters or 1253 feet, is a dominant landmark located between the river valleys in the southern part of Town. Other prominent high points include Prospect Hill, Dummerston Hill, and Wickopee Hill.

State Routes 30 and 5 are the main roads serving the community. Dummerston is served by I-91 both at the south and north ends of town (Exit 3 in Brattleboro and Exit 4, which is partly in Dummerston and partly in Putney). Dummerston is located only a few miles north of Route 9, the major east-west corridor linking Brattleboro with Bennington and Keene, New Hampshire. The East-West Road from Route 30 to Route 5 is also an important road used by both local and regional commuters.

Geology

Metamorphic rock, known as the Waits Formation, underlies Dummerston and extends through West Dummerston, Prospect Hill, and Dummerston Center. It is characterized by mica schist, impure marble, and quartzite. Three hundred fifty million years ago, as the tectonic plate drifted northward, magma surged upward from deep within the earth and began to cool, forming granite. Some of these granite formations are visible along Route 30, and this granite exposed by weathering formed Black Mountain and the quarries along the West River.

Other plutonic rocks (igneous rocks formed deep below the surface of the earth) were folded, pushed, and eroded to form the Standing Ponds Volcanics found just south of Dummerston Center running in a north-south direction. Most of East Dummerston is sitting on a combination of metamorphic rocks including impure marble and slate. The old slate quarries along Route 5 north of Houghton Road are good evidence of these deposits.

One hundred seventy five million years ago, the continents moved into their current locations. The processes of erosion and mountain building continued. Mount Monadnock shows the height of the land before erosion. Then in recent geological past the glaciers came in four separate ice ages. The latest ice age occurred 10,000 years ago and covered Vermont in ice two miles thick. As the ice began to melt, portions of Dummerston became covered with water. The part of Dummerston along the Connecticut River and West River was an ancient lake called Lake Hitchcock. When the lake drained into the ocean, great deposits of sand and gravel (formed by water moving over rock) were left along the West River and Connecticut River.

Settlement History

Archeological evidence suggests that pre-historic settlers made their way into the area by following the retreating glacial ice in the Connecticut River Valley. As agriculture complemented traditional hunting and gathering practices, established settlements with larger groups of people were formed. Archaeological findings indicate that the Abenaki¹ established extensive villages along tributaries of the Connecticut River.

Europeans came in the mid-1700s as homesteaders, purchasing large tracts of land. They cleared the valley lowlands for pasture and for agriculture. Wood from the forest was primarily used for heating, cooking, and for masts on English ships. At this time, transportation was difficult so town centers were located to be central to everyone. Thus, Dummerston Center became an early town center.

The abundant forest resources in Dummerston led to the proliferation of mills. Slab Hollow became a major settlement area because of the many mills that were located on Salmon Brook. It continued to be as such until the mid-1800s when electricity replaced the need for mills.

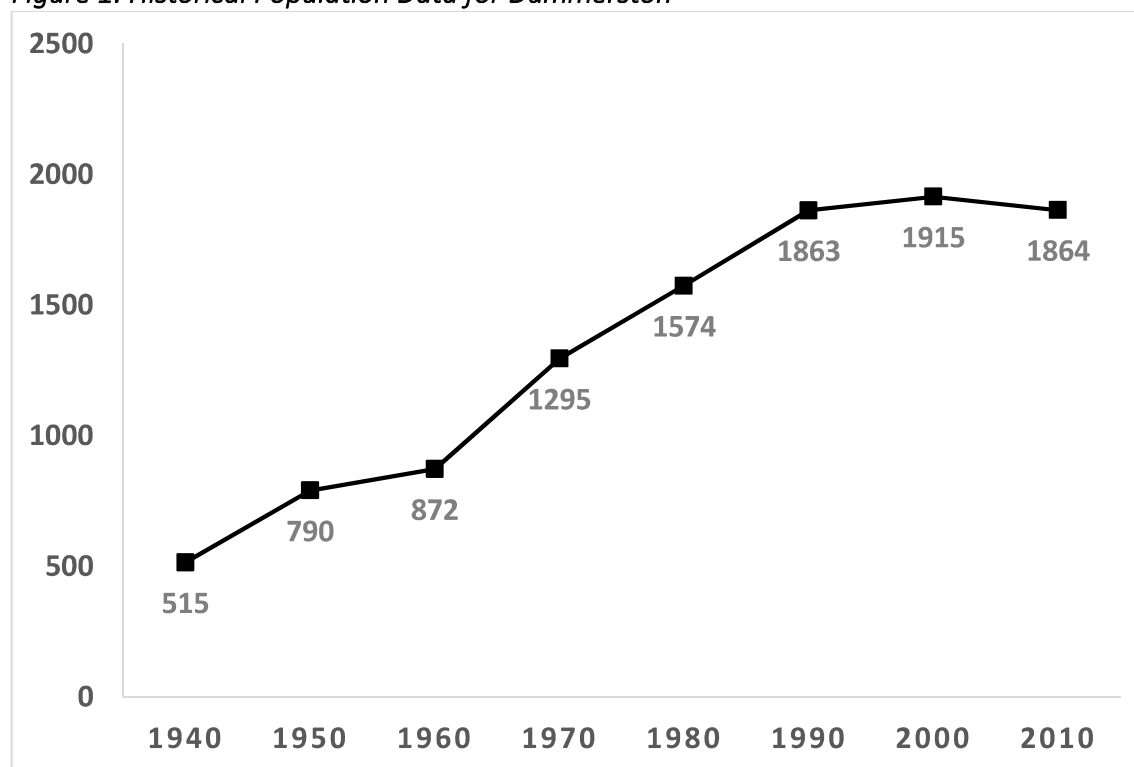
The rise of the railroad in the 1800s had a significant impact on Dummerston. Access to rail lines and the ability to transport heavy goods led to the mining of granite from quarries on Black Mountain. A concentration of workers for the quarries led to a new town center known as West Dummerston Village.

Outside of the established areas of Dummerston Center, West Dummerston Village, and Slab Hollow, the settlement pattern evolved as well. Years of clearing and farming upland soils, led to the loss of topsoil. The rocky uplands of Dummerston were no longer productive for agriculture. Agriculture activities moved from the higher elevations and concentrated in the lower valleys. By the mid-1900s, agriculture was consolidated to large farms in the Connecticut River Valley, many of which remain today.

Population Growth and Projections

Dummerston's population steadily increased from 1940 to 2000, and then declined slightly from 2000 to 2010, as shown in Figure 1 below. The most significant increase in population occurred during the period 1960-1970 (48.5%). The 1970s and 1980s saw approximately 20% growth each decade. Since 1990 the population of has leveled off at around 1900 residents. The following figure shows Dummerston's population growth over time.

¹ According to *Vermont, The Green Mountain State* by Walter Hill Crockett, the indigenous people of Vermont is chiefly concerned with the Abenaki.

Figure 1: Historical Population Data for Dummerston

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

While population has increased significantly in Dummerston in the past, the town's population as a percentage of the Windham Region's population has been constant. This is attributable to the fact that while percentages of change may appear significant, the absolute numbers in such changes are relatively small and that many towns in the Region have had similar patterns of growth. The following chart compares Dummerston's growth with that of other neighboring Vermont towns.

Figure 2: Population Trends in Neighboring Vermont Towns

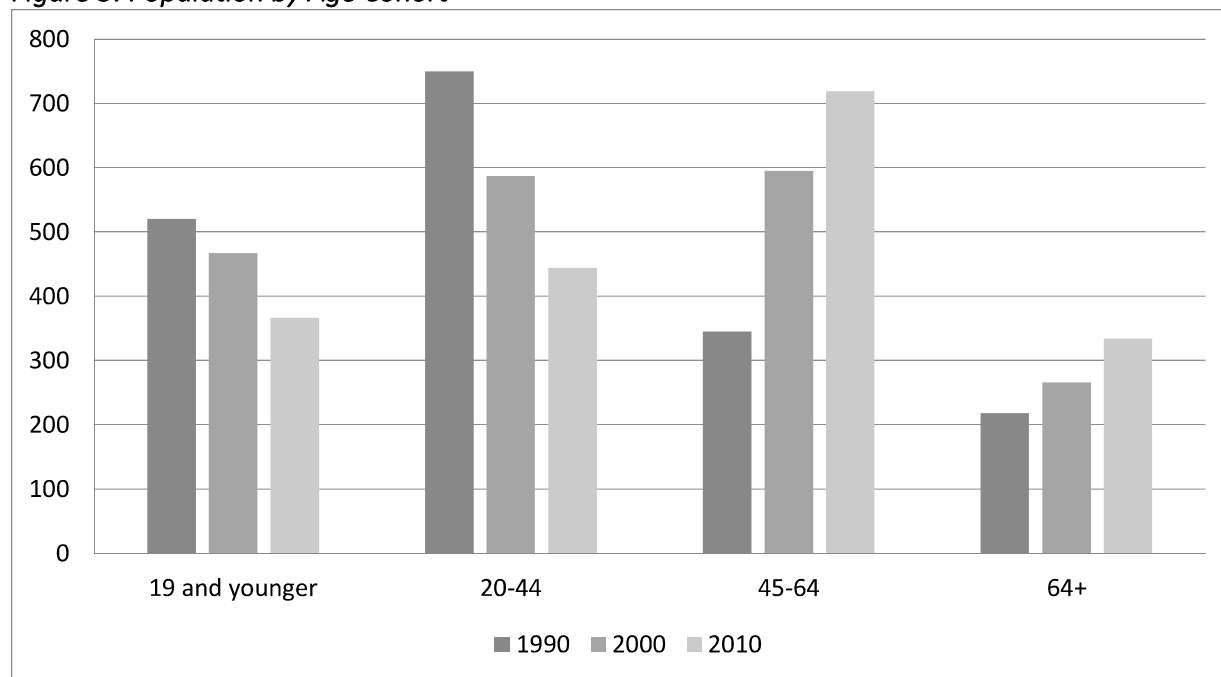
Town	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 2000-2010
Dummerston	1863	1915	1864	3%	-3%
Brattleboro	12241	12005	12046	-2%	0.3%
Marlboro	924	978	1078	6%	10%
Newfane	1555	1680	1726	8%	3%
Putney	2352	2634	2702	12%	3%
Brookline	403	469	530	16%	14%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Age Distribution

Dummerston's population is aging. Since 1990 the median age of Dummerston has increased by 13 years, or 36%, from 36 in 1990, to 49 in 2010. While this reflects a statewide aging trend, Dummerston's population is older on average than the state and the county. Windham County's median age in 2010 was 45, Vermont's was 41.5.

Figure 3: Population by Age Cohort



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Figure 3 shows the current distribution of Dummerston's residents by age. The following observations can be made from the data

1. There has been a significant increase in the population of people who will likely enter retirement within the next ten years (those ages 45-64).
2. There has been a decrease in the number of people in child bearing ages.
3. The senior population (those over 65) is growing.

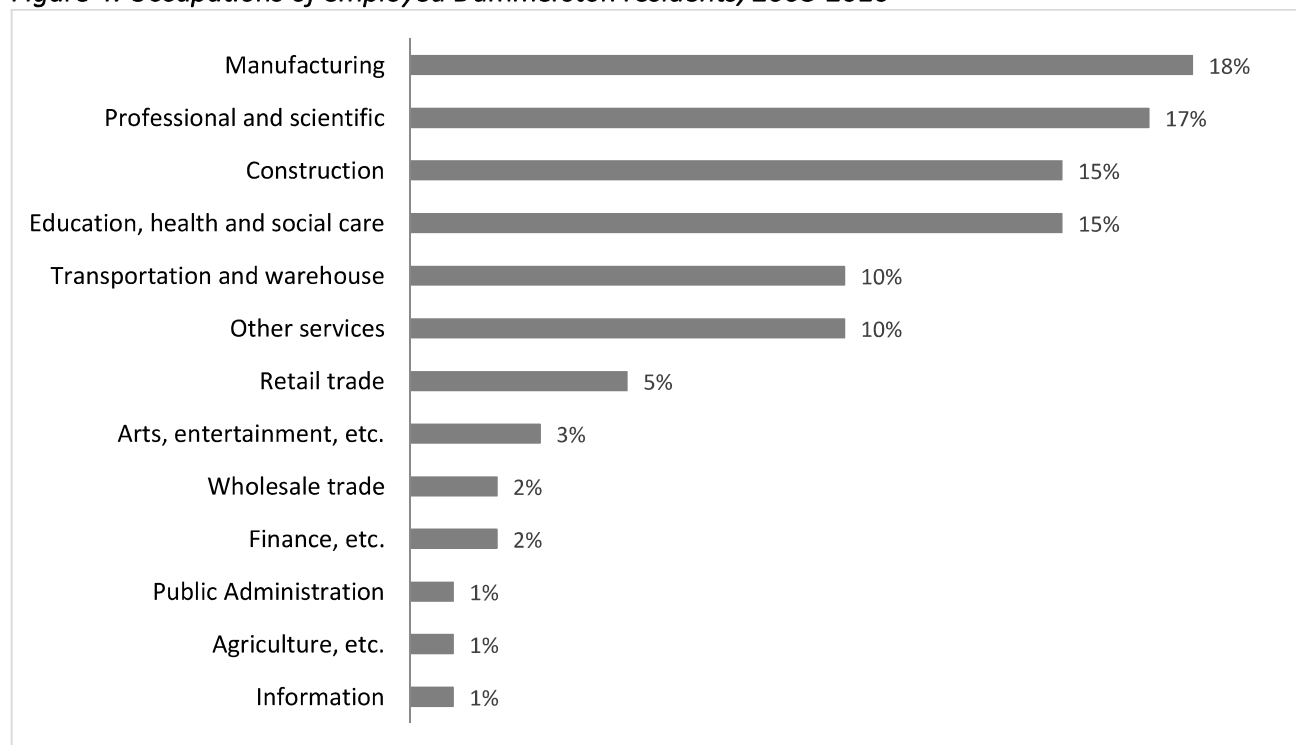
Economy

Dummerston has evolved from an agrarian community with the majority of its residents employed in farming, logging, sawmills and quarries. Now residents work in a diverse range of professions, with agriculture and forestry holding a very small percentage of the overall employment picture. Some commute to businesses in neighboring towns, while some travel farther to jobs in larger towns in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Brattleboro is an important economic hub, providing employment as well as shopping and necessary services for Dummerston residents. A number of residents are employed by area educational institutions, both public and private, as well as area health care practices and institutions.

During the period 2008-2012, 25.5% of Dummerston residents worked in Dummerston, with 12.2% working from their homes. See Figure 4 for a list of occupations showing the range of job

types in Dummerston. A significant number of residents support themselves with businesses run out of their homes, many of which provide services to Dummerston residents. A growing number of residents are able to find employment by telecommuting from home.

Figure 4: Occupations of employed Dummerston residents, 2008-2010



Source: American Community Survey

According to the American Community Survey, median household income in Dummerston, adjusted for inflation, has been stable over the past 25 years. Estimated median household income in Dummerston in 1989, adjusted to 2012 dollars, was \$63,334 while the same estimate in the period 2008-2012 is \$62,543. For this same time period, the estimated median household income for Vermont is \$54,168 and for Windham County, \$51,113. While the median household income in Dummerston is higher than the state and county, an estimated 33% of Dummerston households had income below \$50,000.

Local Revenue and Fiscal Conditions

Local revenue is generated through property taxes, state funds, and other miscellaneous reimbursements. The Selectboard sets the Town tax rate to raise the money necessary to pay for the municipal expenditures that were approved at Town Meeting. Dummerston gains a significant amount of income from other revenue sources including state highway funds, fees and charges for services, and permits and licenses.

The following table shows municipal expenditures and revenue. For more detailed financial information, see the Dummerston Annual Report.

Figure 5: Dummerston Annual Municipal Expenditures and Tax Revenue

	1990	2000	2010	2015
Road Department	\$286,538	\$336,427	\$466,260	\$659,475
General Government	\$88,388	\$151,344	\$295,903	\$262,262
Fire & Safety	\$33,498	\$78,290	\$134,194	\$106,654
Emergency Management	\$0	\$6,566	\$32,278	\$30,033
Health and Welfare	\$6,719	\$7,630	\$14,150	\$12,400
County Tax	\$7,609	\$12,453	\$14,833	\$13,680
Total Annual Expenditures	\$422,752	\$592,710	\$957,618	\$1,084,504
Municipal Tax Revenue*	\$238,890	\$315,240	\$671,497	\$734,211

**Includes both General Fund and Highway Fund taxes but not Education taxes*

Source: Dummerston Annual Reports

Town Government and Administration

The government of the Town of Dummerston derives its authority from its general charter and from the Vermont Constitution. There is a five member Selectboard whose members are elected at Town Meeting and serve staggered terms. The legislative authority of the Town is vested in the voters at Town Meeting, but the Selectboard is the legislative body responsible for the general supervision of the affairs of the Town. The Board's duties fall into three general categories regulation, general administration, and appointments.

Other elected town officials consist of the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Town Moderator, Auditors, Listers, Library Trustees, Town Agent, Town Grand Juror, and Justices of the Peace. These officials provide various services, acting as town staff, presiding over public meetings, handling town accounts, determining the value of real estate property, and working election polls and counting ballots for office.

The Town employs one road foreman and crew and provides wages to the following elected officials Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Selectboard, Auditors, and Listers; and to the following appointed officials Zoning Administrator and Selectboard Assistant. The Emergency Management Director receives a stipend.

A number of ordinances and bylaws are in force in the Town of Dummerston, including Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Ordinance, Traffic Ordinance (speed limits), Road Acceptance Ordinance, and Zoning Bylaws (including flood hazard area regulations).

The Town functions through the active participation of its residents and volunteer groups. Residents serve on various boards and committees and either join or financially support various associations in Town. The willingness of Dummerston's residents to participate in the civic life of the town brings diversity and vibrancy to the public discourse and many benefits to the community. Below is a partial listing of boards and commissions that serve the Town along with some of their responsibilities. All members are appointed by the Selectboard.

The Planning Commission is charged with formulating the Town's long range planning goals through the process of updating the Town Plan every eight years. The Planning Commission also amends the zoning bylaw to conform to the Town Plan.

The Development Review Board is responsible for hearing zoning appeals of the decisions of the Administrative Officer, variance requests, and applications for site plan approval, conditional use approval, planned residential and planned unit developments, and rights-of-way.

The Conservation Commission is responsible for the protection and management of natural resources in Dummerston. It does this through developing and maintaining a biodiversity inventory, community education and outreach (website, e-mail alerts, educational programs), stewardship of town and state owned properties and conserved lands (Prospect Hill, Dutton Pines, Black Mountain) and specific targeted activities such as invasive plant removal and monitoring for invasive pests. It coordinates its activities with community members, other town boards, regional conservation commissions and boards, and local and state natural resources agencies. The Commission was established by the Selectboard in 1990 and has nine members.

The Energy Committee is dedicated to the promotion of environmentally responsible energy conservation and energy efficiency strategies to help residents cut energy costs and support the usage and development of renewable energy sources. The Committee is involved in advocacy work as well as information and awareness activities towards these ends.

Several other Selectboard-appointed groups address specific issues relevant to the Town. The Dummerston Recreation Board manages some of the athletic opportunities offered in the community. The Farmland Protection Committee assists the Selectboard by reviewing applications to the Farmland Protection Fund. For a complete listing of elected and appointed officials, see the latest Dummerston Annual Report.

Community Goals

<i>Goal 1 — Maximize opportunities for all residents to participate in all public processes</i>
--

