

Town of Mt. Holly

Town Plan

Adopted July 6, 1986

I. Introduction

Hundreds of thousands of words are written yearly about man's exploitation of natural resources, his misuse of the land, and the increasingly complex organization of our communities. Again and again, the same conclusion is reached; if order is to be created out of chaos, the solution will be found in the process of planning.

Whether we live in small towns or the city, we are faced with soaring taxes, inadequate streets and roads, and expensive municipal facilities. Community necessities must be paid for from one primary source; the municipal tax base. Unless this tax base is sound and continually improves, the ever-rising demand for services cannot be met. The process of planning provides a means to correct the errors of the past, to prevent current errors and to hold future misjudgments to a minimum.

As each new subdivision of land occurs—whether it be for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes—the community of the future takes shape. The use which is made of the land, the physical organization of the developed area, and population density after development of land can provide a substantial enlargement of the real property tax base of the community. Throughout the country, the largest single source of local revenue is the real property tax. Planning for the future development of the community is not only good sense, it is good business.

Logical patterns of land use based upon the needs and desires of individual communities can be established through planning and enforced through zoning. Attractive, carefully developed, orderly communities have inherently sound economic foundations. When we permit haphazard, disorganized and unattractive development, we allow the destruction of the very essence of sound community life. In effect, we require those citizens who take pride in their property to subsidize the exploitation of the community by the entrepreneur whose sole interest is in a maximum profit from real estate development.

If our communities are not to be bankrupted by wasteful and uncoordinated development, we must have practical plans for the future. If we are not to be

overwhelmed by man-made ugliness, we must see to it that our plans work. (Courtesy of the Proctor, Vermont Planning Commission.)

During the past several years, members of the Mt. Holly Planning Commission have discussed the Town's direction with the citizenry, we have worked with professional planners who are concerned with orderly development of the Rutland Region, we have reviewed Plans from other municipalities of comparable size and with similar problems and we have considered the ability of the terrain to support the types of land uses necessary to develop a balanced community. This work, and the foregoing philosophy have been condensed into this Plan which we feel reflects a logical growth pattern for the Town of Mt. Holly.

II. History

1. Geography and Topography

Mt. Holly is a rural town located on a hilly plateau on the central ridge of the Green Mountains. Its elevation ranges from about 1200 feet above sea. level to 3343 feet at the summit of Okemo Mountain. Its principal population center, the village of Belmont, at 1850 feet, is one of the highest in the State. The Town lies astride the watershed of the Green Mountains since the streams in the eastern part of the town drain eastward into the Black and Connecticut Rivers while the waters in the central and western parts of town drain northwestward via Mill River and Otter Creed into Lake Champlain. The Town's elevation and its remoteness from urban centers give it an unusually clean, fresh air. Its location also places it in a belt of unusually high annual snowfall.

Topographically, the Town is composed of a series of hills and low mountains,, some in excess of 2000 feet, which are separated by mountain streams and brooks and gradually sloping valley lands and terraces. There are three lakes in the Town, Star Lake in Belmont, Lake Ninevah in the north near the Town's boundary with Plymouth, and Tiny Pond which the Town shares with Ludlow in the northeastern corner.

In total area, Mt. Holly is one of the larger towns in Rutland County with 29,338 acres. About one-fifth of the Town is public land, in Okemo State Forest on the eastern border (2770 acres), Green Mountain National Forest on the west (2353 acres) and about 92 acres on the northeast side of Star Lake owned by the State of Vermont. Much of the land in Town is forested or reverting to forest from former pastures and meadows.

Although former farm and pasture lands are still visible in many parts of the Town, soil and topographical characteristics impose severe limitations to development. The soil in the Town is primarily stony and acid. Hard pan clay is also characteristic of the area. The combination of severe slope and hard pan clay soils impose serious limitations to many forms of development. The soil and slope conditions have also led to the decline of agriculture in the Town because the land was not suited to efficient larger scale mechanized farming. The forest cover that has reclaimed the older fields and pastures is transitional and usually of a low value.

Where topography is more suited to development, such as valleys and plateaus, soils are often sandy and excessively drained. To ensure high water quality in such areas, waste waters must be treated before discharge, a factor which also imposes development limitations. Marshes and wetlands restrict development around principal water bodies. Such areas should be protected in order to preserve the Town's water resources.

2. Population

At the turn of the century, the Town's population was almost twice its present size. The land uses reflected a diversity in the population that is still evident. Agricultural uses, primarily dairying and forestry, supported most of the population on widely dispersed farmsteads. With the decline of upland farming and the resulting decline of the population, almost sixty years of receding agricultural uses occurred. Farms, homes, and roads gradually were abandoned until most of the Town's farmland had returned to brush or forest and almost all of the dairying had ended.

The 1960's marked the first time in this century that the Town had gained population with the growth rate from 1960 to 1970 being more than twice the growth rate for Rutland County as a whole. The 1970 population was 687 with 1980 increasing to 988 and a projection to 1990 of 1124 people in town. One factor which contributed to this growth rate has been the improvement in the highway system serving the town and connecting it to the job centers of the region. Commuting became easier and more reliable. Services and commodities not provided in the town were also more accessible, making the town that much more attractive as a home site. Transportation improvements are likely to continue during the coming decade. The town will, for this reason, become even more attractive as a home site.

Another factor which has contributed significantly to the town resident population, is the retirement or relocation to the town of a number of the town's long time seasonal residents. It appears unlikely that this trend

will continue. Evidence for this is found in the fact that school enrollment increased significantly between 1980 and 1904 paralleling the population increase from 1970 to 1980. This statistic supports the contention that a considerable part of the town's growth is attributable to new families rather than seasonal residents retiring and converting to permanent residency.

It should be noted that much of the housing constructed both by permanent and seasonal residents during the past decade has been designed for year-round use. Housing has increased from 432 houses in 1970 to 618 houses in 1980. Formerly, seasonal housing was constructed for summer season use, but that era has been by-passed with the advent of four season recreation, and potential retirement or rental use of such housing. This change in the housing characteristic has important potential implications for the future population expectations of the town. Housing that is built to sustain year-round use will, in all likelihood, be used in that manner either by the current owners or by future owners. The type and condition of the town's housing stock relates directly to the possible future population of the town.

Year	Population	Housing	Farms (Graph 1)
1960	517	-	79
1970	687	432	-
1980	938	618	7

(Figures from U.S. Census)

3. Transportation

(a). Description

Mt. Holly is served by 15 miles of State Highway (Class 1), 10.6 miles of State Aid Roads (Class 2), 46.3 miles of town roads (Class 3), and 11.99 miles of seasonally maintained roads (Class 4). State Highways 103 and 155 are major arteries crossing the town. Route 103 is heavily used by both commercial and pleasure vehicles. The State Aid roads (Cl 2) extend from Route 155 in Tarbellville through Belmont and Mt. Holly to the Shrewsbury Town line and from Route 103 in Healdville to Belmont. These serve in part as feeders to Route 103 and 155. All Class 2 roads are paved as well as a few miles of Class 3 roads.

The Green Mountain Railroad has train tracks running alongside of Route 103 through Mt. Holly currently carrying only freight traffic though the future may call for revival of passenger service. The Vermont Transit Bus line gives service to most places along Route 103.

(b) Policy

Apart from the expense of schools, town highways are probably the largest expense the town has. Therefore, in order to minimize continually increasing highway expenses, where Class 4 roads are currently being used seasonally, they will be maintained in that condition. Upgrading to Class 3 or taking over maintenance of new roads or upgraded Class 4 roads will be at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen on a case by case basis when it is determined to be in the best interest of the town.

The section of Town Highway 22 from the bridge south of the William Wortman residence to the bridge (culvert) south of the Priest Farm will be designated a Scenic Road according to the provisions of Vermont's Scenic Road regulations. Maple trees along the roadside will be preserved and/or replaced as necessary. The removal or replacement would be done by the Town road crew with cost to be borne either by the Town or by private donation.

4. Natural and Wildlife Areas

(a) Description

The following areas are designated either by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department or are listed in the "Natural Areas of Vermont: An Inventory of Natural Areas, 1972-'73".

1. Deer yards as marked on accompanying Exhibit A.
 - a. Along Russell and Freeman Brooks.
 - b. Along Mt. Holly - Wallingford Town line, west of Route 155, from approximately 1/2 mile south of East Wallingford to 1 and 1/4 miles south.
2. Wetlands.
 - a. Lake Ninevah (Natural Areas Inventory #9398) is considered a waterfowl nesting and feeding area of moderate to good use and quality with moderate migratory bird use.
 - b. Star Lake is considered high in fishing use as well as important for water fowl.
 - c. Nameless Bog (Winslow's Flats) (Natural Areas Inventory #941B) is rated moderate in nesting use by waterfowl and fur bearing animals. It is rated excellent in waterfowl food and cover.
3. Forest Lands
 - a. Okemo State Forest and Green Mountain National Forest are important established habitat for species including black bear

and bobcat both of which require large tracts of undisturbed forest. The "Land Management Plan Okemo State Forest, August 1983" notes, page 21, that "The wildlife condition that is most special to Okemo State Forest is the obvious evidence of significant population of black bear. Other agency lands in District I also have black bears, but none have the amount of bear sign there is on Okemo Mountain."

(b) Policy

In response to the Fish and Wildlife Department's belief that these areas outlined above are important for wildlife, that wildlife are important economically and aesthetically, and the fact that ecologically fragile species inhabit these areas in some cases (e.g., bear and bobcat), road building or development which would disturb these areas should not occur.

Many forested areas are over 2500 feet elevation and/or have slopes of 25 percent or greater. These are fragile areas due primarily to thin soils with potential problems of erosion, ground water contamination, and access. Those are the main reasons for the fact that what limited development occurred there previously has now disappeared. Due to the potential for creating major problems for the town in the future, development should not occur in these areas.

5. Agriculture

(a) Description

The presence of farm land in town adds to the scenic beauty of Mt. Holly. This may simply reflect contrast of forest and open land or it may be the result of grazing animals in fields. Regardless, it adds to the quality of life for townspeople while hopefully providing employment and income for those engaged. Additionally, gardening and sugaring supply a significant food source for townspeople.

Since 1960 the number of operating farms has declined from 80 to 7 according to the 1980 census. Partially replacing these farms has been the number of people maintaining livestock on what can best be described as a part time basis. These include beef animals, horses, sheep and goats. The net effect has been to maintain a considerable part of the town for pasture and meadow, more, in fact, than would be suggested by the loss of 73 full time farms. A very small part of the town is considered prime agricultural land. (see map)

(b) Policy

In so far as possible, the town will encourage use of land for agricultural purposes in order to maintain both the aesthetic qualities provided to the town as a whole and the financial return to those people involved. This would include, but should not be limited to, encouraging development on other than agricultural lands, encouraging participation in the State Land Use Value Taxation Program, and generally discouraging activities which would tend to reduce the level of farming and agricultural activities.

6. Town Government and Services

(a) Description

The town is governed by the Board of Selectmen consisting of three members elected for three year terms. At least one monthly meeting is held with additional meetings as needed. The Board of Civil Authority consists of 5 Justices of the Peace, the three Selectmen, and the Town Clerk. Duties include correction and updating of the voter checklist, ballot counting, and abatement of property taxes.

The Planning Commission is a 5 member board whose purpose is to assist the Selectmen in planning for the orderly growth and development of the town through implementation of the Town Plan, Subdivision Regulations, and other regulations as required and enacted.

Local police protection is provided, on a part time basis, by the Town Constable and Assistant Constable with additional support from the County Sheriff's Department and Vermont State Police as necessary. Increased Town growth and improved back roads have brought problems involving traffic violations, vandalism, and breaking and entering. At some time in the future the town may need to consider having full time law enforcement officers.

Mail service is varied with post offices in Belmont and Mt. Holly and rural delivery covering much of the rest of the town.

The Mt. Holly Volunteer Fire Department is a member of the Rutland County Mutual Aid Association and provides fire protection for the town. There are approximately 30 men on the squad many of whom have received training through State sponsored programs. Water for fighting fires in Mt. Holly is drawn from streams or ponds. The two spring fed water systems in Belmont are not large enough to support hydrants though Star Lake and its outlet provide abundant water for the Village.

Complete medical services are dependent on hospitals and doctors in surrounding towns. However, Mt. Holly does have a volunteer rescue squad staffed by personnel with Emergency Medical Technician certification. The Squad has two fully equipped ambulances and is dispatched on a 24 hour basis from Rutland Hospital. It is a member of State Ambulance District 10. Mt. Holly has a Town Health Officer and is served additionally by the Rutland County Visiting Nurses, Rutland County Mental Health Association, and the Vermont Achievement Center.

Some town residences have water supplied by springs, most of the other homes have drilled wells, the depths varying up to 400 feet. The village of Belmont has two small separate spring fed water systems serving several homes. The town will probably have to rely on individual sources for domestic water. This is presently practical because of the wide spacing of dwellings. However increasing development density may produce problems both from the standpoint of subsurface water pollution and limitation on available water.

Public refuse is collected at the town transfer station and trucked to a land fill out of town. In March 1979 the town voted to join the 21 towns in Rutland county and form a Union Municipal District to be known as the "Rutland County Solid Waste District". The District has contracted with Vicon Recovery Systems to build an incinerator to handle solid waste and produce electricity with the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation purchasing the electricity.

The absorptive powers of the town soils are very limited and the gradients are often relatively steep, consequently much of the town has difficulty disposing of raw sewage. The relationship of soil depth and slope to housing density is illustrated on accompanying Exhibit B. There is reason to believe that some existing homes have inadequate sewage disposal systems and are discharging raw sewage or inadequately treated sewage into the waters of the town. Several streams are polluted at some points, and Lake Ninevah has, in the past, had an unsafe level of mercury pollution though the present situation is unknown. Star Lake is subject to "bloom" or eutrophication (the excessive growth of algae) probably resulting in part from phosphates in detergents and fertilizers.

(b) Policy

The town is served by dedicated and competent individuals who volunteer to serve on the various boards and organizations. It is the expectation that townspeople will continue to support these organizations and officials to maintain the high level of competence and quality of government present in Mt. Holly.

In a rural situation, fire protection can be a significant problem. There are, however, certain things which can be done to reduce the danger and increase that protection. Installation of a few hydrants connecting Star Lake to points in Belmont would provide improved fire protection for village residents. Thought should be given to such a system by village residents. In the more rural areas of town construction of fire ponds with dry hydrants is encouraged.

As noted above, Sec. II (4) 2, streams and lakes are important natural resources in the town. Whatever actions are necessary to protect these assets in the future, will be undertaken. One step readily available is to regulate future density of development based on percolation tests of the soil and slope of the land to assure adequate space for leaching fields without contamination of ground water supplies.

Because of the use of the town for residential, agricultural, and recreational purposes and because of the nature of the soils and topography as outlined elsewhere in this document, no hazardous waste dumps for either nuclear or non-nuclear materials may be located in Mt. Holly.

The Town will consider providing space which could be used for emergency shelter in event of disasters, and the area in Mt. Holly emerging as the center for town government facilities should be studied for that purpose. In addition, the town will study the entire area in terms of future government needs and how they can be best met within the confines of the space available.

7. Education

(a) Description

The Mt. Holly Elementary School is run by a Board of three members elected for three year terms. Monthly meetings are held. At the secondary level, Mt. Holly is a member of Union 39 with Ludlow and has representation on that board proportional to school enrollment.

The people of Mt. Holly have long been aware of the importance of good schools and have done much to provide them. Their cooperation and understanding in the face of rising costs and unfair cuts in State Aid have been outstanding. The elementary school, which was built to accommodate 65 pupils has been enlarged (1981) and again in 1982, 1983, and 1985 to allow for increased school enrollment. Every indication is that the school population is still increasing. (Graphs 1 and 2)

(b) Policy

As the town population and school enrollment continues to increase as projected steadily since 1960, future expansion may be required. It is the policy of the town to provide the best education possible to prepare our students for the highly technical and complicated world facing them.

8. Recreation

(a) Description

Recreational activities in Mt. Holly have historically revolved around the fact that it is a hill country town. Much of the land was forested thereby providing excellent wildlife habitat. Hunting and fishing have probably been the single most important recreational activities. Today, hiking, snowmobiling, ski touring, horseback riding, and camping have been added, while the ponds and streams provide excellent swimming, boating and fishing.

(b) Policy

These dispersed types of recreational activities outlined in Sec. II 8(a) will be encouraged by doing whatever possible to maintain the forest areas, important water courses, and open spaces. In particular, the public lands in town should be protected to provide those activities which may not be possible on private lands in the future. They should not be converted to use by private interests for mineral extraction, ski development, or related or similar activities. These areas should be maintained to protect and promote the dispersed type of recreational activities outlined above in Sec. II 8(a).

9. Historic Sites

(a) Description

The Crowley Cheese Factory has been designated a National Historic Place and listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the Federal Government. Many other buildings in town can probably qualify and hopefully some will be designated in the future. Some federal funds have been available for restoration work of recognized Historic Sites, Places, and Districts in the past.

(b) Policy

Historic sites and locations, such as but not limited to, buildings, boundary markers, old roads, springs, etc. should be marked in some manner to inform the public of the sites and their importance in the town's history. Every attempt will be made to protect these places or structures, and whenever possible destruction will be discouraged and alternatives investigated.

10. Land Use Regions and Map Legend

(a) Forest, Conservation, Recreation: Areas so designated are currently forested and either predominantly high in elevation (above 2500 feet), possess a steep slope (15% or greater), or both. Therefore, normal forestry practices are to be encouraged including protection and maintenance of wildlife habitat, protection of water supplies, forest recreation of a non-commercial nature, and conservation education. Single family residences. Minimum lot size, 5 acres.

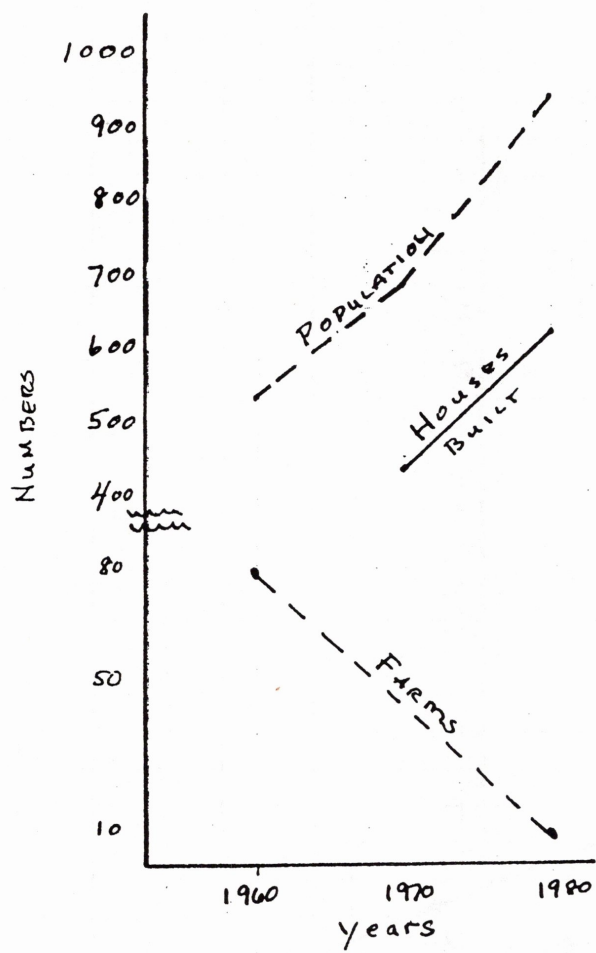
(b) Agriculture and Rural Residential: Practices normally associated with general farming are to be encouraged including lumbering, Christmas tree growing, and maple sugaring. In addition, normal residential uses are permitted including cottage industries and country inns. Single family residences. Minimum lot size, 1 acre.

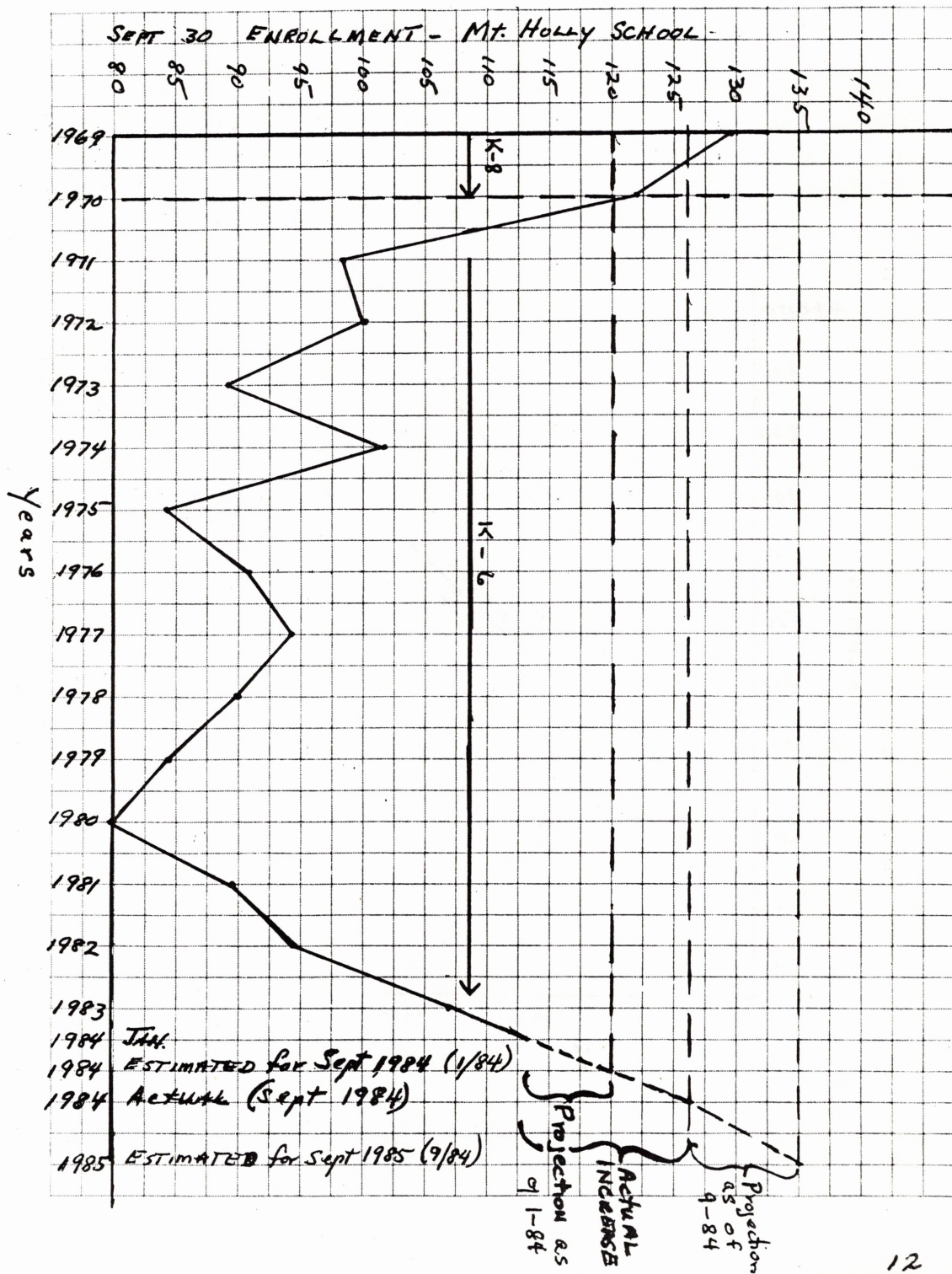
(c) Commercial, Industrial, Residential: any type of residence is permitted here as well as small scale businesses and industries. Minimum lot size, 1 acre.

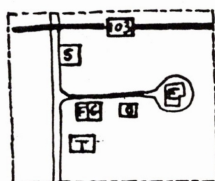
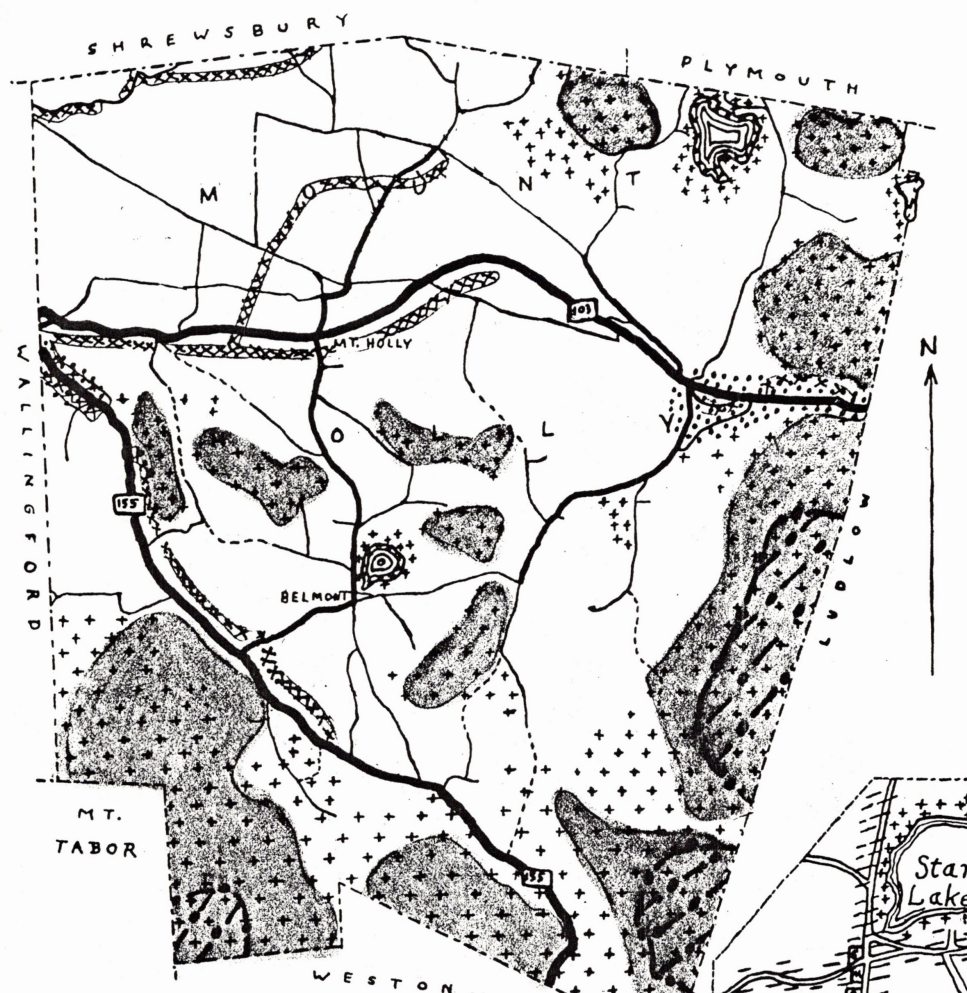
(d) Multiple Residential: multiple family dwellings and country inns are permitted in this district. Minimum lot size, 1 acre.

(e) Flood Plain Areas: These are areas designated as flood hazard areas in the Town of Mt. Holly Flood Hazard Regulations. Any construction in this district must conform to Town Flood Plain Zoning Regulations.

NOTE: The following map represents some of the activities currently occurring in Town. It obviously, due to scale, cannot and does not indicate the location of all individual residences and businesses. It does, however, indicate the direction and pattern which the Town believes should occur in the future.







MOUNT HOLLY

- [S] STORE
- [E] SCHOOL
- [F] FIRE HOUSE
- [O] TOWN OFFICE
- [R] RESCUE SQUAD
- [T] TOWN GARAGE

- [+ + +] FOREST, CONSERVATION, RECREATION
MINIMUM LOT SIZE 5 ACRES
- [] AGRICULTURAL + RURAL RESIDENTIAL
MINIMUM LOT SIZE 1 ACRE
- [•••] COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL
RESIDENTIAL

- [//] MULTIPLE RESIDENTIAL
MINIMUM LOT SIZE 1 ACRE
- [S] NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

[■] 15% SLOPE AND OVER

[■] FLOOD PLAIN INCLUDING SHORES OF STAR LAKE AND LAKE NINEVAH

[■] ELEVATION 2500 ft. and OVER



BELMONT

- [S] STORE
- [H] TOWN HALL
- [G] TOWN GARAGE

- ARTERIAL ROADS
- FEEDER ROADS
- BACK ROADS