

# **TOWN OF MT. HOLLY, VERMONT**

## **TOWN PLAN**

Adopted Dec. 7, 1974

### **FORWARD**

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 omit haphazard, disorganized and unattractive development, we allow the destruction of the very essence of sound community life. In effect, we require these 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 plan work.

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 the 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.

## **BACKGROUND**

Mt. Holly is a rural town located on a hilly plateau on the central ridge of the Green Mountains. Its altitude ranges from about 122 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 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 Creek into Lake Champlain. The town's altitude and its remoteness from urban industrial 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 2,000 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.

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 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 the topography is more suited to development, such as the valleys and plateaus, soils are often sandy and excessively drained. To ensure high water quality in such areas wastewaters must be treated before discharge - a factor which also imposes development limitations. Marshes and wetlands bordering principal water bodies of the area present development problems. Such areas should be protected in order to preserve the town's water resources and ecology.

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN**

It is the intent and purpose of this Plan to encourage the appropriate development of all lands in the Town of Mt. Holly in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, prosperity, comfort, convenience, efficiency, economy and general welfare; and to provide means and methods for the future elimination of such land development problems as may presently exist or which may be foreseen. In addition, this Plan shall further the following specific objectives:

1. To plan for orderly expansion of the town's facilities to cope with the population growth of the town; to maintain and promote the rural nature of the Town.
2. To allow development to progress at a rate that would not cause undue hardship on the town and its schools.
3. To protect the town from unwise construction that would be harmful to the environment.
4. To provide space and appropriate locations for public and quasi-public facilities.
5. To preserve mountains and high elevations.
6. To protect natural resources.
7. To protect the population of the town from overcrowding and loss of privacy.
8. To protect from pollution of all types.
9. To regulate the economic growth of the town and provision of roads.
10. To encourage the appropriate use of the land.
11. To assign the cost of services in a manner that is fair to those served and in accord with the land use objectives of the town.

## **POPULATION**

Mt. Holly's 1970 population totaled 687 permanent residents and indicates an increase of almost 33% over the preceding decade. The 1960's marked the first time in this century that the town had gained population and the town's rate of growth during this period was more than twice that of the Rutland Region's 15%.

The town's population growth during the 1960's coincided with several events which may or may not sustain a similar population growth through the 1970's. Probably of first importance was the state's and the region's participation in the national economic expansion of the middle 1960's. Better jobs and more diverse job opportunities opened in the nearby cities and towns. These openings gave residents the opportunity to remain in the town while deriving their income elsewhere. At the same time, because of the revived regional and state economy, others selected Mt. Holly as their residence.

A second factor was 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.

A third factor which has contributed significantly to the town resident population, is the retirement or re-location to the town on a permanent basis of a number of the town's long-term seasonal residents. Their retirement and relocation decisions probably had little to do with such economic factors. The question for the future is to what extent the town will experience a continuation of such a trend.

Relating these changes to the various population data shows that the specific contribution made by each of the population addition-types is difficult to estimate. One perspective is found in the fact that school enrollment increased almost as rapidly as did the permanent population - about 31% between the school year 1960/61 and 1970/71. This statistic supports the contention that a considerable part of the town's growth is attributable to new families rather than seasonal residents converting to permanent residency.

It should also 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. Formerly, seasonal housing was constructed for summer-season use, but that era has been by-passed with the advent of four-seasons recreation, and potential retirement and 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.

Based on these trends and factors, and available information, the population of the Rutland Region and of Mt. Holly is projected by decade to the year 2000. Projections for the Rutland Region are reported in the comprehensive plan of that area; those for Mt. Holly were developed by extending three separate trends; extension of the 1960-70 growth rate to the year 2000 (the high projection); and extension based on a compromise trend of twenty percent per decade reflecting the assumption that future growth will be less than that which occurred during the 1960-70 period, but greater than that of 1950-70 (the middle projection). These are presented not as predictions, but as suggested ranges of population which should be anticipated and considered in the town planning effort.

Referring to "Land Use and Planning Considerations for Town of Mt. Holly, as prepared by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, 1973, page 5, the Planning Commission and the Board of Selectmen should strive to keep large-scale development within the growth figure of 20% per decade as follows:

1970: 687  
1980: 824  
1990: 989  
2000: 1189

## **FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS**

Based on 1970 Census data and discussion with town Officials, the median number of persons per dwelling unit approximates three. At this time, mobile homes tend to be used as retirement homes for elderly couples or as first homes for small families. Several units are being used for seasonal occupancy.

Local land use policy will determine whether the mobile home becomes a major part of the additions to the supply in the future or whether it remains at its current percentage.

In projecting future housing needs, seasonal housing presents some problems. Since most of such housing is substantial enough in construction to serve as permanent dwellings, it should be included in the housing stock of the town—but then the seasonal population should also be included in the population total used to develop an idea of future needs.

The flat lands of Mt. Holly near the railroad are swampy and subject to flooding - under other conditions that land would be suitable for industrial development. Since the town's economy is largely geared to residence, agriculture, forestry and recreation, large-scale industry does not seem practical. The dangers of air and water pollution, together with the strain on town facilities such as schools, roads, parking space, and water supply, also weigh against major industrial development.

Small-scale businesses and industries which are environmentally "clean" seem more appropriate for Mt. Holly, such as development of a variety of home crafts, woodworking, blacksmithing, food specialties, forestry practices such as plantation tree growing, logging and maple sugaring, as well as all agricultural uses of the land are to be encouraged.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Mount Holly is served by 15 miles of State Highway (Class 1), 14.5 miles of State Aid Roads (Class 2) and 51 miles of Town roads in use (Class 3), State highway Routes 103 and 155 are major arteries crossing the town. Route 103 is heavily traveled by both commercial and pleasure vehicles. Since Route 155 has been paved and converted into a State Highway, its traffic load is constantly increasing.

The State Aid Roads extend from Route 155 in Tarbellville through Belmont and Mt. Holly to the Shrewsbury line, and from Healdville to Belmont. These serve in part as feeders to Routes 103 and 155.

Most of the Town Roads in Mt. Holly at the present time are dirt roads. Some of them remain impassable in the winter and spring. Quite a few Town Roads need to have the brush cut back on them and to be otherwise cleaned up. Some back roads have been dis-used and neglected; these are unfit for travel and should be classed as Class 4 Roads (Trails). The Town Roads will require more money in the next ten years as more people are building on them and will demand improved service.

Most of the wooden bridges and culverts in town have been replaced by steel ones; however, there are still some wooden ones left.

The Green Mountain Railroad has train tracks running alongside of Route 103 through Mt. Holly, but the future may call for a revival of passenger service. The Vermont Transit Bus line gives service to most places from Route 103 daily.

### **SCENIC ROADS**

Town Road 22 from Belmont for a distance of approximately 3/8 mile beginning about 5/8 mile so south of Belmont Village is designated as a Town Scenic Road. This road, through the lines of maple trees, and the surrounding countryside has been an important photographic area with pictures appearing in the Vermont Life Magazine, in a major photographic book on Vermont and on National television as part of a birthday tribute to Robert Frost (Winter 1974). Any roadwork or expansion which would alter or destroy these values should be discouraged.

### **IMPORTANT NATURAL AND WILDLIFE AREAS**

These areas are designated either by the Vermont Fish and Game Department or are listed in "Natural Areas of Vermont: An Inventory of Natural Areas, 1972-73". Any development which would disturb or destroy these areas should be discouraged.

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 ½ mile South of East Wallingford to 1-¼ miles South.
  - c. The area North and South of Route 155 and approximately ½ mile south of the village of Belmont and between town roads 22 and 23.
2. Important Wetlands:
  - a. Lake Ninevah: (Natural Areas Inventory #939B) waterfowl nesting and feeding areas of moderate to good use and quality, moderate migratory bird use.
  - b. Star Lake: Fishing use rated high.
  - c. Nameless Bog (Winslow's Flats) Natural Areas Inventory #941B) This area is rated moderate in nesting use by waterfowl and fur-bearing animals. It is rated excellent in waterfowl food and cover.
3. Hortonville Esker (Natural Areas Inventory 208G) This area is important geological feature illustrating glacial deposits.

## **LAND USE PATTERNS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE**

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, schools, homes, and road 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 largest number of the town's permanent residents are now concentrated near the major town road junctions and in the village clusters of Belmont, Mt. Holly, Hortonville as well as Tarbellville, Healdville and Bowlsville. Seasonal homes, though to a lesser extent, are found in these same areas. There are seasonal home clusters on the shoreline of Lake Ninevah and of Star Lake, but these remain the exceptions in the land pattern of the town through to the 1970's.

Commercial uses are almost all located along state routes 103 to 155. The town's proposed permanent zoning map encourages certain areas along route 103.

Dairy farming still exists in Belmont, Healdville, Tarbellville and Mt. Holly. Some beef cattle raising occurs on scattered locations in the town. The cheese factory relies on milk imported from East Wallingford and no longer depends on local sources.

## **PROPOSED LAND USE:**

As an introduction to this section, it is important to convey several concepts around which the proposed land use plan for Mt. Holly revolve. The first is that land with a slope in excess of 15% should be protected from any form of development.

The second concept is that land in excess of 2,000 feet of elevation should be retained in its natural state and its use carefully controlled. Such areas are important water-sheds and also tend to be difficult to service on a regular basis.

The third concept is that water bodies, streams, brooks, swamps and marshlands should be protected from pollution and inappropriate uses. Development near such areas should be carefully controlled, if allowed at all.

Fourth, the public investment in roads and highways requires that special attention be given to protecting that investment from infringement which is inconsistent with the primary objective of a road, that is, transportation.

Finally, competition for certain types of land requires that priorities for use be established. Wherever possible, land best sited for agricultural uses should be protected for that use.

In brief, future land use in the town should be consistent with an overall policy which respects the town's physical development limitations, and maintains its essentially

rural character.

Village clusters; Mt. Holly has developed historically as a group of villages with separate identities. Despite the many changes which have occurred since the town was first settled, these villages remain identifiable units today. It is proposed that future incremental, unit by unit, residential and related commercial growth in the town be encouraged to occur in and adjacent to the town's existing villages.

One may wonder why a town like Mt. Holly, with the abundance of open space it contains, should consider a policy of selected land acquisition. Upon a closer look, it is clear that because of rising land values and the attractiveness of the area for seasonal as well as year-round development, selective acquisition is vital now. Acquisition after development has occurred is excessively expensive; desirable parcels are frequently in uses which are not suitable for public acquisition. Furthermore, public acquisition of desirable and strategically located parcels can be used as a means of shaping the town's growth pattern along desirable lines.

The area near the Mt. Holly post office, immediately south of Route 103, is emerging as the town center. The town's administrative office, fire equipment garage, and elementary school are all located here. Land to the south and east of this area should be considered critical for further expansion of the town's present facilities; location of such other public facilities as may be required in the future.

Historically, the public beach at Star Lake has been sufficient to satisfy the local demand for water-based recreation. However, to accommodate increases in such demand as the town grows, the town should act now to ensure that its residents will have suitable alternatives to Star Lake for such activities. Although development of facilities adjacent to Lake Ninevah and Tiny Pond would be premature, acquisition of the land would be desirable now for the development of the sites as future demands emerge.

## **SEWAGE DISPOSAL**

There is no centralized public sewage collection and disposal system in Mt. Holly. The scattered settlement and the irregular terrain make it likely that in the foreseeable future, Belmont may be required to become a separate Sewage District for the purpose of installation of a centralized sewage system, cost to be borne by the users, with Federal and State Aid. It is possible that other closely-developed sections of Town may find it necessary to develop centralized sewage. An example of how such a project would be funded is detailed in "Land Use and Planning Considerations, Town of Mt. Holly" as compiled by David C. Hoeh, A.I.P. for the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

Since the absorptive powers of the town soil are very limited, and since the gradients are often relatively steep, much of the town cannot accommodate large numbers of septic tanks in close proximity without creating serious health hazards. It is important therefore that the density of future development be restricted in terms of percolation tests and adequate space for leaching fields.



The relationship of soil depth and slope to recommended housing density is clearly 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, Lake Ninevah has an unsafe level of mercury pollution; and Star Lake is subject to "bloom", or eutrophication, the excessive growth of algae, probably resulting in part from phosphates in detergents and fertilizers. The town should take steps to clean up its polluted streams and to protect the quality of water in its lakes.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

Approximately one-third of the town residences have water supplied by springs; most of the other homes have drilled wells, the depths varying from 60 to 320 feet. The village of Belmont has two small, separate spring-fed water systems serving several homes. Again it may be necessary in the future to form a separate district for the centralized water supply for Belmont, cost to be borne by users with Federal and State Aid. A suggested method of funding such a system is detailed in "Land Use and Planning Considerations, Town of Mt. Holly" as compiled by David C. Hoeh, A.I.P., for probably the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (1973). The other areas of the town will probably have to continue to rely on individual sources for domestic water. This is presently practical because of the wide spacing of dwellings. However, too great a density of development should be prevented, to avoid the double dangers of pollution and overtaxing of the underground water sources.

Water for fighting fires is drawn from any available stream or pond by the Volunteer Fire Department. The two water systems in Belmont are not large enough to support hydrants, but Star Lake and its outlet provide abundant water for this village. Installation of a few hydrants connecting the lake with points in the village would improve protection. In the more rural areas of the town, the digging of fire ponds with dry hydrants should be encouraged.

## **SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

The present town dump is illegal under the Vermont Sanitary Landfill Act of 1967, which required that all open dumps be closed by July 1, 1969, and that solid wastes be disposed of in sanitary landfill dumps or approved incinerators. Mt. Holly will soon be required to close its present dump and to make other provisions for disposal of its solid wastes.

Since a sanitary landfill dump requires a special kind of site and is extremely expensive to operate, Mt. Holly cannot afford to develop her own. The town principal alternatives for the immediate future seem to be: (1) to cooperate with other towns in the region in developing a joint sanitary landfill, or (2) to contract with a private collection agency to gather the town's solid waste in containers and export it to a private sanitary landfill. The latter solution seems more practical at present. In the

longer run, the transportation of Mt. Holly's solid wastes to a regional recycling plant seems the most desirable and likely permanent solution. Stumps, stones, brush, leaves, grass, and fill can probably still be disposed of in a town site like the present dump. Junk cars and other large metal objects such as appliances and barrels can be collected at a town site and periodically disposed of by a car crusher. Funds are available from the State Highway Department for the development of sites for the disposal of bulky metallic waste.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

Mt. Holly has a volunteer Fire Department having a complement of 30 men. Their equipment consists of one 1,000 gallon tank truck and two pumper trucks holding 500 gallons of water each, with two-stage centrifugal pumps and 300 gallon booster tanks, with a rated pumping capacity of 500 gallons per minute for each truck. The Department also has a car trailer for carrying hose and equipment as well as three portable pumps each with a pumping capacity of 250 gallons per minute.

Water for fighting fires in Mt. Holly is drawn from streams or ponds. Although the spring-fed water systems in Belmont are not large enough to support hydrants, Star Lake and its outlet provide abundant water for this village. Installation of a few hydrants connecting the lake with points in the village would improve protection. In the more rural areas of the town, the digging of fire ponds with dry hydrants should be encouraged.

The Mt. Holly Fire Department is also a member of the Rutland County Mutual Aid Assn., as are all Rutland County communities.

## **TOWN GOVERNMENT**

As the population of the town grows and the number of State laws bearing on town government increases, it becomes more difficult for the selectmen to cope with the growing complexity of their duties. The town should therefore continue to consider authorizing the selectmen to appoint a town manager to assist them on a part-time basis.

Another increasing problem is police protection. The growth of the town, the extension of tarred road surfaces, and the appearance of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles raise the danger of traffic violations (especially speeding), vandalism, breaking and entering, and robbery. The town is almost without protection against such crimes at present. Every effort must be made to secure additional police protection from County, State and Federal sources until the town grows enough to be able to afford its own law enforcement officers on a full-time basis.

In addition to regular maintenance of existing public buildings, the town should plan for the construction of a new garage space to house the expensive road equipment which at present stands outdoors all year. An effort should also be made to solve the problem of providing toilet facilities in the Town Hall.

The Town should consider adopting capital budgeting and a capital improvement program-raising funds in advance for specific foreseeable expenses - instead of waiting until the needs arise and then borrowing at higher final cost to the taxpayers. In the event of an Act 250 hearing, a capital improvement plan, if adopted by the town, would put the burden of proof on the developer to show that his development conforms with future growth plans for the town.

Communication between public officials and the people needs improvement. Between the annual town reports and town meeting, the townspeople receive little information about town government. A new monthly newsletter for Mt. Holly called "Chit-Chat" is a step in the right direction to accomplish this need. A new rapid system of communication with the Volunteer Fire Department than the present telephone chain needs to be developed such as an Electron Radio System.

The, people of Mt. Holly are well 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 town should do everything possible to regain a fair share of State Aid.

Our elementary school at this time has 35% more pupils than it was built to accommodate. The hot lunch program and the general-purpose room have been eliminated, as a result of overcrowding. Storage facilities are very inadequate. There is no provision for indoor physical education. As soon as possible, the School Board will have to find means to provide additional space and improved facilities.

On September 27, 1973, at an officially warned meeting, the Ludlow-Mt. Holly Union District #39 was formed for the specific purpose of supplying better education and assuring facilities to educate Jr.-Sr. High School students from Mt. Holly, grades 7 through 12.

Because of rising school costs and the fact that the present school is overcrowded, it is recommended that the Mt. Holly Subdivision Regulations be amended to assess a substantial charge on any developer for each lot sold or each house built in excess of three units as set forth in the Mt. Holly Subdivision Regulations. This money would be used to cover the cost of either an additional school or expansion of present facilities. Anyone who builds a house for his own residence would not come under such a regulation.

## **RECREATION**

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 activity. Today hiking, snowmobiles, ski touring, horseback riding and camping have been added, while the ponds and streams have provided excellent swimming, boating and fishing. Forest areas, important water courses and open spaces should be maintained and protected to foster these dispersed types of recreational activity. With increasing pressure from development, steps must be

undertaken to prevent the overuse and commercial recreational exploitation of these areas, which would destroy those very values and activities so important to the town.

The town has an obligation, and that is to its present and future residents. It owes nothing to developers, exploiters, speculators, and the like. The town should consider carefully the benefits and costs of growth which are outside the pattern which has been evident in the past. Those areas of the town not suited to development should be protected.

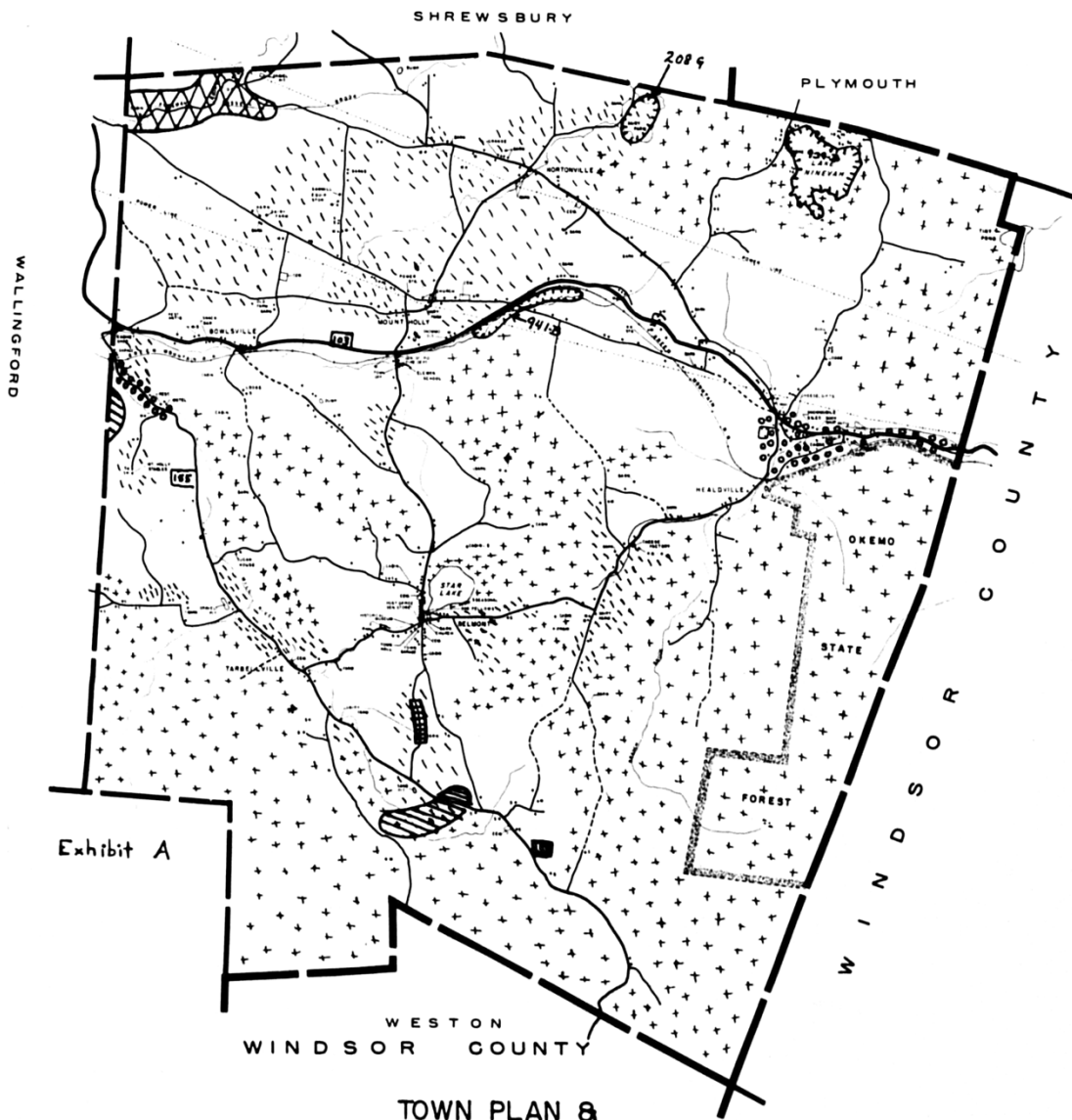
**CHANGES TO PROPOSED NEW TOWN PLAN** - (this change turned over to the Selectmen for discussion at their hearing on the Town Plan.

Page 6 "Proposed Land Uses", the words "that would have any adverse effect upon the land" be added to the first paragraph at the end.

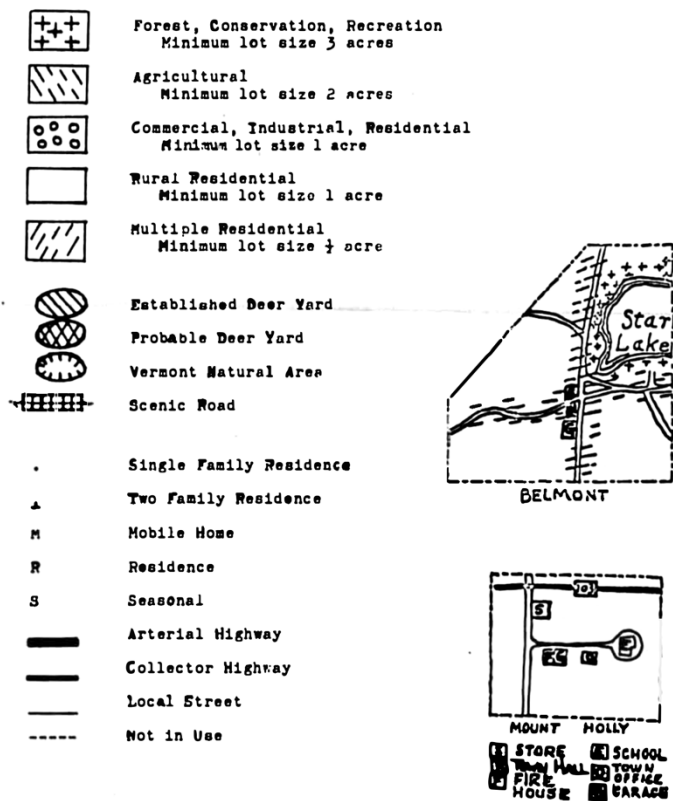
Mr. Sylvester Brown has suggested that a change be made showing that the present school was built for 75 students, current year enrolled 89, an increase of 18%. This matter will also be brought up at the Selectmen Hearing October 17, 1974.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION**

TOWN OF MT. HOLLY, VT.



KEY  
TOWN PLAN & TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
MOUNT HOLLY, VERMONT



NATURAL FORMATIONS

OPTIMUM LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

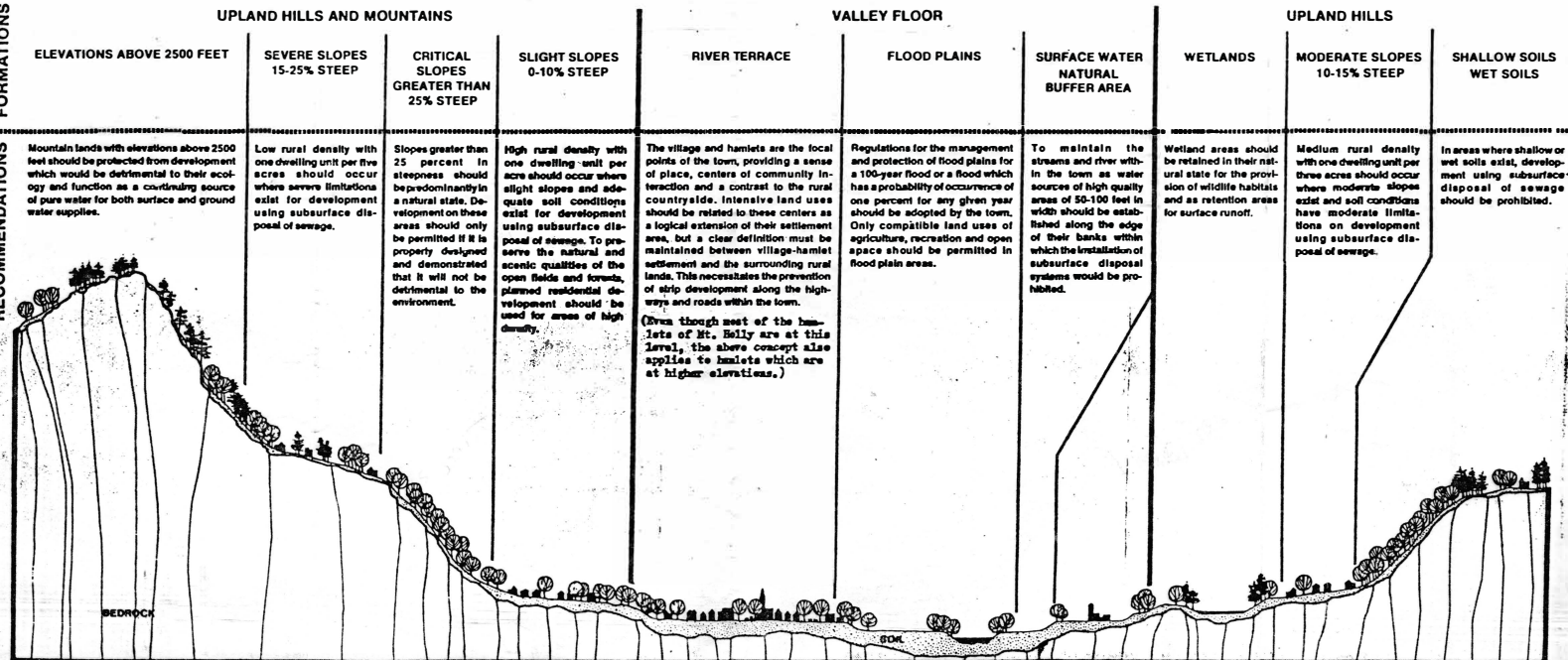


Exhibit B

## OPTIMUM LAND USE DIAGRAM

The diagram above illustrates many of the planning recommendations for optimum land use within the town. Future development must recognize and protect natural formations and processes which are inherently beneficial to man.