

BELMONT VILLAGE PLAN



PREPARED BY:

Mount Holly Grant Administration Working Group

PREPARED FOR:

Town of Mount Holly, VT Selectboard

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:



REGROWTH
PLANNING



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RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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Mill Brook as it passes beneath one of the homes in the historic district.



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Belmont Village Plan

Executive Summary

The Village of Belmont has completed a community planning discussion which sought to identify issues and opportunities that residents feel are important to the economic well being of the town, vitality of the village, our health, the environment, and our overall quality of life. This document was prepared to summarize that process and make recommendations for the future of Belmont Village.

We believe that the village would benefit from some measured growth and enhancements which reflect its history as a center of local activity, inviting more energy and vibrancy to the area. In order to enable this growth, the town should investigate the feasibility of a shared community septic system which could serve the village, allowing home and business owners to shed their aging septic systems, accommodate additional septic capacity for desired business and housing expansions, and relocate waste contaminants away from our source of groundwater. Additional housing diversity in and around the village is needed to provide a place where local seniors can afford to downsize within the town they love, as well as younger workers seeking year-round rental options. The septic improvements to support this could be installed over time, in concert with necessary stormwater replacements which have become more necessary since the flooding earlier this year, some of which require immediate attention.

These changes would be supported by a continued dedication to clean the waters of Star Lake, enhance the recreation area, and work toward the development of a network of walking paths winding in and around the village as part of a very attractive local recreational amenity.

It is recommended that the Town Selectboard apply to renew the Village Center Designation with some boundary corrections, and begin seeking grant funding to put some of these plans in motion.

Sincerely,

Mount Holly Municipal Planning Grant Working Group

PART I

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

Introduction

Every community benefits from developing a longer-term vision to help guide and plan for the future. Planning and strategy efforts such as these help to identify long-range policies, big-picture goals and improvements desired by local residents which might otherwise be overlooked in the day-to-day operation of the town. They help to provide each municipality with a guide to future decision making that is aligned with the larger will of the community and designed to span multiple elected administrations. This plan, developed for the Village of Belmont, seeks to identify important issues and opportunities for improvements within the village, including issues related to infrastructure, housing and economic development, and craft a vision for how the community could best address them.

In April 2003 the Town of Mount Holly was awarded an official Village Center Designation, by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), for an area encompassing much of the historic Belmont hamlet. The approved boundaries of this village center (**See Map A, pg. 4**), have been re-approved on a recurring basis and were most recently renewed and approved on April 26, 2016. Village center designation is intended to identify older historic settlements and population clusters in the state which are candidates for community revitalization. These designations are designed to help direct new growth to match historic settlement patterns, and reduce unwanted sprawl from infiltrating our more rural Vermont countryside. Village centers also receive priority consideration in a number of state grants, and often qualify for other funding opportunities which are

not otherwise available toward these goals. This can provide a community with the resources and funding it needs to implement many desired community improvements.

The Town of Mount Holly has since applied for a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to develop this plan for the Village of Belmont using the village center designation status. The town was awarded the grant in January 2022, and the planning process was begun in the Spring of 2022. On September 9, 2022, the Town requested, and was granted, a one-time 4 month extension to the 2022 MPG term.

Municipal Planning Grant Working Group

This planning effort, and the grant which funds it, was spearheaded and overseen by a group of volunteers who form the Municipal Planning Grant Working Group. These volunteers include: Municipal Authorizing Official Jeff Chase (Select Board member, Emergency Management Director); Grant Administrator Jon McCann (Planning Commission Chair); and Steering Group members Anna McGee Hanson (Mount Holly Rescue Squad, Friends of Star Lake volunteer); Russ Garrow (Emergency Management Coordinator, former Fire Chief); Andy Bolalek (Village property owner); Lisa Kelly (Community Association, former Belmont store owner); Kevin Hollebeck (Community

Association); David Martin (Conservation Commission, Mount Holly Conservation Trust, Mount Holly School Board); Faith Tempest (Town Administrative Officer); Jessica Metcalfe (Rutland Regional Planning Commission representative).

This group met regularly in the Town Office and on Zoom, working in conjunction with professional consultants from Community Roots, LLC, and Regrowth Planning, LLC, which were retained by the town using the available grant funding. The role of the Working Group has been to organize the planning effort, collect information, review materials, develop and refine the recommendations outlined in this plan.

The Planning Process

The process used to develop this plan was organized around seeking initial input from the larger community to help understand what the local concerns and priorities were. The input collected was used to help develop some initial draft recommendations which were then presented to the public for discussion, and adapted into a Draft Plan for review and comment by the public. Based on public comments, the Draft Plan was then revised and updated into a Final Plan for review and consideration. The details of each step are outlined in more detail below.

Community Survey. A town-wide community survey was developed with assistance from Community Roots, LLC, to collect initial public opinion on a variety of topics felt to be of importance to local residents, property and business owners. In particular, the survey sought to identify and understand community viewpoints related to local issues of housing, natural environment, economic development and public infrastructure. The survey also provided the opportunity for respondents to



Public Outreach. *Handing out informational flyers to village residents about the upcoming public workshop.*

write-in additional ideas or concerns not covered in the provided questions which they felt should be addressed.

The survey was made available in both hardcopy paper format as well as online, and administered between November 1st and November 30th, 2022, with advertising and links provided on the town website, Newsflash email distribution, the November issue of Chit Chat and various other local community forums. A total of 172 responses were collected.

Several common themes emerged from this survey which were identified as being important to the future of Mount Holly. Overall, there was very



MAP A
VILLAGE CENTER

**VILLAGE CENTER
BOUNDARY**

DRAFT

BEIMONT ROAD

TARBELVILLE ROAD

MAPLE HILL ROAD

STAR LAKE

LAKE STREET

CHURCH STREET

VILLAGE CENTER
BOUNDARY



strong support for the protection of the rural and working agricultural landscape and the small town character which defines Mount Holly. Likewise, protection of the natural environment—Star Lake and water quality in particular—and how these relate and support outdoor, nature-based recreation. The community noted a desire for more housing diversity, particularly as it related to availability and affordability for younger families and senior residents.

At the time of this survey, the future of the Belmont Store was uncertain, and many residents voiced interest in keeping this local amenity, as well as some limited village-focused small businesses. There was also a need identified for improved infrastructure, with village water and sewer necessary to support some additional growth, as well as improved broadband, cell service, and renewable energy support. The strengthening of community spirit,

through local events and opportunities for social interactions, were also valued as very important considerations in maintaining the identity of Mount Holly. A strong sense of community was particularly important to retain with a high percentage of second homeowners and many new residents locating in the area. Lastly, it was noted that an inclusive and transparent local government was desired by residents, with updated local emergency services and facilities.

The full results of the survey have been documented in the Mount Holly 2022 Community Vision Survey Summary Report, a copy of which is provided in the Appendix of this document for reference.

Public Workshop. A public workshop was held on May 24, 2023 at the Belmont Community Room to present some of the results of the Community Vision Survey and initial draft recommendations



Public Workshop - Public meeting held at the Belmont Community Center, May 24th, 2023.

as part of an open discussion. Approximately 30 people attended this meeting. Initial ideas relating to potential septic improvements, housing, short-term rentals and recreational improvements were presented for discussion.

Overall reception to the preliminary ideas was generally favorable, although many people expressed curiosity about where the funding to implement these ideas could come from, and how long they could take to be realized.

General consensus from those in attendance that evening was that there needed to be a little more activity and vitality in Belmont, things to do, places to go, and that the ideas presented seemed to work toward that goal. It was suggested by several people that the plan needed to include stormwater improvements since the village experiences several problems with erosion, storm runoff and inadequate drainage in places. The ideas presented for various walking paths around the village were very popular, although the exact route(s) were identified by some as needing further study and refinement. Housing was also a popular topic, with much of the discussion related to the needs of local seniors and long-term renters, and how their availability was often impacted by market forces, speculative developers and the pros and cons of short-term rentals such as AirBnB. The issue of vehicle speeds and traffic safety was also raised by several people, who noted that there needed to be a way to slow traffic down and get people to stop at stop signs.

There was a general desire to see some more small local business and activity in the village center to attract people, give them more things to do and more reasons to come, while at the same time caution that there should not be “too much” business. People questioned what methods could be used to control business growth so that it remains within a size and scale appropriate for the village.

Residents expressed an interest in getting Star Lake Park swimming area cleaned up and expanded with other amenities, though they pointed out that water quality issues with the lake would likely need to be addressed first before more swimming was a viable attraction. Attendees were overall supportive of a generalized concept to provide a shared community septic system to the village as a strategy to reduce local water quality contaminants and provide some septic capacity for business expansion. Many people felt that this strategy was worth investigating further, but wanted to get more details on how much such a system might cost, how it would work, and where funding would come from to construct it.

This meeting was video recorded, and the video as well as a copy of the presentation slides were made available on the town website shortly afterward. Notes from this public workshop have been provided in the Appendix for reference.

Draft Plan Presentation. Utilizing the input from the public workshop and discussions with Steering Committee members, a draft Belmont Village Plan was developed and made available to the public on August 11, 2023. This was followed by a public meeting and presentation to solicit input from local residents, property and business owners on the draft, which was attended by approximately 40 people.

Major discussion themes which emerged from this meeting included the recent flooding and storm damage which occurred on July 9th, desired traffic calming measures, lake water quality, as well as significant interest in the town conducting some form of outreach or poll to identify property owners who may be interested in participating in a future community septic system. Several residents indicated that although they lived outside the boundary of the designated village center, they may be interested in having septic service to replace their current system,

and wanted to know if they could be potentially eligible. It was suggested that initial outreach to property owners could help to help to identify the potential size of any desired community septic service in advance of a feasibility study, and such outreach would help to give the town selectboard a measure of community support for moving ahead with this effort. There was also interest in having the feasibility study determine what the eventual costs would be of such a system, both to the town and end-users, as well as any impact to the local taxes.

Attendees noted that the temporary (seasonal) speed bumps proposed in the draft plan may not be adequate enough, and that additional measures may be needed, particularly in the east-west travel directions.

Additional discussion included the necessary replacement of the box culvert underneath Belmont Street, the desire to relocate or underground the overhead utility lines, feasibility of some of the

proposed walking trails, and the need to address the water quality issues of the lake.

Notes from this presentation have been provided in the Appendix for reference, as well as a link to the video recording of the meeting made available to the public on the project webpage.

Online/Email Input. Over the course of this planning effort, additional comments and suggestions from the community related to the Belmont Village Plan were collected and considered through the email address mounthollycommunitysurvey@gmail.com set up and managed by the Working Group, as well as an online comment form which collected input on the draft plan. A project webpage, located at www.mounthollyvt.org/planning-commission/municipal-planning-grant/, was used to post information, announcements and materials related to the planning effort.



Draft Presentation - Public meeting held at the Belmont Community Center, August 16, 2023.

PART II

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Belmont Village Center consists of approximately 50 buildings, primarily single-family residential in nature, including several historic buildings as well as many community-focused operations. These include the Belmont General Store, U.S. Post Office (within the general store building), the Mount Holly Community Historical Museum, Oddfellows Hall meeting space, Baptist Church, Belmont Village Fire Station, and the Mount Holly Library which includes a Community Room space on its lower level. The village also includes two publicly-available outdoor spaces, including the Village Green (on church property) as well as the town-owned Recreation Area on the southwest shore of Star Lake. Mill Brook traverses through the village westward from the dam at Star Lake Recreation Area. Less than ten percent of the structures in Belmont Village were constructed after 1900, creating a charming historic village atmosphere.

Over the course of this planning effort, different issues and opportunities for this area were identified for discussion and consideration. These are briefly described below.

Wastewater Septic Limitations

Like many smaller historic Vermont villages, Belmont evolved as a cluster of buildings on relatively small lots, eventually to be served by their own on-site septic systems. While this has served the community relatively well over the years, it has begun to cause issues more recently related to water quality, health, economic development and infill growth potential.

Today, several of these aging septic systems have begun to fail, and it is anticipated that more private systems will likely begin to fail in the coming years. In some cases, it is believed that these failing systems are contributing to the contamination of Mill Brook, and Star Lake. This is coupled with a significant overlap of the recommended isolation zones for private septic systems and individual water wells on each property. This issue is illustrated in **Map B - Existing Wellhead Isolation Zones (pg. 10)**, where a 100 foot isolation zone for each approximate well location is shown overlapping with many adjacent properties and wastewater systems, creating potential water contamination and health issues. Although much of the village used to be served by the Mechanicsville Aqueduct water supply, reliability of that supply led many homeowners to abandon the aqueduct and drill their own on-site wells, which do not meet contemporary required separation distance from wastewater.

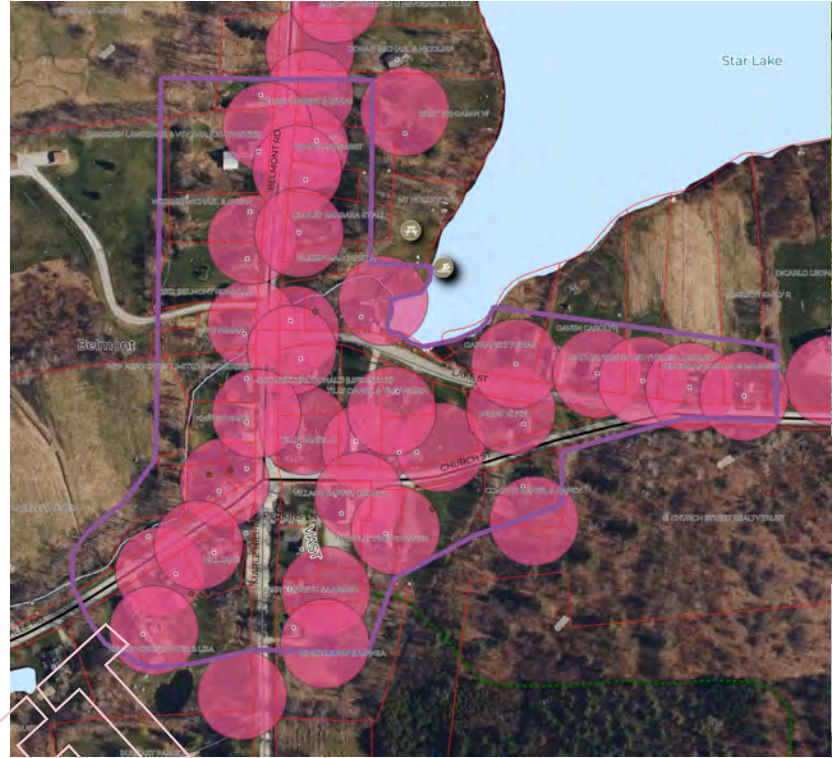
A second concern related to the wastewater issue is that the currently inadequate septic capacity is hindering desired economic development within the village, which in turn hinders economic development for the town. The Belmont General Store, now under new ownership, has been unable to expand or add additional seats for food service due to the lack of space to accommodate a new system. In a similar fashion, it has been unable to maintain rental apartments on the second floor due to septic limitations. The Mount Holly Library and Community Room have likewise had insufficient capacity to accommodate a desired pre-school group or serve as a local emergency shelter due to the limitations of their system, which consists of only

a holding tank which must be routinely pumped and has no room for expansion. Other village property owners have been unable to meet septic requirements for building an additional bedroom, creating an accessory dwelling unit, or adapting to a commercial use.

Lastly, it should be noted that the footprint of on-site septic systems on each of the small parcels within the village often preclude owners from building additions or accessory dwelling units because their septic systems are occupying much of their potential building area. The existing wastewater septic infrastructure within the village has made it difficult or impossible to support commercial or residential infill expansion which would otherwise benefit the village and the town, and provide supplemental income or dwelling units for homeowners. These deficiencies were first noted in a report by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission back in 1973, however potential remedies at that time were considered to be cost-prohibitive for the town to undertake. As a result, no significant progress has been made to resolve the issues, and conditions have not improved. It is critical that new strategies be developed and considered which can address the health and water quality issues while allowing reasonable room for some commercial and residential growth within and around the village.

Aging Stormwater System

The existing stormwater infrastructure within the Village of Belmont is aging, often provides insufficient flow capacity where it is present, does not adequately capture runoff in other areas and currently creates obstacles to some village parking options which could otherwise improve the community. Stormwater systems are important components of controlling heavy rainfalls, reducing flood and erosion impacts which undermine



Map B - Existing Wellhead Isolation Zones. *Approximate 100 foot radius isolation zones from individual property well locations. This illustrates the amount of overlap with nearby wastewater systems on each property as well as adjacent properties. Note: 100 ft radius shown here assumes flat/level terrain for simplicity, actual isolation zones on uneven/sloping terrain would be larger. Source: Town of Mount Holly.*

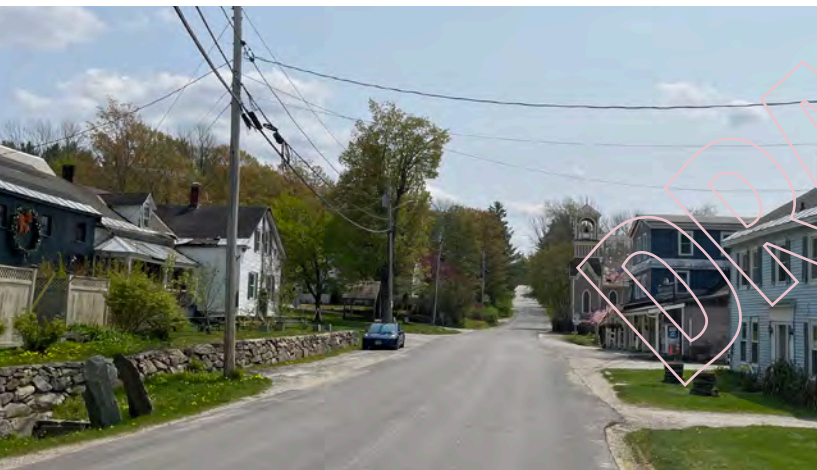
roadways, and help to reduce sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen from entering and contaminating local waterbodies.

During the May 24th public workshop, several residents noted that these stormwater issues needed to be addressed, particular where open stormwater inlets interfere with on-street parking potential and can be a hazard for pedestrians. Also existing utility poles and open stormwater inlets (see detail below) are creating obstacles within the town right-of-way, making it difficult to plow parking areas in the winter.

These stormwater issues were highlighted recently by a July 9th, 2023 rainstorm and flooding event which caused severe road and private property



Stormwater Inlet. Open stormwater inlet interferes with on-street parking potential and can be a hazard for pedestrians.

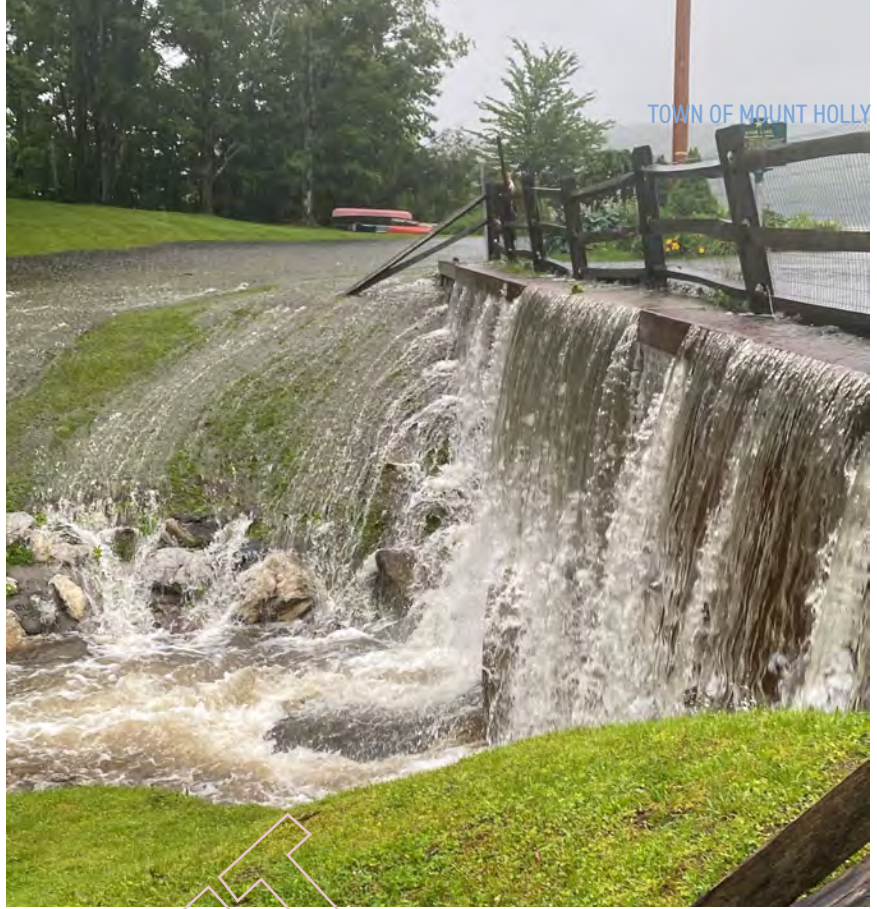


Belmont Road Obstacles. Existing utility poles and open stormwater inlets (see detail below) are creating obstacles within the town right-of-way, making it difficult to plow in the winter or use this area for parking.



damage in the village. Damage occurred along Belmont Road and Church Street as well as to several private residences in the vicinity. Of particular concern is the outlet stream from Star Lake as it crosses underneath Belmont Road. The existing concrete and stone box culvert here is undersized for handling storm events and is nearing its design life expectancy. During the July 9th storm the culvert could not handle the flow of water and was surcharging (see photos pg. 12) at the inlet due to the high volume of lake runoff, resulting in the flooding of Belmont Road and adjoining properties. This storm resulted in structural damage to the inlet side walls of the box culvert, which currently appears to be failing, and significant roadway damage (see photos pg. 12). This also resulted in private property damage to several driveways, building interiors, foundations and basements of adjacent homes. One home in particular—which the damaged box culvert runs underneath—may not be salvageable if the replacement culvert needs to be increased in size. While it would ideally be preferable to avoid having to destroy this residence, it is currently unknown if any future culvert replacement will be able to engineer a way around it.

The Town has been working on temporary repairs, however more extensive permanent repairs and culvert replacements will be necessary to fix this stormwater network. Although Stormwater system deficiencies had already been identified by local residents as an important issue, the recent flooding events of this year has brought them into sharper focus.



July 9, 2023 Storm Flooding. Overflow from Star Lake pouring through the spillway (above); Star Lake outflow at Belmont Street surcharging beyond its design capacity (left); Overflow and flooding at Belmont Road where the stone and concrete culvert passes underneath the road. (below).





July 9, 2023 Storm Damage. Damage and repairs underway at Belmont Road, where the surcharging culvert compromised the road integrity (above); Photo inside the existing culvert where structural damage and failure is clearly visible (below).

The 2021 Mount Holly Local Hazard Mitigation Plan noted that among various potential hazards facing the local community, flooding ranked as the largest threat. This aging stormwater system needs to be replaced and improved to better handle moderate to severe storm events. This will likely require engineering analysis and design to determine the most cost-effective options, and should be coordinated with other planned improvements discussed in this plan for cost efficiency.





Stormwater Issues. The driveway of the church on Church Street is commonly washed out from an outlet pipe located uphill (above) and the resulting washout is carried down to the intersection where gravel deposits collect and create a hazardous condition for vehicles attempting to stop on the hill (below); Catch basins in the village are commonly clogged with gravel and debris, hampering proper drainage (right).





Water Quality

With the preservation of natural resources among the top priorities identified in the Community Survey, the protection of water quality in and around the Village of Belmont is an important consideration of this plan. This topic includes the protection and enhancement of Star Lake and related waterways, drinking water supply sources, viability of water-related recreation as well as related issues of stormwater runoff and septic design.

The 62-acre Star Lake, technically identified as a Class II wetland, represents both a wonderful visual asset to the Village of Belmont as well as a recreational amenity. However this body of water has been suffering from water quality and pollution issues which have prevented it from reaching its full potential. This has resulted in the Star Lake Recreation Area regularly needing to be closed, preventing its continued use for picnics, fishing and swimming. The recurring weed overgrowth of invasive species such as Eurasian Milfoil and Water

Lilies as well as other vegetative growth has also significantly reduced its value as an active recreation area, tourist attraction and scenic asset.

Although the town and volunteers have worked repeatedly to clear this growth from the water and install underwater growth barriers, it continues to require removal multiple times a year. Previously, the town had utilized herbicide and mechanical efforts to control the milfoil, however this came at an annual cost of over \$20,000 and has not been completed again in the last decade. Regular algae blooms in August and occasional fish kills have also served as a deterrent to potential swimmers.

The town has been applying for an annual permit to discourage migratory Canadian Geese from soiling the water and adjacent recreation area, and this effort has proven to be generally effective. While the overall quality of the lake water is regularly tested and appears acceptable, contamination levels typically rise after storm events, potentially from stormwater runoff and overburdened septic systems

within the watershed of the lake perimeter, mostly outside the boundary of the village.

The combination of shallow water depth, slow water movement, bright sunlight, warm water temperatures and nutrients introduced to the lake create conditions which make water quality control difficult. Local residents would like to see these water quality issues improved, and believe that it would manifest an increase in local recreational enjoyment as well as encourage more visitors and tourists to come to Belmont.

The Mechanicsville Aqueduct historically served the Village of Belmont with a supply of drinking water for many decades, sourced from a series of freshwater springs on nearby Hedgehog Hill. This open-cistern system however experienced problems with debris and other contaminants falling into the water supply, inconsistent flow and occasional freezing in colder winter months. As a result, many residents within the village opted to switch to

private water wells on their land for more reliable service, although the aqueduct remains working and viable. Today, the town works to protect this water source from development and disturbance. Given the desire for additional growth within the village and potential contamination concerns with some existing private wells, this aqueduct remains an important opportunity for a secondary water supply.

"We must prioritize protecting our natural environment, preserving our two lakes and helping people access local recreation in the town."

~ Community survey response



Star Lake Recreation Area

Housing

This issue of housing has become increasingly important over the years as people are finding it more difficult to find homes and rental properties which are reasonably affordable. This appears to be particularly true for senior citizens and younger workforce residents and families who wish to remain in the area.

The Affordable Housing Market Analysis conducted for Mount Holly in 2006 noted that there was an unmet demand for reasonably priced dwelling units and there was evidence that some people had left the area for more affordable options elsewhere. This trend has been pushed further with a new influx of people buying up properties in more rural areas since the COVID pandemic, and rising home prices. Although the topic of housing ranked relatively lower than other issues in the Community Survey, many respondents noted that there was a need to address the issue of availability and affordability for

the long-term well being of the community. Some feel that their children should be able to afford to live here, others noted that there were too many second homes.

Although the Village of Belmont has always had a seasonal/summer vacation component, there is some lament for the fact that many local houses remain vacant during the winter months, and that this has a direct effect on community cohesiveness. Seniors queried in the 2023 local Senior Survey sometimes noted they have concerns about being able to remain living in the area, with the difficulty of maintaining a larger home, concerns about isolation and loneliness as they get older in a remote and rural environment. Residents also expressed thoughts on the pros and cons of short-term rentals. While these provide opportunities for people to come visit Mount Holly and enjoy what it has to offer, they can also take away viable long-term rentals which might otherwise be useful to regular locals.

While there is limited space within the village center, the Village of Belmont provides the most logical and ideal location for denser, more affordable housing options, provided the water and septic needs can be addressed. Denser housing in this area would provide many benefits. It can provide relatively more affordable options, it helps to avoid development of the more rural and agricultural areas, creates a walkable environment to support local village businesses, and provides a closer-knit community of socialization for seniors who otherwise feel isolated and are seeking to downsize. The Village of Belmont provides a potential opportunity to allow and encourage more diverse housing options which better serve the needs of local families.





Local Businesses

In recent times, the commercial services provided within the Village of Belmont have been largely limited to the existence of the Belmont General Store, an establishment which has been in local operation for many years and is greatly valued by the community as an important local asset. Stores such as this, along with the local Post Office, provide a regular socialization hub and reinforce a sense of community beyond the simple convenience of being able to run local errands. They can also offer economic development, jobs and attract visitors which help to support the town financially.

Respondents in the Community Survey indicated that while they do not wish to see a large amount of new commercial development in Mount Holly, there was some desire for limited additional small local businesses within the village to create more activity and things to do. This sentiment was echoed in the May 24th Public Workshop, where people indicated that the village could benefit from a little

more activity. Historically, the village used to have more commercial enterprises providing jobs and activity—including but not limited to the Chase Toy Factory—and today there remains some potential for new business enterprises to be established or expanded.

Commercial businesses are also an important component in a town's ability to help offset the tax burden of residential growth. A 1991 report on Mount Holly's Financial Capacity to Accommodate Growth found that the overall property tax burden in the town had been rising faster than that of neighboring municipalities and the state as a whole.

The town would benefit financially from having some additional non-residential tax revenue to offset this. However, new business growth or expansion within the village is currently limited by existing septic and water capacities discussed above, as well as parking.

Village Streetscape & Parking

The streetscape in the core of the village would benefit from some improvements which would provide a safer and more walkable village center with additional parking and improved landscaping. Homes in walkable neighborhoods, especially close to daily destinations and recreational amenities, have become extremely popular.

Currently, on-street parking along Belmont Street is impeded by existing utility poles and open stormwater drains or inlets. This problem is further exacerbated in the winter months when snowplows cannot clear through these obstacles and the accumulated snow storage takes up available parking space. If these obstacles could be removed it would help to provide more parking right in the center of the village for the store and other local businesses. This may also present the opportunity to relocate overhead utility lines underground, something which could improve the small town visual appeal of the village. Additional opportunities for off-street parking should also be considered, particularly to support larger, community-wide events.

The unique parking and intersection arrangement in front of the Post Office and Belmont Store creates a condition where there is no room to place a stop sign for southbound traffic on Belmont Street, even though northbound traffic does have a stop sign. This creates a confusing condition for visitors who may expect southbound vehicles to yield to them as they enter the intersection. The existing “head-in” parking configuration in front of the Belmont Store also has potential issues which could be improved. The current practice of head-in parking in front of



the store often blocks the line of sight for vehicles approaching from Tarbellville Road to Belmont Road, and does not lend itself well to customers seeking to pull up to the gas pump in front of the store. According to local residents, it used to be parallel parking in front of the store until some years ago when that practice was abandoned. Streetscape improvements within the town right-of-way at this key intersection may be able to improve these safety issues and clarify the parking conditions, ideally to include gas pump use, handicapped parking and a 5-minute parking space for the Post Office. These arrangements will likely need to be coordinated with the new store owners to align with their plans from the front of the store, and provides the opportunity to include some landscaping enhancements.

The existing triangular island intersection at Belmont and Lake has also been noted by residents as somewhat confusing and unnecessary. It doesn't function as a "splitter island" to direct traffic flow, and travelers are sometimes confused as to which

side of the island they should be turning from. It also takes up additional width which could potentially be used to accommodate some on-street parking along Belmont and other improvements such as walking paths within the town right-of-way. The reconfiguration of this corner into a basic "T" intersection would help to clarify the intended vehicle movements and provide space for other uses.

Overall, several residents have commented on their concerns about the safety of walking in the village. Vehicle speeds are often an issue, and people don't always stop for stop signs. The lack of road shoulders and sidewalks make walking in the roadway unpleasant and sometime dangerous. Future changes within the town right-of-way should be geared toward helping to correct these conditions, slow traffic and make for a safer and more pleasant walking and biking experience.





Recreation

Parks and public recreation facility improvements were noted in the Community Survey as one of the top issues to be addressed by the town in the next few years. With this in mind, the Village of Belmont would greatly benefit from several accessibility and amenity enhancements at the Star Lake Recreation Area, as well as a system of recreational walking paths connecting various points of interest within the village.

The Star Lake Recreation area is a one-acre parcel of town-owned land on the southwestern shore of Star Lake. Currently, the full enjoyment and potential of this park is being impeded by several factors, beyond just the water quality issues described earlier. Currently, pedestrian and maintenance access into the park is only available through an informal parking area adjacent to the Oddfellows Hall. Visitors and maintenance crews must enter by going around a steep raised berm created by

the existing dam structure underneath. Because the berm is a protected element of the dam structure, it cannot be modified, and vehicles are prohibited from driving over it. This arrangement is not currently ADA accessible, makes the park difficult to find, and gives visitors the incorrect impression that they must cross through someone's private property and over a steep berm to enter the site. It also prevents town maintenance crews from accessing the park with any larger vehicles or machinery.

The result is an awkward and unwelcoming entry to what should be a friendly and inviting public space. A secondary means of accessing the park needs to be found, with suitable accommodations for maintenance or emergency vehicles. Changes should also be made to make this entry from Lake Street more readily visible and welcoming to pedestrian approach as an obvious park entry.

The issue of park access is somewhat compounded by limited parking availability. A pull-off area on the

north side of Lake Street—which at first appears to be a logical parking area—is in fact strictly reserved for the Fire Department to have emergency access to the two dry hydrants. Additional parking space and clearer parking arrangements should be found.

Once inside the park, a large open lawn area is provided with wonderful views of the lake, however amenities within the park are currently limited to some picnic tables and benches. Available space for other desired public amenities (such as playground equipment or a picnic pavilion) is constrained by overhead power lines and utility poles which cut through the property. In order to free up space for some of these desired amenities, these utility lines need to be relocated.

The park itself provides frontage along the water's edge which has historically been used as a local swimming area and kayak/canoe launch, unfortunately due to the presence of invasive species growth and water quality issues (described earlier in this plan), use of the water here has become

undesirable. People have not been able to reasonably paddle in the water here since 2016. As a result of these issues, the park is currently underutilized and is not seeing its full potential realized as a local attraction.

This town-owned parcel includes a narrow strip of frontage along Belmont Street which could conceivably be used as an alternative or secondary access point into the park for pedestrians or vehicles.

Additional opportunities exist throughout the village to begin establishing a network of sidewalks and/or informal walking paths for recreational use and connectivity. These paths would greatly enhance the walkability of the village and improve pedestrian safety, ideally creating a walking loop path which connects to numerous points of interest including the park. This path system would take advantage of available space along the town owned right-of-way in most instances, but could also be utilized on private property in cases where the landowner volunteers an easement.



View of Star Lake Recreation Entry - Visitors approaching the entry to Star Lake Recreation area are met with a confusing view that gives the impression that they must cross through someones side yard and then have to climb over a grass berm to get into the park beyond.



Rural Community Character

The preservation of rural character and small town feel were identified in the Community Survey as very important issues to local residents. With this in mind, this plan recognizes that any improvements recommended here should be mindful of this overall goal. Where possible, village enhancements should be made with a light touch that reflects a small, informal and rural Vermont town.

This mindset can be applied to design decisions such as the materials used for any future walking paths, the style and scale of future housing, playground equipment as well as the integration of green stormwater management practices and approaches to managing aquatic vegetation. All of these elements can work together to help create a consistent theme and character for the Village of Belmont which reflects its vision as an attractive historic Vermont community.





PART III

VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS

General Policy & Vision

The Belmont Village Center would benefit from sensitive enhancements and growth which reflects its historic development pattern, creates a more active and inviting destination, and is in keeping with the scale of a traditional Vermont village. As part of this effort, the village should seek to accommodate additional housing options within and immediately adjacent to the center which support a more diverse range of needs for younger family members and local seniors, geared toward year-round residency. This growth should be supported by infrastructure upgrades which can provide additional sewer, water and stormwater capacity and protect local water quality. To further enhance the village, these improvements should be augmented by recreational walking paths, parking and park improvements which will encourage a more vibrant and active village center.

The details of these policy and vision recommendations are illustrated in **Map C - Village Vision Plan**, **Map D - Village Streetscape Concept**, and **Map E - Park Improvements** and keyed to their corresponding number where appropriate. These are described further in the following pages.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Recommendations

1 Storm Damage Repair

In the aftermath of the July 9, 2023 rainstorm event which caused severe damage to areas within the Belmont Village, some immediate short-term repairs and mitigations are a priority. These include the repair and replacement of the Star Lake outflow as it travels west across Belmont Street, particularly through the existing box culvert beneath the roadway which suffered significant damage. Repairs here will likely require re-design, upsizing and replacement of the entire culvert spanning the town right-of-way, which will likely affect a large area including some private properties. As part of this work, it is important to identify and incorporate other opportunities for improvements such as a secondary access to the park.

Design goals for consideration here include:

- » It is recommended that any stream bed repair or reconfiguration necessary as part of the Star Lake outflow and culvert replacement be sensitively designed, utilizing vegetation and a naturalized stream bed with construction materials (such as natural stone, wood) that reflect the historic and rural character of the village;
- » The stream bed and culvert replacement work should attempt to integrate pedestrian and/or vehicular maintenance/emergency access into the park from Belmont Street along town owned property as may be feasible;

- » Culvert design and replacements should, where engineering limitations allow, be sensitive to reducing impacts to the historic character of the village.

1A Stormwater System Improvements

In the longer term, recognizing the age and deficiencies of the local stormwater infrastructure after the recent storm events, it is recommended that the town pursue a parallel engineering effort to assess a redesign of the overall stormwater system. This effort should be coordinated in a parallel fashion with the wastewater system design described below. The heavy storms experienced in July 2023 were a recent example that the local stormwater infrastructure is ineffective and needs replacement. This parallel assessment should be made with an eye toward how both a municipal sewer and stormwater system could be installed at the same time, minimizing road disruption and taking advantage of cost sharing in construction mobilization and phasing. This approach, if timed effectively, could avoid the need to excavate and tear up the same roadways twice.

Design goals for this assessment should include:

- » Identifying additional catch basins necessary to capture and correct areas of significant runoff and roadway erosion;
- » Increased capacity to handle anticipated storm events;

- » Elimination of open culverts and catch basins which are obstacles to on-street parking and pedestrians;
- » Potential design/construction coordination with a parallel wastewater septic system;
- » Potential for integration with current best practices for green stormwater management;
- » Necessary compliance upgrades to meet Act 64 Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) requirements.

Note that this reconstruction effort within the town right-of-way is also an opportunity to improve fire suppression access within the village. As described later under Village Streetscape Improvements, the relocation of the Fire Department dry hydrants adjacent to Star Lake can be coordinated with an expansion of this system which provides a gravity-fed fire suppression water supply to other areas of the village. Therefore, it is further recommended that if town right-of-ways are being excavated for stormwater and/or sewer improvements, gravity-fed hydrants supplied from Star lake should be installed alongside these improvements within the village center and extended down Tarbellville Road to feed a hydrant near the intersection of VT Route 155.

Additional design considerations are illustrated on **Map C - Village Vision Plan** and **Map D - Village Streetscape Concept**.

2 Wastewater Feasibility Study

In order to address many of the issues and goals of this plan, it is essential that the existing septic limitations within the village first be resolved. To address this, it is recommended that a shared community septic

system be investigated where waste is collected from properties in the core of the village and transported via underground pipes to a location downhill and west of the village where a larger drainfield could be constructed on suitable soils with land acquired by the town. The capacity provided by such a system could enable many local property owners to abandon their existing aging systems, increase their septic capacity for residential, commercial or community service growth, and reduce potential contaminants in the local water supply. These septic systems are already closer than normally allowed to existing wells and are a limitation to additional growth. Proactively addressing these issues now are of interest to the town to head-off larger problems down the road and potential environmental or health violations. In return, users of the system would pay a user fee to repay construction costs and maintain it.

Currently, the costs and feasibility of such a system is undetermined. It is recommended that the Town of Mount Holly engage an engineering firm to conduct a wastewater engineering feasibility study to determine the potential for such a shared community septic system to serve village residents, businesses and community centers. Goals for this assessment should include:

- » An assessment of potential drain field locations, system sizes, number of properties served, and cost estimates for capital expenditure and user fees. The cost of these alternatives, and their associated user fees, can differ widely depending on the number of customers and how construction is funded.¹ Therefore, it is important that a range of alternatives be presented in the study to give the municipality

¹ In general, systems constructed with little or no loan money, or very low loan rates, typically have lower individual user fees.

and property owners enough information to make an informed decision about proceeding with different options, particularly with regard to estimated user fees and any potential impact to local town taxes;

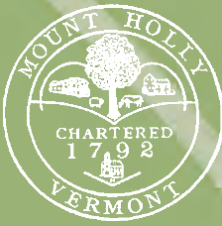
- » Prioritization of accommodating existing village center residences and services which have failing or end-of-life wastewater systems, or those which are at capacity;
- » Accommodation for some additional future capacity for commercial/residential growth within the village and potential future housing immediately adjacent to the village;
- » It is recommended that the town consider conducting preliminary outreach to property owners within the village to poll their interest in participating in such a shared community septic system, understanding what factors may be of importance to them for the purposes of the feasibility study, and inquire about their interest in volunteering as part of a local “Community Project Participant” committee;
- » Establishment of a wastewater committee or similar volunteer group to serve as the Community Project Participants for the purposes of securing grant funding, project scoping, and planning.
- » The town, or the Community Project Participants, should reach out to the Village Wastewater Solutions Initiative (VWIC) for support and assistance early in the scoping process. Information about this group is provided in the Resources section of the Appendix for reference.
- » The town may wish to consider conducting some initial research to identify potential sites

downhill of the village which have suitable soils and query property owners who may have an interest in discussing the sale of land to the town. Even if these locations are not used immediately the town should move to protect and secure them for the future. See ‘Soils Map’, provided in the Appendix for reference.

- » Information about available funding sources for this feasibility study, as well as subsequent design and construction funding, is provided in the Resources section of the Appendix for reference.
- » Coordinate with stormwater and fire-suppression improvements outlined above.

3 Village Center Designation Renewal

Village Center Designation must be renewed every eight years. The Belmont Village designation was last renewed in April 2016, and therefore is up for renewal again in April 2024. Because the village designation provides access to important local funding opportunities, it is recommended that the town seek to renew this status once again. This renewal period also provides the opportunity to potentially request a modification of the boundaries of the village center. It is recommended that the village center boundary be revised to include the full extent of the Star Lake Recreation Area. It is also recommended that the boundary lines be re-assessed to determine if there should be other adjustments which follow existing property lot-lines instead of dividing parcels.



MAP C VILLAGE VISION PLAN

VILLAGE CENTER
BOUNDARY

BELMONT ROAD

TARBELLVILLE ROAD

MAPLE HILL ROAD

TOWN OF MOUNT HOLLY

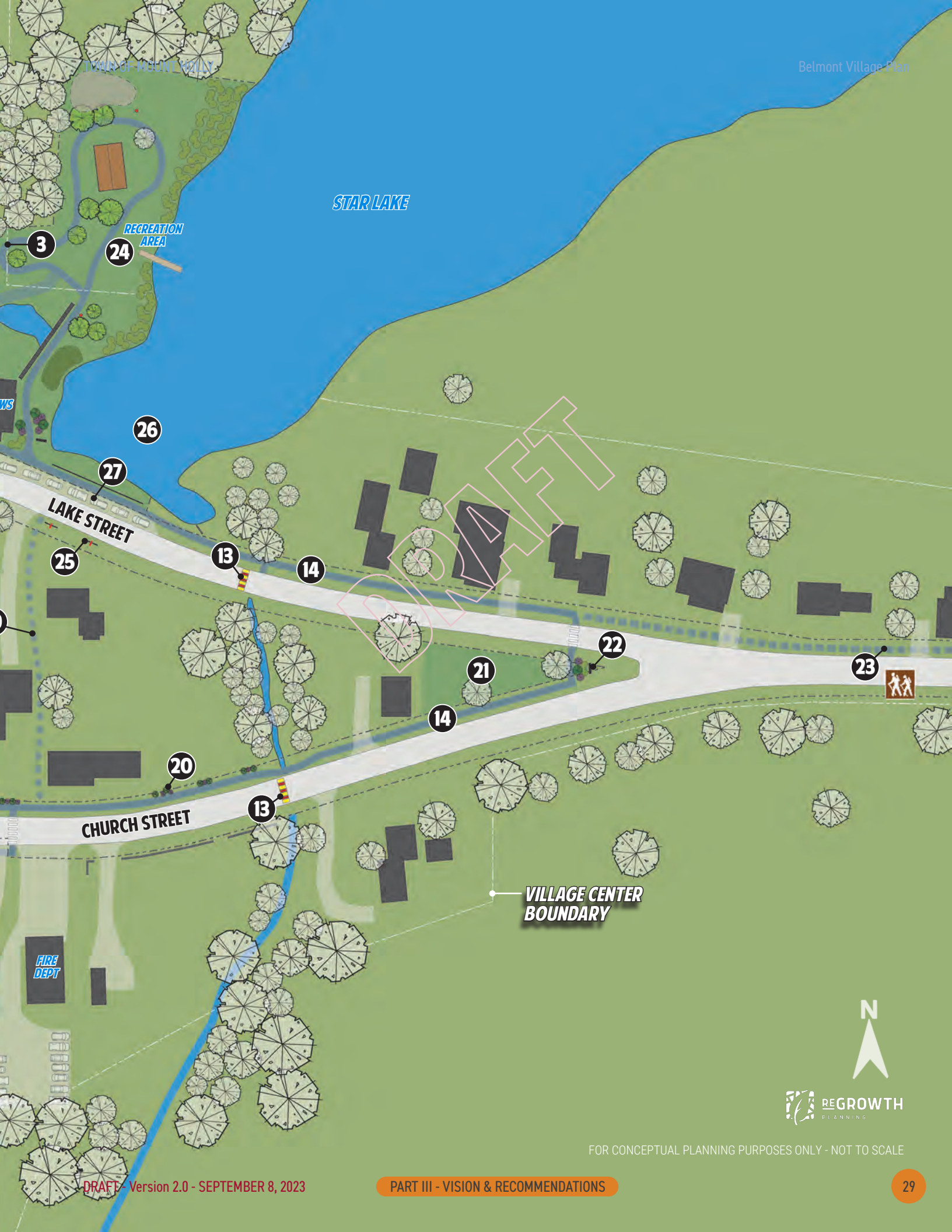
ODD FELLOWS
HALL

BAPTIST
CHURCH

HISTORICAL
MUSEUM

GENERAL
STORE
POST
OFFICE

COMMUNITY
CENTER



FOR CONCEPTUAL PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY - NOT TO SCALE

OTHER VILLAGE GOALS

4 Village Streetscape Improvements

After the completion of any stormwater or community wastewater upgrades are completed, the town should pursue incremental streetscape improvements. The following conceptual ideas are recommended to expand on-street parking capacity, improve intersection safety, slow thru-traffic, improve walkability and beautify the village with additional landscaping features. Refer to **Map C - Village Vision Plan** and **Map D - Village Streetscape Concept**.

- 5 Remove existing open stormwater inlets which are obstacles to on-street parking and pedestrians.
- 6 Relocate or underground existing utility poles and overhead service lines to reduce visual clutter and obstacles to plowing and parking.
- 7 Provide new on-street parking spaces on east side of Belmont Road.
- 8 Provide new southbound stop sign on Belmont Ave.
- 9 Consider reconfiguration of parking in front of Belmont Store which is more suitable to accessing gas pumps, improved line-of-sight.
- 10 Reconfigure Lake Street intersection into standard 'T' configuration.
- 11 Address drainage and flooding issues at Star Lake outlet under Belmont Road and adjacent residences.
- 12 New crosswalks.
- 13 Traffic calming measures or devices, as recommended by professional traffic engineers (such as temporary speed bumps, painted markings, or digital speed limit radar signs) at each of the approaches into the village. Locations to be determined.
- 14 New recreational walking paths.
- 15 Coordinate with Church to expand Village Green capacity for hosting community events by relocating Perkins Lane access drive.
- 16 Create new access drive on south side of Historical Museum to a shared parking area reconfigured behind Church and Fire Department for community event parking.
- 17 Future housing accommodated on west side of village.
- 18 Connect recreational walking paths to and around future housing.
- 19 Potential alternative cross route for walking path with landowner easement(s).
- 20 Decorative landscaping provided along walking paths as may be needed to strategically clarify property boundaries and discourage trespass.
- 21 Shaded seating area with benches on town-owned triangle lot.



MAP D VILLAGE STREETSCAPE CONCEPT

FOR CONCEPTUAL PLANNING
PURPOSES ONLY - NOT TO
SCALE

GENERAL
STORE

POST
OFFICE

LAKE STREET

BAPTIST
CHURCH

22 “Belmont Village” welcome signs with decorative landscaping along entry routes into village.

23 Future recreational walking path extension to hiking trails off Dodge Road.

24 Park Enhancements

The Star Lake Recreation Area should be improved as described below (**Refer to Map E - Park Design Concept**). For additional guidance, refer to the “LakeWise Info Sheet for Beaches and Recreation Areas”, produced by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, found here:

https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/documents/LakeWiseInfoSheet_BeachesAndRecreationAreas.pdf

25 Relocate existing dry hydrants to south side of Lake Street. Coordinate with future stormwater/sewer work to extend dry hydrant piping downhill from Star Lake to provide gravity-fed pressurized water to other areas, as described in #2, Stormwater System Improvements.

26 Install weed reduction mats at Star lake dry hydrant intakes to reduce flow interruptions.

27 Create on-street parking along the north side of Lake Street to serve Star Lake Recreation Area and Oddfellows Hall.

28 Potential secondary access into Star Lake Park for maintenance/emergency vehicles and pedestrians.

29 Enhanced and welcoming entry into Star Lake Recreation Area with new welcome sign, path and decorative landscaping.

30 Provide ADA Accessible entry path into recreation area.

31 Stabilize and restore ecology of existing shoreline with buffer plantings of new native vegetation along water’s edge.

32 Improve entry into the water with a small path and dock to limit shoreline disturbance.

33 New picnic pavilion, enabled by the relocation of overhead utility lines, installed outside of dam spillway area.

34 New playground equipment provided in shaded area of park.

35 Provide new shade trees as necessary to make seating and relaxing areas more welcoming.

36 Develop Aquatic Vegetative Management Program for water quality improvement.



MAP E PARK DESIGN CONCEPT



Walking Paths

The Community Survey discovered that there is a strong desire for overall parks and public recreation facility improvements. A number of residents specifically noted an interest in the availability of walking trails, walkable connections to the village, and a need for safer walking conditions given concerns with vehicle speeds. This interest was also noted in the public workshop, where the proposed idea for a walking loop was well received.

It is recommended that the town pursue the incremental establishment of a connected network of informal walking paths and sidewalks within the town-owned right-of-way, ideally creating a loop around the village as illustrated in the Village Vision Map. The final routes may need to be discussed in cooperation with local residents, taking into consideration potential concerns about inadvertent trespass in locations where visitors may be unaware of where private property lines are. This concern however could be mitigated with strategic landscaping if necessary. It is also recommended that individual property owners who may be voluntarily interested in an easement arrangement could help to further enhance the trail connections in areas where the town does not have jurisdiction.

In keeping with a more rural Vermont village setting, and to reduce costs, these paths could be constructed of crushed and compacted stone dust in lieu of asphalt or concrete surfacing. This approach has the advantage of potentially being installed and maintained by local road crews without the need to contract and hire outside contractors. While the issue of winter maintenance could be discussed further by the community, it is assumed for initial purposes that these paths would not be shoveled or plowed in the winter.

Lake Water Quality

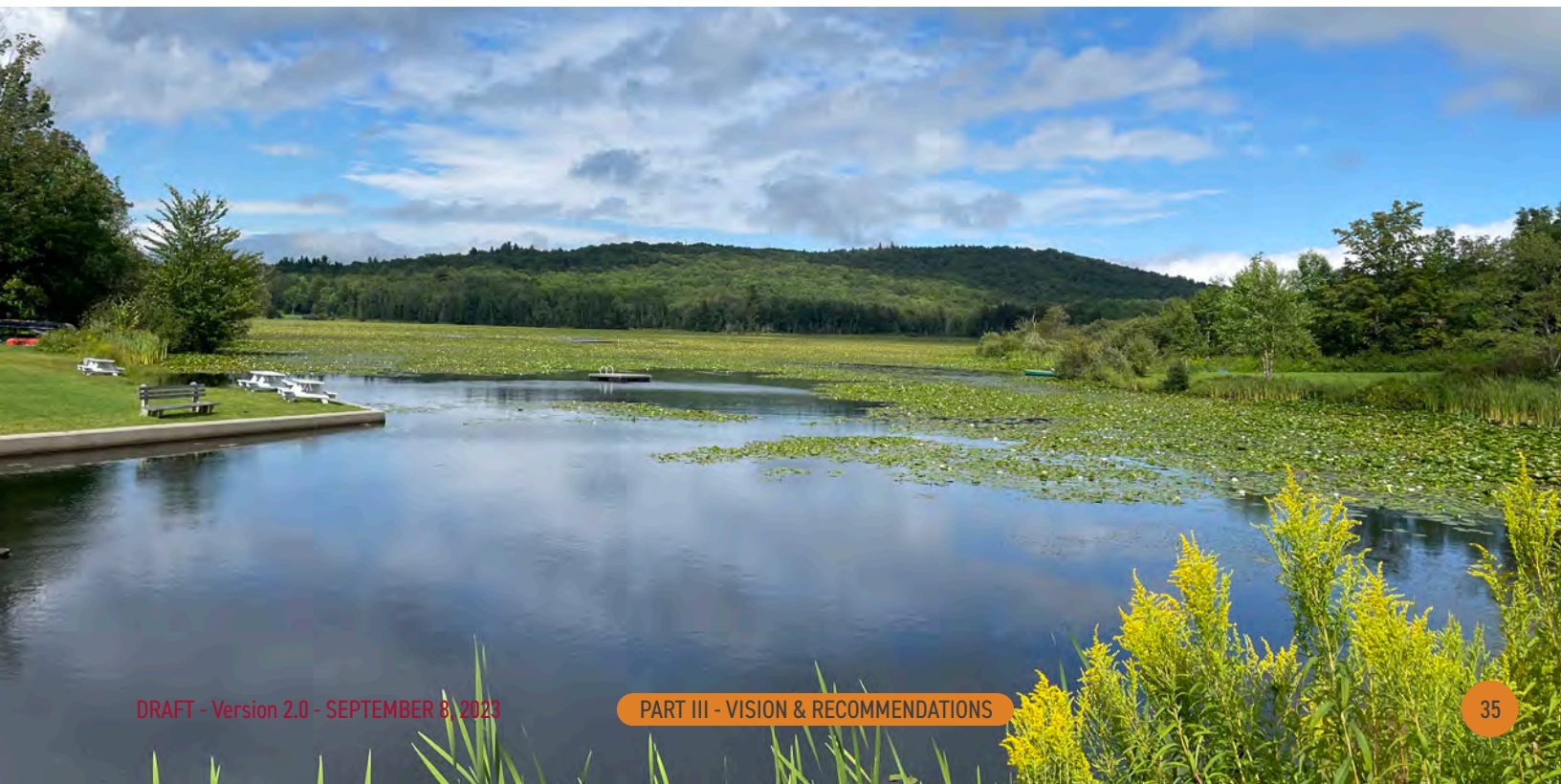
While the issue of water quality in Star Lake directly impacts the livelihood of Belmont Village, the eventual solution is a larger town-wide issue. Localized efforts to reduce septic and stormwater contamination of the lake from the village will do little if not addressed at the wider scale of the overall watershed. A likely source of local water contamination is nutrients entering the waterbody from nearby stormwater and wastewater runoff, particularly after storm events. When too many nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous enter surface waters, they act as fertilizer for fast-growing bacteria and algae, causing algae blooms and reducing water quality. Small amounts of this contamination can either leak from the septic tank, or remain untreated in the soils of the drain field and then pass untreated into the local groundwater below. Once the groundwater has been contaminated, that contamination can spread to nearby wells and waterbodies connected to the groundwater system. The risk of contamination is increased when septic systems are near a lake, because the tank and drain field are likely close to the water table, and contamination can reach the waterbody very quickly.

For this reason, it is recommended that the town investigate potential point sources of pollution within the lake perimeter, including likely sources of septic contamination. One potential method used to identify if there are failing septic systems contaminating a local waterbody is to perform Bacterial Source Tracking (BST), which determines if the fecal bacteria found in the water is from local wildlife or from the surrounding human population. This method works well, however can be expensive and does not isolate the source of the pollutants without further testing and tracing by flushing fluorescent dye down the drain of selected homes.

A joint study conducted by the Warren County NY Soil and Water Conservation District and the Adirondack Community College demonstrates an alternative and more cost-effective method of locating failing septic systems in lakefront communities. This approach used flush tests of chlorine from individual households to determine if it was later found in the lake in order to help pinpoint where the contamination was coming from. It is recommended that the town pursue one or both of these methods with funding available from the State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, such as the Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP). If human-source contamination can be confirmed, and the sources located, the town should then work with individual homeowners to find grant funding to mitigate this issue to restore the lake.

Additional Recommendations:

- » Seek funding to develop an Aquatic Vegetative Management Plan which will identify the specific steps and ongoing management processes necessary reduce the milfoil and water lily growth;
- » Establish an official liaison who can help to coordinate each of the disparate groups who have been working independently to improve Star lake, including the Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, the (former) Friends of Star Lake, and the new organization which is being formed to replace it;
- » Lake frontage should follow the Vermont Lakewise best management practices to help improve water quality. <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/lakeshores-lake-wise/bmp> Continue regular water quality monitoring during the swimming season;
- » Continue efforts to reduce stormwater runoff into nearby lakes and streams which contribute nutrients and pollutants into these waterways;
- » Continue efforts to protect the Mechanicsville Aqueduct water source areas, including the establishment by the town of a protected buffer zone around the water source area(s) which prohibit or limit development and certain disturbance activities;



Housing Needs

Additional housing in the greater Mount Holly area is needed, and the village represents the most suitable location to accommodate a denser arrangement of smaller, clustered dwellings. This is especially true for more cost-effective living arrangements suitable for seniors looking to downsize, younger families, independent adults and long-term rentals—unserved demographic groups which have been moving to more affordable areas. However, the current limitations of available sewer must first be addressed in order for this to be economically practical.

It is recommended that additional infill housing be encouraged within the village center through the use of residential expansions, Accessory Dwelling Units and long-term rentals to help meet the local housing needs as sewer and water capacities may allow. Additional housing should also be accommodated in the area directly west of the village center, in what is now an open and vacant field. This proximity to the village is ideal for walkability and community socialization, features which are highly desired by local seniors. Any such housing proposed here should be geared toward small-scale, small cottage-lot arrangements which mirror the traditional scale and street pattern of the historic development in Belmont. A diversity of housing types and income levels is recommended, with cottage homes, duplex or quad-plex units meeting a variety of purchase or rental needs. This housing should be augmented by a walkable path system which encircles the site and connects to the village pedestrian routes wherever possible.

Because Belmont is a Designated Village Center, such housing could qualify as a Neighborhood Development Area within a 1/4 -mile radius of the village, making it potentially exempt from Act 250 regulations and land gains tax on housing units sold, as well as other benefits. Funding through the

Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP) could be utilized toward this effort to provide municipal wastewater and water supply. (See Resources in Appendix) The actual number of units which could be built in this area would likely be limited to a threshold acceptable to area residents and within water and septic limitations, and may require finding a secondary access point into the property for emergency access. Currently, this property only has a small amount of road frontage accessed from Tarbellville Road, and the fire department may desire a secondary route depending on the number of units. A deed restriction or other arrangement is recommended to ensure that any new dwellings provided as part of this site be prevented from use of short-term rentals which would undermine the goals and intent of this housing.

It is also recommended that the town consider addressing the larger issue of short-term rentals in the town with regard to their impact on the local housing stock available to long-term renters. As an initial step toward this, a registry of short-term rental properties could be considered to begin tracking and monitoring the growth and impact of this use in advance of seeing if other measures or limitations may be necessary. If further measures are considered, it is recommended that the town conduct a housing study/needs assessment to be used as the basis of support for any Short-Term Rental regulations with clearly defined purpose, findings and negative impacts to be mitigated. Any short-term rental registry data collected could be useful in providing legal support for such regulations.

APPENDIX

A. Resources

B. Mount Holly 2022 Community Vision Survey Summary Report

C. Focus Group and Meeting Notes

D. Environmental Maps

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A - RESOURCES

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES:

Village Wastewater Solutions Initiative (VWIC)

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

Inter-agency working group established to assist Vermont municipalities with tools, resources, technical assistance and coordination in navigating the process of funding and development of **community sewer systems**. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/village-wastewater>

Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)

The RRPC provides technical resources for local municipalities within Rutland County, providing tools, assistance with grant applications, map production, data collection, and assistance with understanding state requirements. Link: <https://www.rutlandrpc.org>

Vermont Village Center Designation Program

Agency of Commerce and Economic Development

Provides benefits to eligible communities which successfully establish a formal village center for future economic growth and development. NOTE: Village Center Designation must be renewed every 8 years. The Belmont Village designation was last renewed in 2016 and therefore should be renewed in 2024. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/village-centers>

MUNICIPAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES:

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

Provides funding for Vermont's Clean Water projects in the form of low interest loans (0%-2%) to municipalities and private entities for planning, design, or construction of community decentralized **wastewater disposal** systems, municipal **wastewater collection** systems, treatment facility construction, **stormwater conveyance** and other projects. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/cwsrf>

Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP)

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

The Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) funds, tracks progress, and reports on priority projects to restore and meet water quality restoration targets in Vermont, including water restoration, **municipal stormwater management**, **stormwater master planning** and **green infrastructure projects**. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/cwi>

Engineering Planning Advance

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

Provides financing for Feasibility Studies or Preliminary Engineering Reports for the initial planning of a **community-based wastewater** or drinking water system. Funded on a loan basis, however repayment is only required if the project goes to construction. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/planning-advance>

American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources

\$30 million in total funding available to support up to 10 decentralized **community wastewater** disposal systems and/or public municipal water systems in designated villages and neighborhoods. Funding can be used to complement other funding sources or as part of required community match funds. Link: <https://anr.vermont.gov/special-topics/arpa-vermont/village-water-wastewater-initiative>

Hazard Mitigation Funding Programs

Vermont Emergency Management

Provides funding to mitigate the damages and expenses associated with hazards such as **flooding**, including voluntary property buyouts for residential, commercial or vacant land which is at risk of repeated flooding, **infrastructure improvements**, and planning efforts to identify and reconcile potential future hazards. Link: <https://vem.vermont.gov/funding/mitigation>

Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households Grant

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

Provides funding to local government entities for the feasibility, preliminary design and engineering analysis of water and **wastewater facilities** for eligible local governments in rural areas with a population below 2,500 that meet selected income criteria. Link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/search-special-evaluation-assistance-rural-communities-and-households-grant/vt>

Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP)

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development

CRRP grant program provides funding for projects that spur economic recovery in communities throughout Vermont. These funds may be used for the following efforts: Capital improvements related to the renovation or creation of childcare and **affordable housing**; Capital projects that assist non-profits and **small businesses** in industries including Food Services, Accommodations, Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Education and Agriculture; **Municipal water supply and wastewater projects** that create jobs through business creation or expansion, or build housing. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/community-recovery-and-revitalization-program>

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Agency of Natural Resources

The agency provides grants and loans covering projects including drinking water and **wastewater projects**, pretreatment and wastewater capacity. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/grantloan-programs>

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

Provides low-interest (0%-2.75%) financing for the planning and capital improvements of public water systems that improve public health and facilitate compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act for municipal or private **community water systems**. Link: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/dwsrf>

Vermont Agency of Transportation - Municipal Assistance

The Vermont Agency of Transportation Municipal Assistance Program provides grant funding for a wide variety of transportation projects, including **roadway design**, erosion control, best management practices, park and ride facilities, bridge rehabilitation, **pedestrian accessibility** scoping studies, **feasibility studies**, **design and construction projects**, small scale construction projects, complete streets, planning, design and construction of on-road and off-road bike and **pedestrian trail facilities**, safe routes to school, rail trails, overlooks and viewing areas. Link: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects>

Vermont Better Places Grants

Agency of Commerce and Economic Development

A non-competitive matching grant program eligible for designated village centers, utilizing a crowdfunding effort combined with 2:1 matching funds (up to \$40,000) from the State, as well as technical support and educational assistance through the project. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>

Vermont Community Development Program

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides competitive grant funding and technical assistance to address local needs of housing, economic development, public facilities and services, and ADA accessibility. Funds can be used to conduct **feasibility studies**, marketing plans, architectural and **engineering plans**, job creation, **construct infrastructure**, and other efforts. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

Municipal Planning Grant (MPG)

State of Vermont - Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides annual funding opportunities for local municipal planning and revitalization initiatives which support statewide planning goals, such as **streetscape and pedestrian** plans, water system studies, **infrastructure improvements**, zoning updates and similar measures. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>

Downtown Transportation Fund

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides financing for Designated Village Centers for transportation-related capital improvements, such as **sidewalk and pedestrian** enhancements, **accessibility improvements**, pocket parks. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtowntransportation-fund>

Better Connections Program

Agency of Transportation / Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Bi-annual program provides funding and technical assistance for master planning, **transportation improvements**, **complete streets**, **parking**, wayfinding, building rehabilitation, site development and zoning code updates. Link: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Agency of Natural Resources

The agency provides assistance through their Recreational Trail Program to develop and maintain **recreational trails and trail-related facilities**. Link: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/about/grants>

State Historic Preservation Grants

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides funding through 50/50 matching grants of up to \$20,000 for repair and rehabilitation of historic buildings at least 50 years old and listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

Preservation Trust of Vermont

The Preservation Trust provides a variety of funding, educational tools and technical assistance related to the development of community supported enterprises and non-profit organizations, **village revitalization**, historic preservation, and essential character and service grants related to food security, childcare, health and community engagement. Link: <https://ptvermont.org/help/grants/>

PRIVATE HOMEOWNER/BUSINESS FUNDING:

State and Federal Tax Credits

Tax credits available to help incentivize private-sector investment in projects within Designated Village Centers including building renovations, code compliance and exterior renovation work to attract new business or create jobs. Federal tax credits available for eligible historic commercial buildings listed on the National Register, and State tax credits available for commercial properties over 30 years old. Link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>

On-Site Loan Program

State of Vermont - Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Environmental Conservation

Provides low-cost funding for income-eligible Vermont homeowners of single-family homes for the repair or replacement of failed on-site **wastewater and water supply** systems.

Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

Provides funding for income-eligible Vermont homeowners and businesses for drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and stormwater drainage in eligible rural areas with a population below 10,000. Link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/water-environmental-programs/water-waste-disposal-loan-grant-program>

B - COMMUNITY SURVEY

DRAFT

Summary Report



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Introduction

With support from the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Town of Mount Holly engaged community members, businesses, and organizations to identify and understand community concerns related to housing, economic development, and public infrastructure.

Historically, Mount Holly has had many thriving hamlets. Due to land use and economic changes, only two areas remain with a development density to support public infrastructure: the Municipal Center and the Village of Belmont.

The Municipal Center is the functional center of the town and hosts government, education, highway, and emergency services. There is no way to avoid continued public investment in these facilities. However, as these facilities age, those costs are likely to rise. Aging or inadequate infrastructure presents a financial liability to the community.

The historic Village of Belmont is the cultural center of the town—home to the store, library, church, museum, public park, village green, bandstand, and two community assembly areas. It is also where the beloved Cider Days is held. These are important assets that belong to all residents of Mount Holly.

This project aims to identify barriers to development in these two areas of town, consider methods of removing those barriers, and identify sources of funding that do not rely on local taxation. Key to this endeavor is community input. The first step of the plan is to enlist input from community members, businesses, and organizations.

Project Overview

The Town of Mount Holly applied for and received a Municipal Planning Grant from the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The Select Board contracted with Community Roots, LLC, led by Melissa Levy, to identify and understand community concerns related to housing, economic development, and public infrastructure.

A number of community members have volunteered to help guide the project and are chipping in to help keep costs down.

Jeff Chase is the Municipal Authorizing Official for the Select Board. Jon McCann is helping with administration. Many thanks to engaged local citizens Andy Bolalek, Russ Garrow, Anna Hanson, Kevin Hollebeek, Lisa Kelley, David Martin, and Faith Tempest for stepping up to help.

This team determined that the first step would involve doing community outreach. A survey was created to collect data to help steer the grant objectives.

Survey Methodology

The survey questions were selected by a group of local citizens and stakeholders with assistance from Community Roots, LLC.

There are twelve questions in all. 6 are demographic-related; two are lifestyle and culture related; three are attempts to assess views of current and future needs; and, one is an open-ended invitation for the respondent to engage with us and share any thoughts they may have about their vision for the future of Mount Holly.

The number and type of questions were chosen so that respondents could complete the survey in under 10 minutes.

The survey was conducted from November 1-30, 2022, via an online survey and a hard copy print survey. The online survey was hosted by Google Forms and linked from the Town website. The link to the survey was additionally distributed on the Newsflash email list each week, and a QR code was published in the November edition of the Chit Chat. Individuals shared the link in various other local community forums and on Facebook. Hardcopies were available for pickup and return at both the Town Office and the Town Library.

A relatively short collection period was selected for the survey in order to meet project deadline requirements for the Municipal Planning Grant and since this was merely the first step of the information-gathering and public involvement process.

Survey Responses

172 responses were received (22 hardcopy, 150 online).

Online survey results were collected under the mounthollycommunitysurvey@gmail.com Google Account.

Hardcopy surveys were manually entered into the online survey form by Community Roots, LLC.

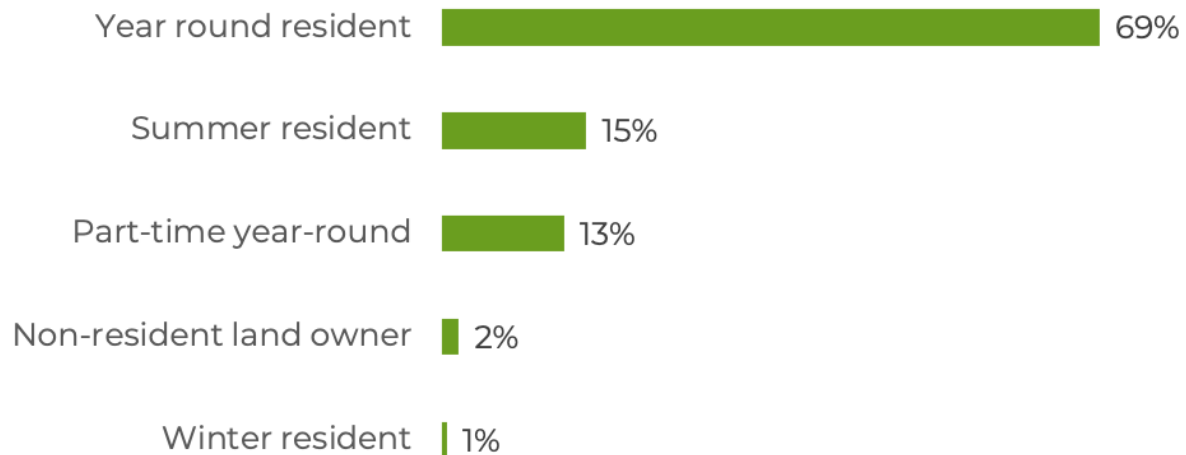
The results were collected in a spreadsheet, and analysis was performed by Jon McCann and Community Roots, LLC in Google Sheets and Microsoft Excel.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Town of Mount Holly has a total population of 1,385 and an adult population of 950. The 172 responses represent 12% of the total population and 18% of the adult population. The survey results suggest that some fraction of the respondents completed one survey per household—rather than one per individual. As a result, the number of responses may represent up to 30-40% of the population.

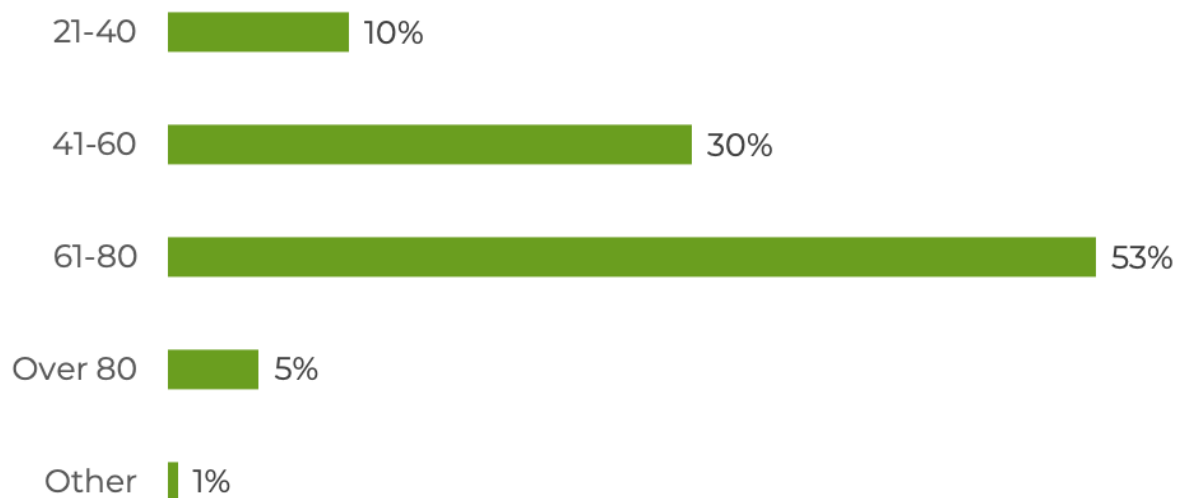
172 responses from an adult population of 950 yields a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of approximately 6%.

Survey Results

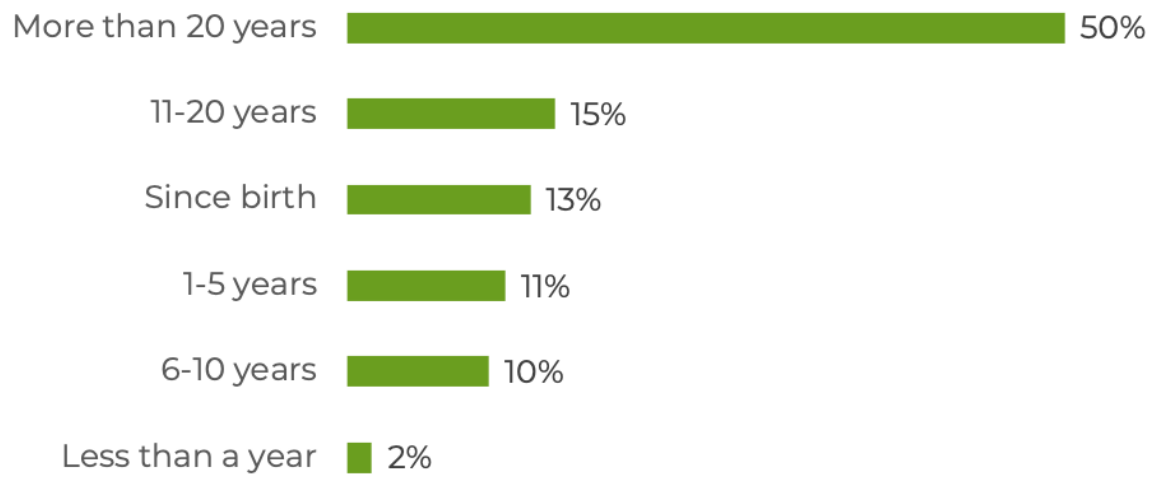
Question 1. Residential Status



Question 2. Age

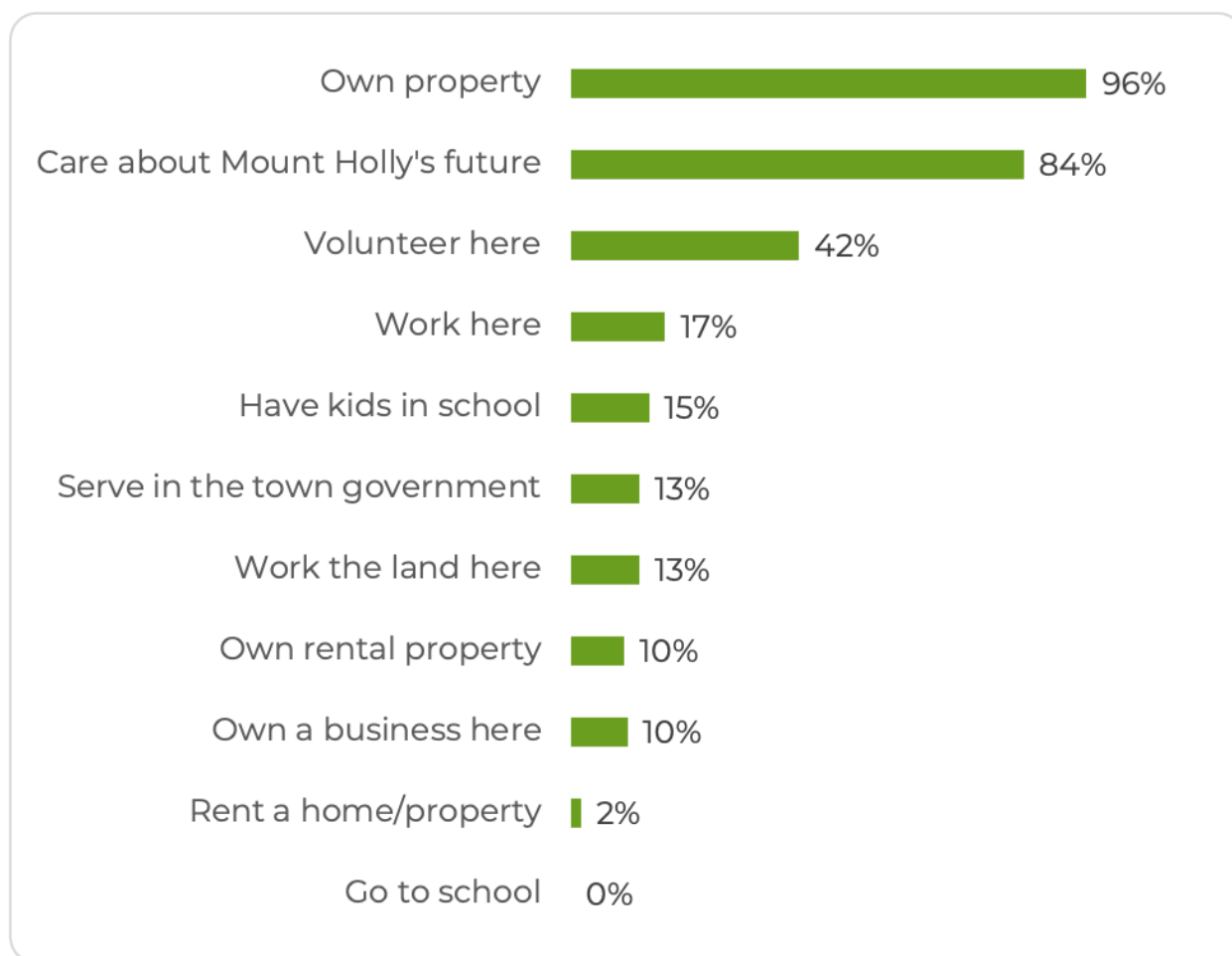


Question 3. Length of Residence



Question 4. Community Involvement

How are you involved in the community?

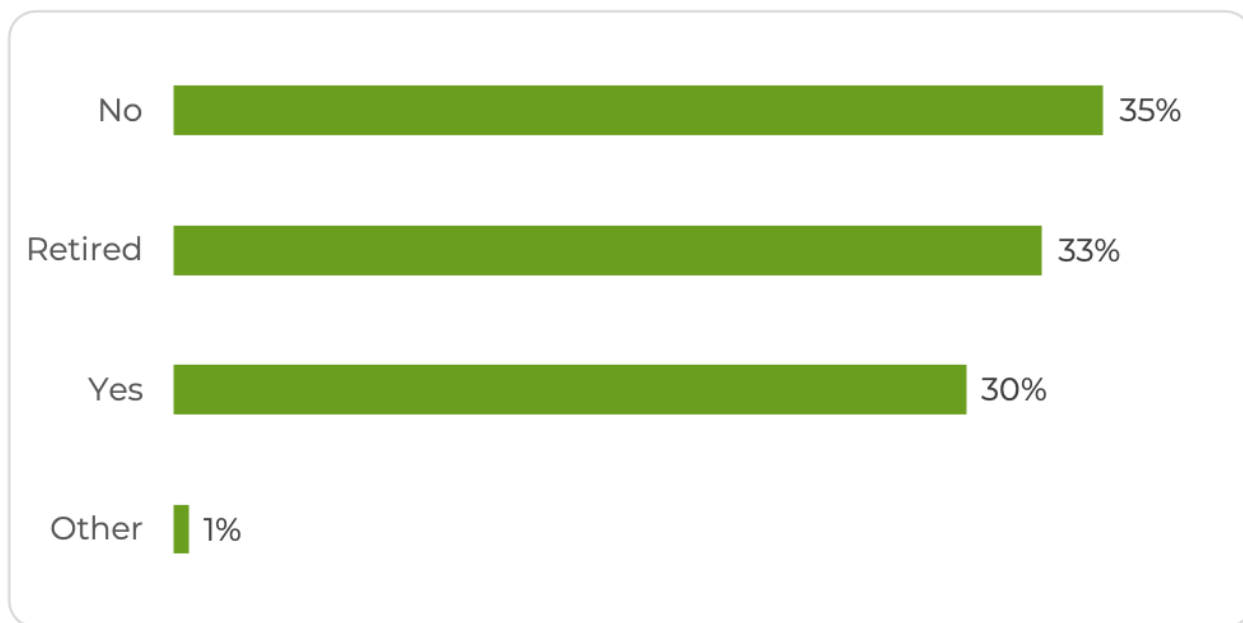


Responses written into "Other" included:

- "Was involved with the Mount Holly Library and Garden Club along with the Reading Group and Art Group."
- "Regretfully I have Long Haul Lyme and am basically bed and homebound making contributing my community impossible. When I get better I fully intend to get involved to make things better in my community."
- "care for my family who lives here"
- "Vermont Land Trust member"
- "Attend events, use the Belmont store, have a CSA at Plew Farm, use library, host friends and and family for holidays"
- "Visited Belmont my whole life, as I had extended family here."
- "Significant family history in Belmont. Care about its ongoing ability to thrive (including lake, general store, library, museum, church, community events)"
- "Raised my family here – we all graduated BRHS!"
- "Town librarian"

Question 5. Commuting

Do you commute to work outside of Mount Holly?

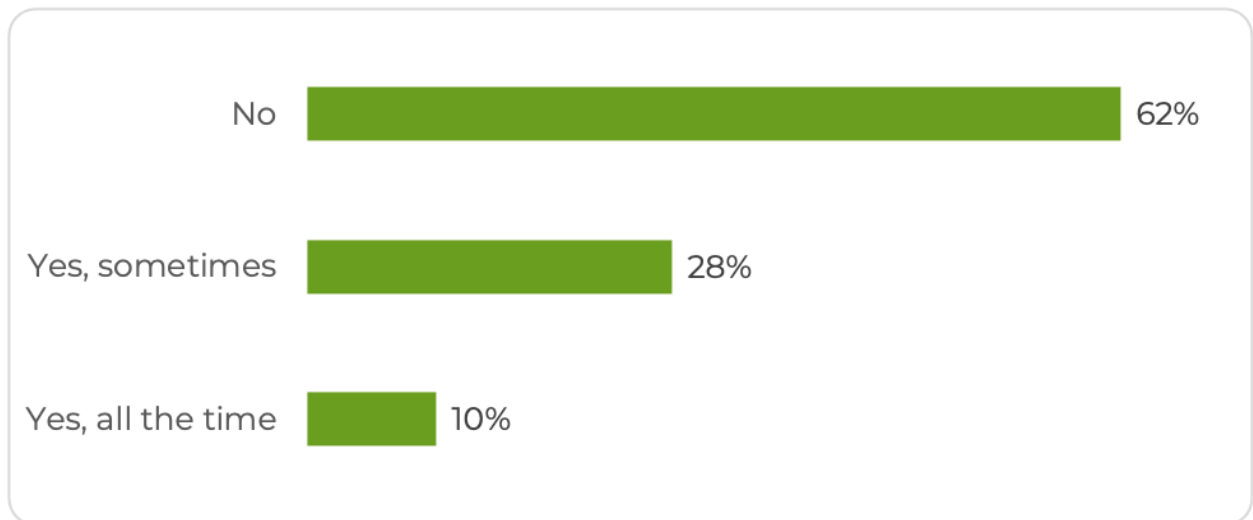


Responses written into "Other" included:

- "Work as contractor in and out of town"
- "I also work in Plymouth and we have conserved lands in Plymouth as well"
- "I work and volunteer here"
- "The property my family owns in Mount Holly is a second home."
- "Retired, but active fulltime volunteer in community groups"
- "Self employee brings me to wherever the job is"

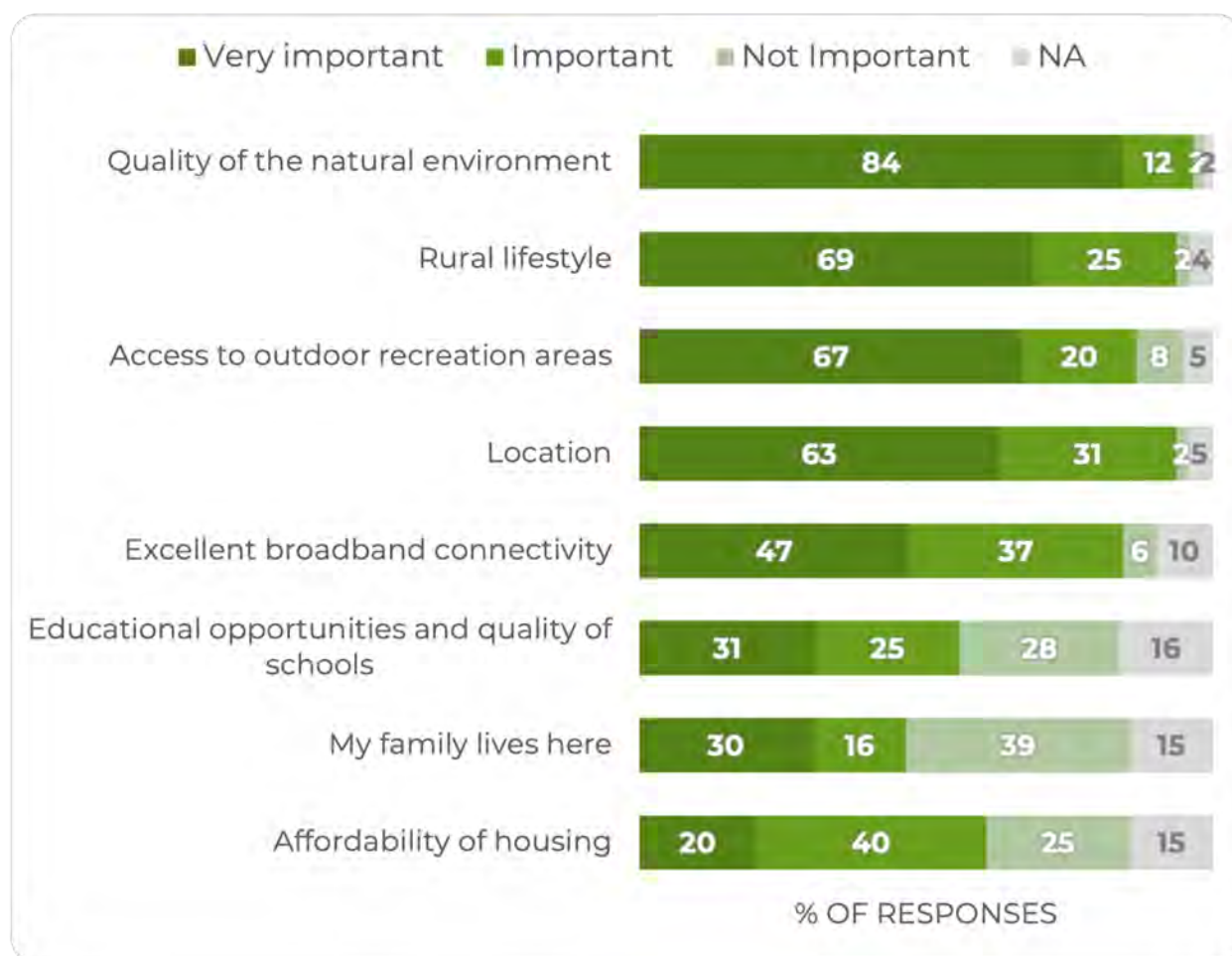
Question 6. Remote Work

Do you work remotely?



Question 7. Local / Resident's Values

How important are the following to you as to why you live in Mount Holly?



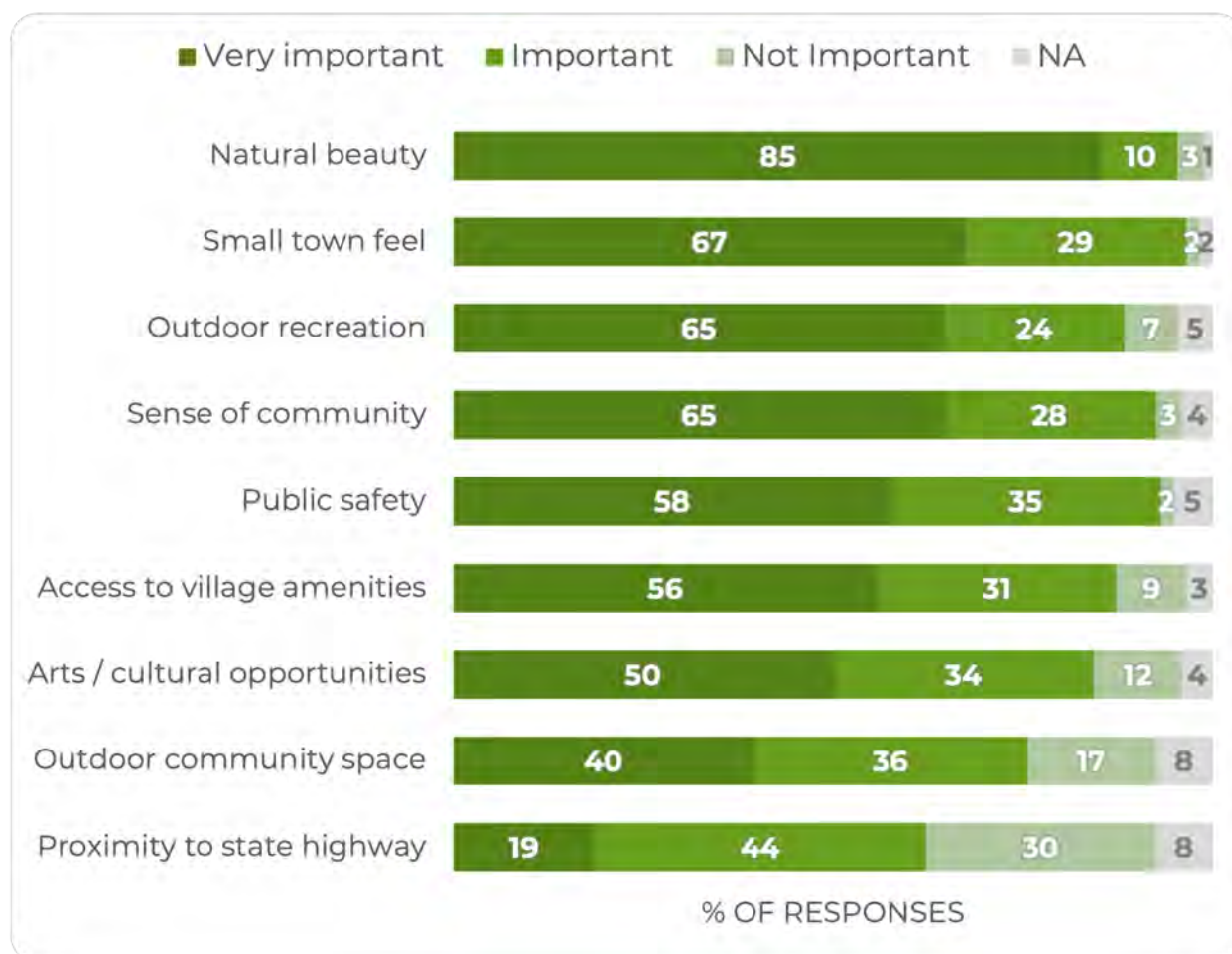
In addition to the reasons selected for living in Mount Holly detailed above, some respondents wrote in their own reasons in the field labeled “Other.” Within these write-ins, a number of themes were identified. These are summarized below, ranked in order of the number of responses corresponding to each theme. Full responses can be found in Appendix B.

Theme	#	Summary
Rural Lifestyle	10	Camping. Managed, rural setting. Peaceful. Quality of life. Quiet. Natural. Respectful. Safe. Small town. Tranquil.

Community / Cultural	9	Activities. Community spirit. Exceptional community. Friendly neighbors. Many interesting characters and groups. Great library. Organizations. Reunions and traditions. Small community. Welcoming.
Natural Environment / Conservation	8	Conservation orientation of landowners. Diversity of natural resources. Enjoying and preserving wildlife and environment. Lake Ninevah. Policies of the Wilderness Community. Preserving habitat. Sustainable land use.
Proximity to Goods and Services	5	Belmont Store. Local produce. Senior support. Urban services nearby.
Family Ties	4	200 years of family history Ancestral ties. History of land ownership. Home for many generations.

Question 8. Rural Lifestyle

How important are the following to your rural Mount Holly lifestyle?



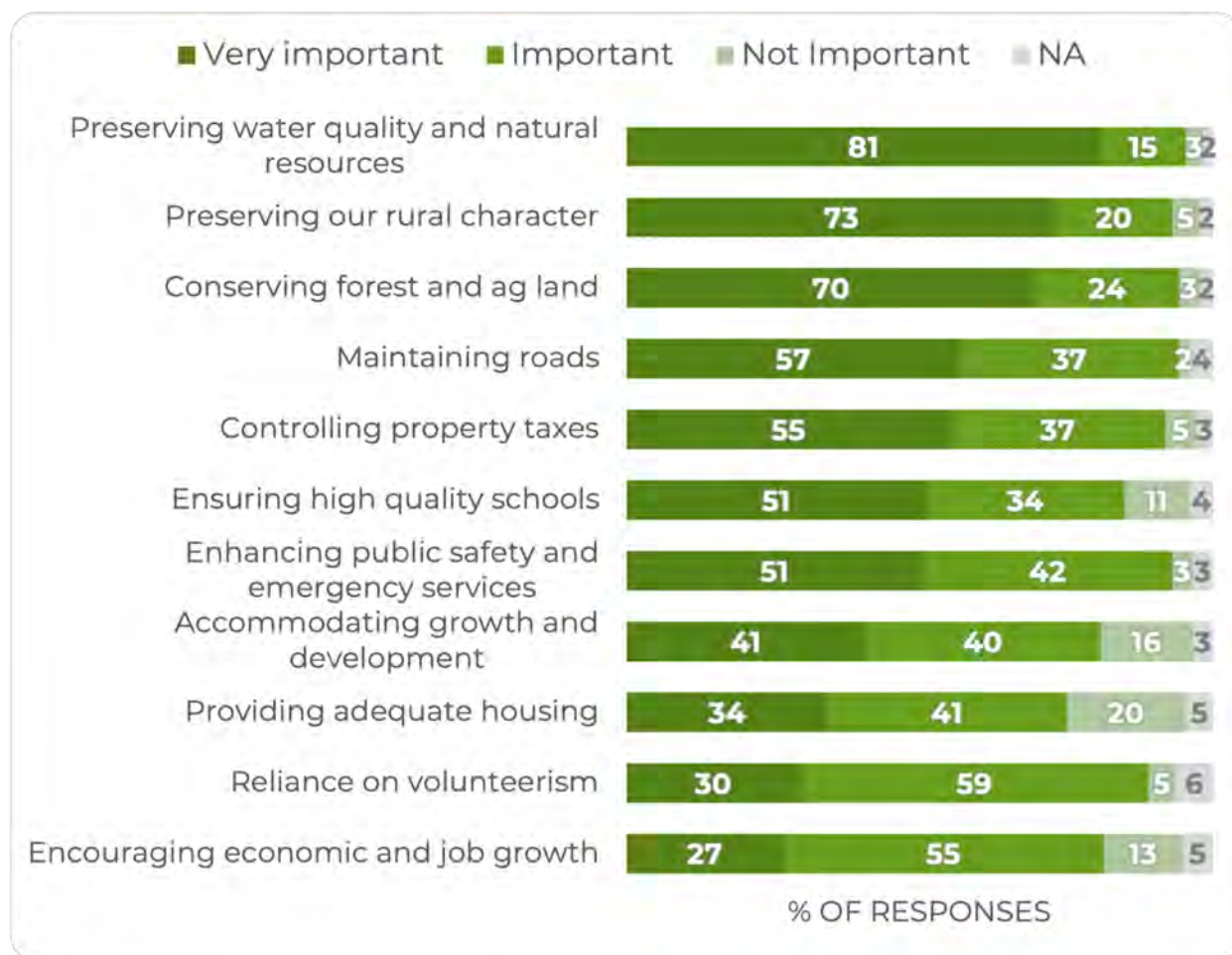
In addition to the rural values detailed above, some respondents wrote in their own in the field labeled “Other.” Within these write-ins, a number of themes were identified. These are summarized below, ranked in order of the number of responses corresponding to each theme. Full responses can be found in Appendix B.

Theme	#	Summary
Environment	7	Natural beauty and peace. Star Lake. Stone walls. Scenic views and roads. Wildlife and forest habitat. Protect wetlands.
Social Capital and Belonging	4	Activities. Close friends. Feeling open and welcoming. Good neighbors. Volunteerism.

Managed Development and Affordability	4	Becoming unaffordable. Losing rural lifestyle to subdivision and development. Enforce junk ordinance. Historic district preservation. Manage and plan development.
Proximity to Goods and Services	4	Biking, skiing, hiking nearby. Local food. Ludlow's restaurants.
Seniors	2	Senior housing needed. Walking trails.

Question 9. Community Challenges

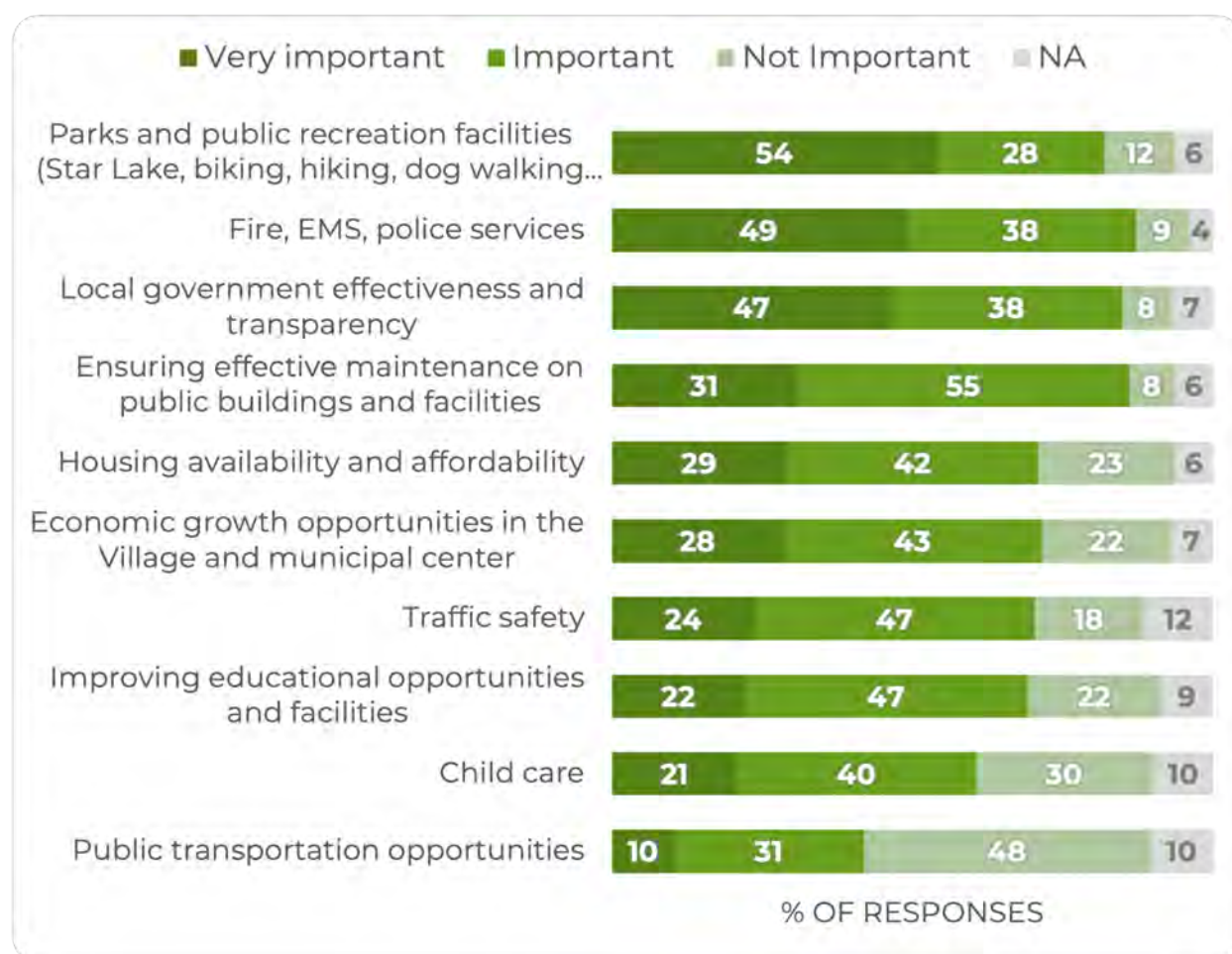
How do you rate the importance of these challenges facing Mount Holly over the next 5-10 years?



In addition to the community challenges identified above, respondents were given the opportunity to write in their own concerns in the field labeled “Other.” However, we collected no comments from that field.

Question 10. Community Needs

Which of these topics do you feel needs immediate attention in the Town within the next 2-3 years?

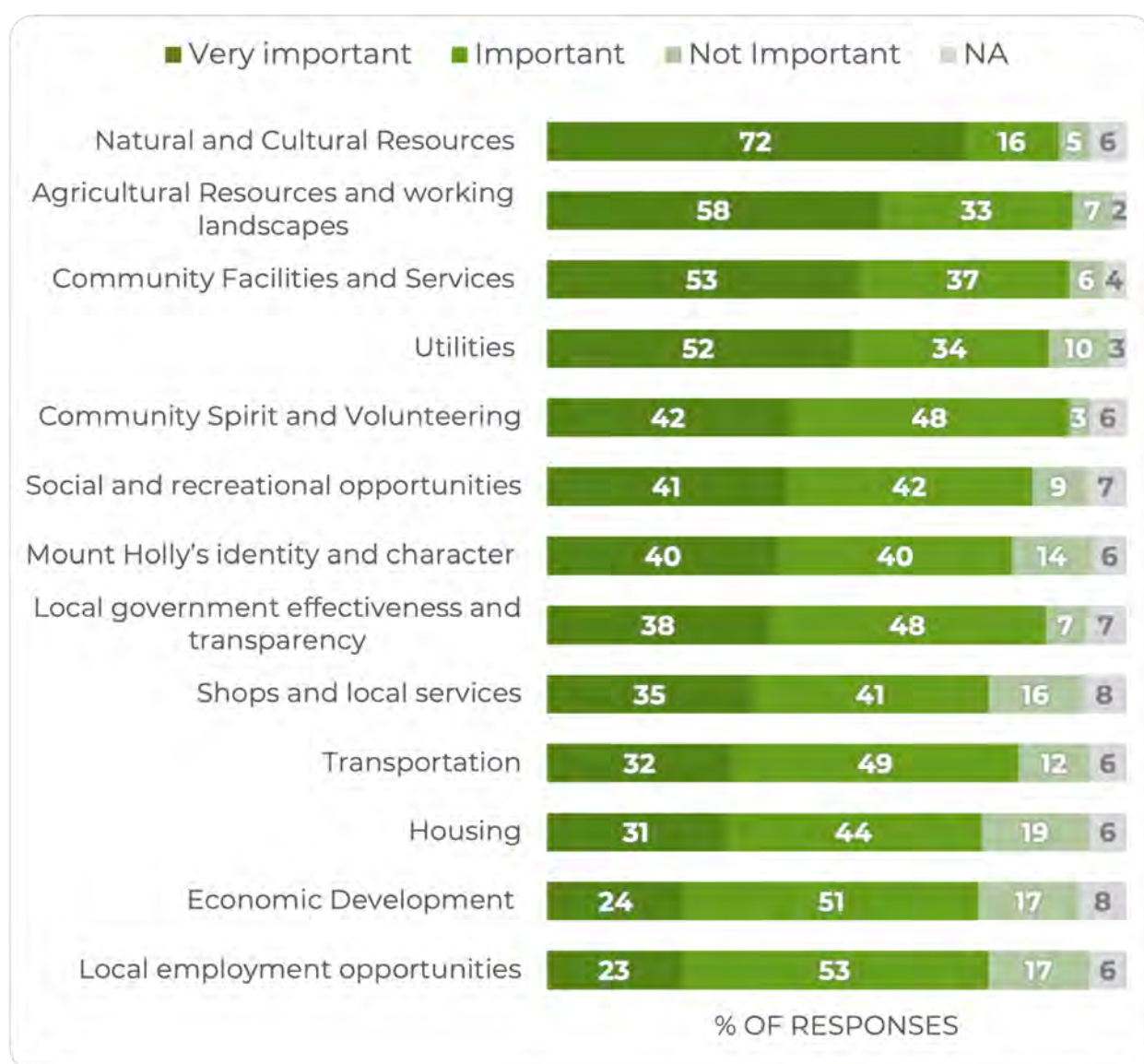


In addition to the community needs identified above, respondents were given the opportunity to write in their own in the field labeled “Other.” Due to an oversight, there was no option provided in the online survey for writing in “Other” topics. This was only afforded by the hardcopy survey forms. Two respondents provided comments, summarized below. Full responses can be found in Appendix B.

Theme	#	Summary
Traffic Safety	2	More law enforcement for speeding and aggressive driving. More enforcement for dangerous ATV use on public roads.

Question 11. Community Investment

How do you rate the importance of investment or enhancement in the following over the next 5-10 years?



In addition to the investments or enhancements detailed above, some respondents wrote in their own in the field labeled “Other.” Within these write-ins, a number of themes were identified. These are summarized below, ranked in order of the number of responses corresponding to each theme. Full responses can be found in Appendix B.

Theme	#	Summary
Identity and Character	4	Better website. Enforce junk ordinance. Preserve scenic roads and historic look and feel. Store in Belmont important.
Utilities and Physical infrastructure	4	Belmont public parking needed for tourism and economic development. Bury power lines. Cell service needed. Public parks. Library. Community gathering places. Cemeteries.
Proximity to Goods and Services	4	Belmont General Store. Local food and products. Perhaps a coop store. Support Belmont General Store.
Natural Environment	4	Encourage Family Forest Carbon Program. Protect flood plains. Star Lake.
Transportation and Public Safety	3	Enforce speed limits. Vehicle noise. Incremental improvements in police and EMS. Safe walking needed. Consider removable speed bumps.
Social Capital and Belonging	3	Public gathering places (community center, odd fellows hall). Sick of seeing confederate flag. Store in Belmont important as social hub.
Governance	2	5-person Select Board. More public engagement. Active public health. Use website to increase transparency.
Seniors	2	Senior housing needed. Senior walking trails needed. Senior van service.
Housing	2	Affordable housing needed to attract and retain young families. Control short-term rentals. More long-term rentals.
Child Care	2	Address sooner than 5 years to attract and retain young families. Invest in child care services heavily.

Jobs and Economic opportunities	1	Promote opportunities region-wide.
Climate Change	1	Integrate climate change into planning process. Encourage Family Forest Carbon Program.
Second-home Owners and Taxes	1	Tax rates of resident vs non-resident.
Managed Development and Affordability	1	More regional planning.

Question 12. Community Vision

Describe your preferred vision for Mount Holly in the future.

You can consider questions such as:

What does it look and feel like in the year 2040? What is the same, and what is different?

This question collected descriptions of respondents' visions for Mount Holly. Within these responses, a number of themes were identified. These are summarized below, ranked in order of the number of responses corresponding to each theme. Full responses can be found in Appendix B.

Theme	#	Summary
Rural Identity / Character	72	A quieter, wilder, peaceful, vibrant town. As little change as possible. Be a leader in preserving rural and historical character of area. Beautiful small town, rural feel. Continue to feel like a special place. Continue to have open space, farms. Don't become Ludlow. Don't change too much. Happy the way things have been. Keep "localness" of town. Keep it the same. Looks as it does today. Looks same only better. Love it as it is. Maintain bucolic and friendly spirit. Hope things stay about the same. Maintain character off town. Maintain peaceful village character. Maintain rural lifestyle. Peace and tranquility. Peaceful and bucolic small town. Peaceful village. Place for children to grow up. Preserve Mount Holly's soul. Protect rural character and natural beauty. Quaint beautiful town similar to now. Remain nice quiet town. Remain rural. Retain rural character. Retain rural landscape. Retain small-town feel. Retain town charm. Rural charm is what was attractive. Rural environment with modern services. Rural with mowed fields and

		meadows, open space, and woodlands. Similar but better. Similar to today. Small community charm. Small town and community values. Small village feeling. Stay a Vermont small town but improved. Stay as it is. Stay recognizable. Stay visually the same. Traditional rural Vermont town. Values the individual and individual responsibility We are a gem but must change with the times. Beware of NIMBY.
Natural Environment	51	Abundant natural resources and conservation lands. Address Star Lake. Beautiful nature protected by all of us. Beautiful natural environment. Beautiful protected woodlands, streams, lakes, and forests. Beauty and seclusion. Care for the natural environment. Clean lakes. Clean Star Lake a central part of the community and draw for visitors. Clean water. Correct invasive weed issues in Star Lake or fill it in for a park. Fix Star Lake. Improve Star Lake. Maintain wilderness aspect. Make environmental decisions based on biodiversity over aesthetics and human desires (let Star Lake become a marsh). More conservation around Star Lake and paths. More lands put into conservation trusts. Open undeveloped land available for farming, hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding. Preservation of open space, natural environment, agricultural lands, forests. Preserve and enhance natural resources. Preserve natural surroundings. Preserve Star Lake. Preserve wildlands. Preserve wildlife and natural beauty. Preserved natural environments and habitats. Prioritize conservation. Prioritize protection. Protect forests and lakes from development. Protect forests from development. Protect open space. Protect rural character and natural beauty. Protect Star Lake by improving Belmont wastewater systems. Make Star Lake swimmable. Protect views. Protects natural resources. Restore Star Lake swimming access. Restore Star Lake. Retain clean air, forests, open space. Retain clean environment. Retain natural beauty and protect environment. Maintain open space, forests, and views. Retain open land uncluttered by solar panels. Show leadership in preserving open land and views. Small town surrounded by wilderness. Star Lake becoming 70% clear water. Support families who support keeping land open instead of selling or subdividing. Woodlands, mowed fields, and meadows enhanced.

Affordable Housing	38	<p>Address investment homes used as short-term rentals. 2-3% tax on every real estate transaction paid to an affordable housing fund. Affordable for young families. Affordable housing for average Vermonters. Something must be done to offset buying by out-of-staters. Affordable housing for families will preserve our community. Affordable housing for year-round residents. Affordable housing offered to young families. Affordable housing. Attract full-time residents by emphasizing housing. Attract more housing. Attract young families. Be a great place for families. Create affordable housing that doesn't detract from rural values. Don't become a place of second homes for the wealthy. Encourage an age and economic diverse population. Ensure families can afford to live here. Great housing. Keep taxes affordable. Maintain the local population. More affordable homes for single people and seniors. More affordable housing for full time residents. More affordable housing in hamlets. Use more European village models. More affordable housing in villages. More affordable housing. More housing in Ludlow and Rutland. More long-term rental properties (perhaps farmhouse-type duplex units) in Belmont or hamlets. Offer more housing opportunities. Our children should be able to live here. Prioritize livability. Protect affordable housing. Regulate short-term rentals. Second homes driving up housing costs. Solve affordable housing problem. Some appropriately designed multifamily housing in town center. Young families can afford to live here.</p>
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Community Strength	32	<p>A caring community of people from all kinds of backgrounds! A community-centered group comes together for the better good of the town. Balance inevitable growth from second homes with having a stable community. Caring and friendly community. Community feel the same. Continue to build strong sense of community. Create a healthy and diverse community by being inclusive of differences. Encourage an age and economic diverse population. Excellent community involvement. Friendly neighbors. Mix of young families and older people. Full-time residents become more accepting of part-time residents who care about the community and contribute to town. Good friends. Have a diverse population with young working families and people of all ages living here full time. Reduce us versus them mentality. More welcoming. Increased sense of community around a series of events. Knowing neighbors contributes to safe communities. Age diversity. Looks and feels like residents care about the Town. Maintain community and volunteer spirit. More people volunteering. People don't get divided by politics. People helping people. Prioritize connection with each other. Residents on both north and south of Route 103 feel connected. Rural community feel. See community grow. Sense of shared community. Diverse opinions accepted. Solutions must come out of a feeling that we are all in this together. Stay good neighbors and an active community. Strong, friendly community. Warm, caring community. Warm, welcoming, inclusive community. Welcome newcomers and preserve traditions. Young families bring energy and volunteerism.</p>
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Economic Growth	31	<p>Another store or two. Attract full-time residents by emphasizing local business. Attract more businesses. Attract tourism and commerce. Support Plew Farm and Crowley Cheese. Attract young families. Cell signal essential for economic competitiveness. Create economic opportunities that don't detract from rural values. Encourage artisanal and digital business. More boutique or organic farms. Expand local food production. Growth of Okemo will hopefully affect us positively. Growth that doesn't detract from village and community. Improve Belmont wastewater systems to allow economic development. Incentives for local small businesses. Identify locations for local business. Increase economic activity by improving town center. Increased support to local farms and businesses. Invest in town wastewater systems to enable more development in Belmont Village. Local business. More business in Belmont. More businesses on Route 103. More farms. Local business thriving. More farms. More stores and businesses. More growth in Belmont. More local employment opportunities. More local employment. More local shops and restaurants. More vibrant job force. Small businesses thrive. Support local agriculture. Support small, locally owned home businesses. Sustainable development over growth. Thriving small businesses and abundant jobs.</p>
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Managed Development	27	<p>Address architectural compatibility Adopt local land use regulations that protect our unique community instead of relying on state regulation. Balance inevitable growth from second homes with having a stable community. Consider zoning. Control over-development. Beware economic improvement. Control sprawl. Controlled development. Current rate of development along roads and on open land limits recreational opportunities. Discourage major developments and McMansions. Discourage subdivision and development of rural lands and instead develop town centers and hamlets with tasteful density and reduce sprawl. Consider municipal center, East Wallingford, other hamlets for increased development. Do not over-develop. Don't become built-up and suburban. Don't become extension of Okemo. Working farms and woodlands should be discouraged from subdivision. Don't turn into New Jersey. Don't want town to be overtaken by commercial development. Improved development limits. Keep development in check. Remain as rural as possible. No overflow from Okemo. Keep up with new regulations. Manage future development to keep Town small. Don't become Ludlow. Minimal subdivision and development. No over-development. No over-development. Not to grown anymore. Regulate development to preserve rural character. Regulate development. Smart development planning required to maintain character. Sustain what we have now and balance with planned growth.</p>
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Utilities and Facilities	26	<p>Adapt to influx of new residents. Add a cell tower. Advertise our high speed broadband. Invest in town waste water systems to enable more development in Belmont Village. Attract full-time residents by emphasizing services. Better road maintenance (especially Ninevah Rd). Cell signal essential for economic competitiveness. Electric vehicle charging station. Expand local food production. Improved infrastructure. Keeping up with technology needs. Maintain facilities without overreliance on small number of volunteers and private fundraising. More affordable broadband. More paved and better maintained dirt roads. Partner with the Vermont Village Wastewater Initiative to explore wastewater system upgrade options for Belmont. Preserve local services. Prettify School Street. Park and ride with bus stop. Public parking in Belmont. Prioritize road maintenance. Provide good services to residents. Public transportation van. Roads maintained and plowed. Rural environment with modern services. Solve Belmont waste water problems. Transportation. Turn on cell service. Well-maintained roads and homes. Well maintained roads.</p>
Community Facilities / Amenities	23	<p>Active Belmont Village. Another store or two. Continue to have a store - perhaps co-op. Excellent museum and community association. Village store. Expand communal activities and services in Belmont. General store thriving. Invest in Belmont Store and run as a co-op. Keep Belmont Store open. Library. Local food. Maintain facilities without overreliance on small number of volunteers and private fundraising. Maintain vibrant town center in Belmont. Support Belmont General Store (see Brownsville Butcher in West Windsor). New town office and fire/rescue station. Public parking in Belmont. Properly maintain public institutions and government buildings. Quality stores and restaurants. Revive Belmont Village. Store in town. Support Belmont General Store. Support General store and post office. Thriving village amenities. Use Pierce's Store as model for Belmont General Store. Village-based development and walking access to town amenities. Village center needs upgraded store, post office, and green.</p>

Recreation	20	<p>Add a town forest with recreational trails. Better access. Better parks and hiking trails. Clean lake for swimming, boating, and enjoying. Community beach at Lake Ninevah. Dog walking trails. Fund recreation. Great recreational activities. Hunting, fishing, outdoor activity. Inventory and link recreation areas. More trails and park-like areas. Perhaps class 4 roads could be opened up or municipal agreements between VAST trail landowners for 4-season use. Produce a map of public recreation (including Lake Ninevah access). It is too hard to find access to outdoor recreation here. Open spaces for the public. Open undeveloped land available for hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding. Outdoors. Preserved lands used for recreation. Preserved outdoor recreation areas. Respect for walkers along roads. Restore Star Lake recreation. Walking trails. Work with LAST and VMBA to develop mountain bike and sport trails.</p>
Full-time / Seasonal Residents	19	<p>Allow community members to live and work here. Attract full-time residents by emphasizing schools, local businesses, services, and housing. Balance inevitable growth from second homes with having a stable community. Don't appreciate out-of-state people trying to make town less rural. Don't appreciate condescension from out-of-staters. Don't hand over rural life to out of state, part-time residents. Grow in a way that enhances life for full-time residents. Keep year-round resident numbers from declining. Less distinction between newcomers and those who are not. Increase proportion of full-time residents. Make out-of-state owners pay more taxes. Something must be done to offset buying by out-of-staters. More full-time residents. More positive engagement from second-home owners in keeping our town character and social / economic viability. Rather not see area owned by out-of-staters. Regulate short-term rentals. Second-home owners act like in the "wild wild west". Second-home owners pay for services but do not bring volunteers or sense of community. Second-home owners don't raise children here and support the community. Second homes driving up housing costs. We have become a second-home community.</p>

Young Families	16	Affordable for young families. Affordable housing for families will preserve our community. Affordable housing offered to young families. Attract young families. Be a great place for families. Be a place young people can raise children and live affordably. Community dies when no longer able to attract young families. Families of many ages. Mix of young families and older people. More housing for young families. More school-age children. Our children should be able to live here. Vitally important to attract young people to town. Young families participate in community activities. Young families bring energy and volunteerism. Young families can afford to live here.
Public Health / Safety	16	Continue to have local emergency services. Emergency response. Enhanced fire and emergency services and public safety. Expanded health services. Focus on public health. Have a robust volunteer fire/rescue squad. Health services available for year-round residents. Knowing neighbors contributes to safe communities. Lack of policing and emergency services is a concern. Monitor and police public use areas. More people volunteering for fire and rescue. More public safety presence. New town office and fire/rescue station. Speed bumps on Belmont Rd. Speed bumps. Water management upgraded to meet current standards.
Schools	16	Attract full-time residents by emphasizing schools. Continue to have excellent school. Have school choice for junior high and high school. Ensure school keeps good reputation. Excellent school. Fund schools. Good schools. Keep local schools. Keep small school (perhaps K-4). More young families will allow the school to expand. New school principal. Offering education opportunities is key. Quality education. School available for year-round residents. School facilities updated and well-maintained. School thriving. Separate school from Ludlow to avoid hyperfocus on testing and allow more science education.
Seniors	10	Affordable senior housing. Allow people to age in place. Develop programs and services for elderly. Ensure seniors can stay in town as they age. Families of many ages. Hope to age in place. Mix of young families and older people. Modern services for aging population. More affordable homes for seniors. Senior housing near Belmont center. Support older residents.

Arts / Culture	10	A central meeting place for events and social gatherings. Apply for Village Center Designation for Belmont. Architecturally preserve historic charm. Continue annual town events. Expanded cultural services. Historical preservation. More grants for local artists, galleries, shops. More to do. Respect historic structures. Vibrant community activities.
Governance	7	Adopt a noise ordinance. Enforce junk ordinance. Great management of local government. Have a five person Select Board to help keep politics out. Quality government. Select Board needs to be more responsive to needs and transparent about finances and expenditures including those paid to staff. Should look and feel like Town cares about residents.
Negative Visions	5	Built-up and subdivided with less forest and field and 50% part-time residential. Don't appreciate out-of-state people trying to make town less rural. Don't appreciate condescension from out-of-staters. Don't hand over rural life to out-of-state, part-time residents. Rather not see area owned by out-of-staters. Risk of becoming town bereft of character.
Climate Resilience	6	Better understand and mitigate impacts of regional climate change. Educate community. Charging for electric cars. Electric vehicle charging station. Environment adapted for a changing climate. More people using renewable energy. More renewable energy. More climate resilience.
Child Care	2	Affordable childcare. Attract young families.

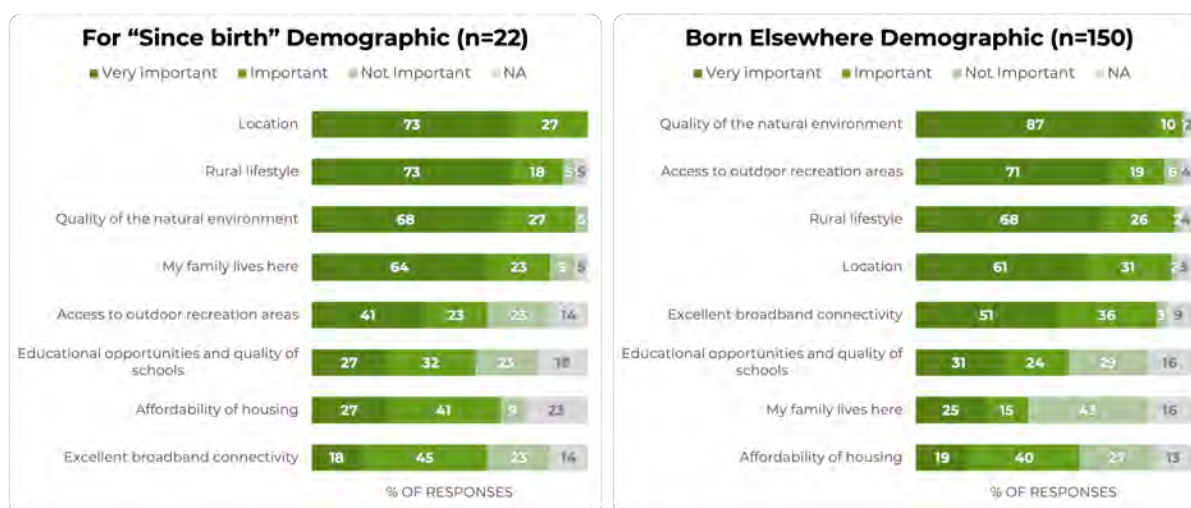
Summary of Findings

Demographic Variance

Several respondents, in their comments, pointed to perceived differences in values and vision between those who were born in Mount Holly and those who were not. It is useful to investigate whether there is any significant variation in the data collected from each of those different demographics.

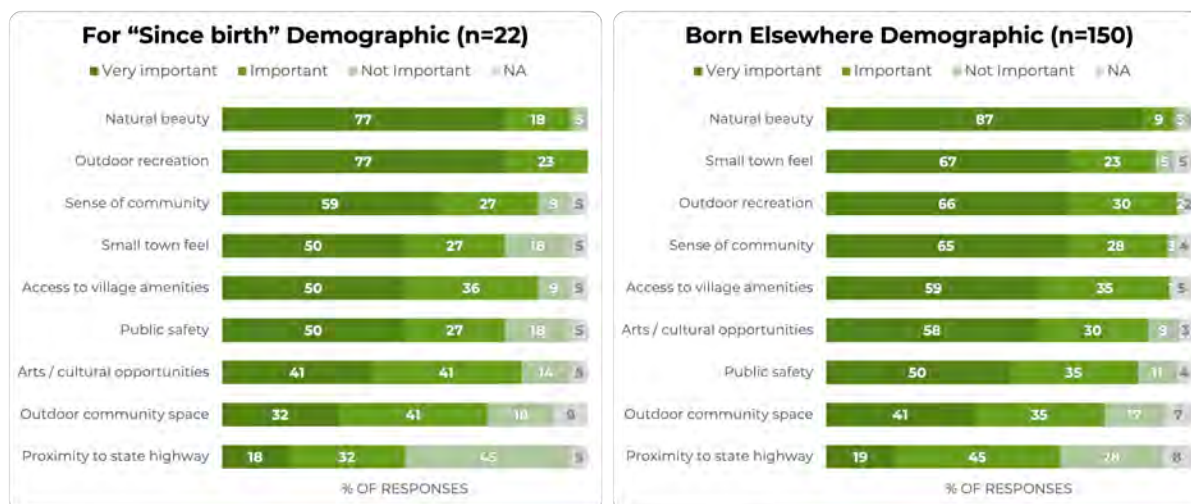
The following data seem to suggest that, while there are some notable differences between the two demographics, there is significant agreement on the most important priorities and therefore ample opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in order to address the current and future needs of the community.

Question 7 - How important are the following to you as to why you live in Mount Holly?



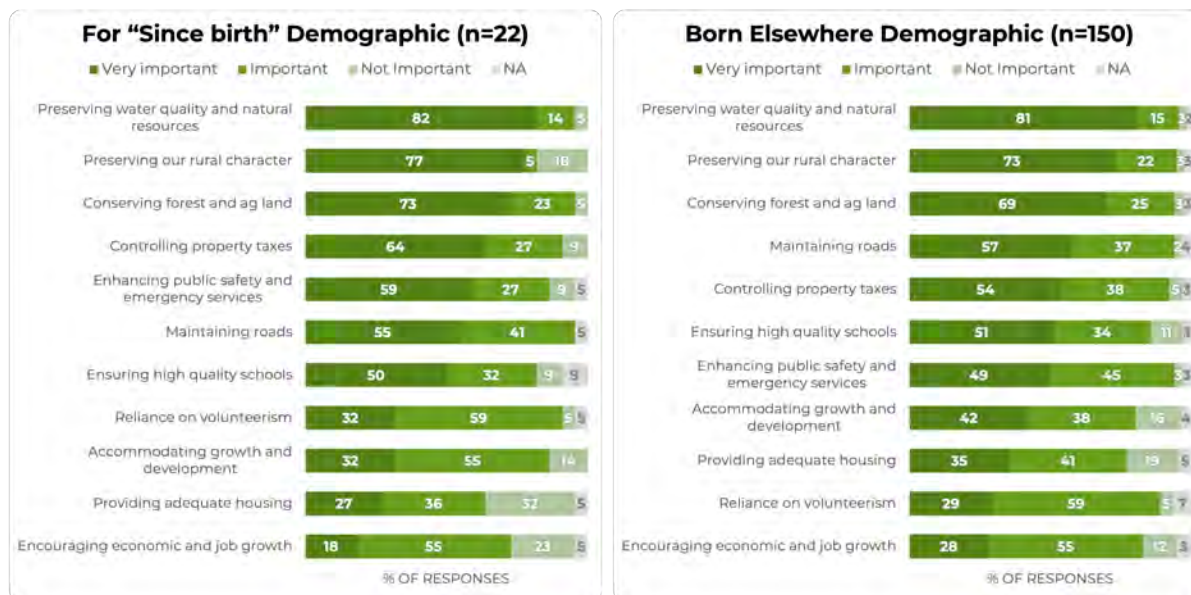
Rural lifestyle and **natural environment** are priorities for both demographics. However, **location** and **family ties** are, perhaps not surprisingly, valued higher by the since-birth demographic (SBD). While the born-elsewhere demographic (BED), seemed attracted by **outdoor recreation** and **high-speed broadband**.

Question 8 - How important are the following to your rural Mount Holly lifestyle?



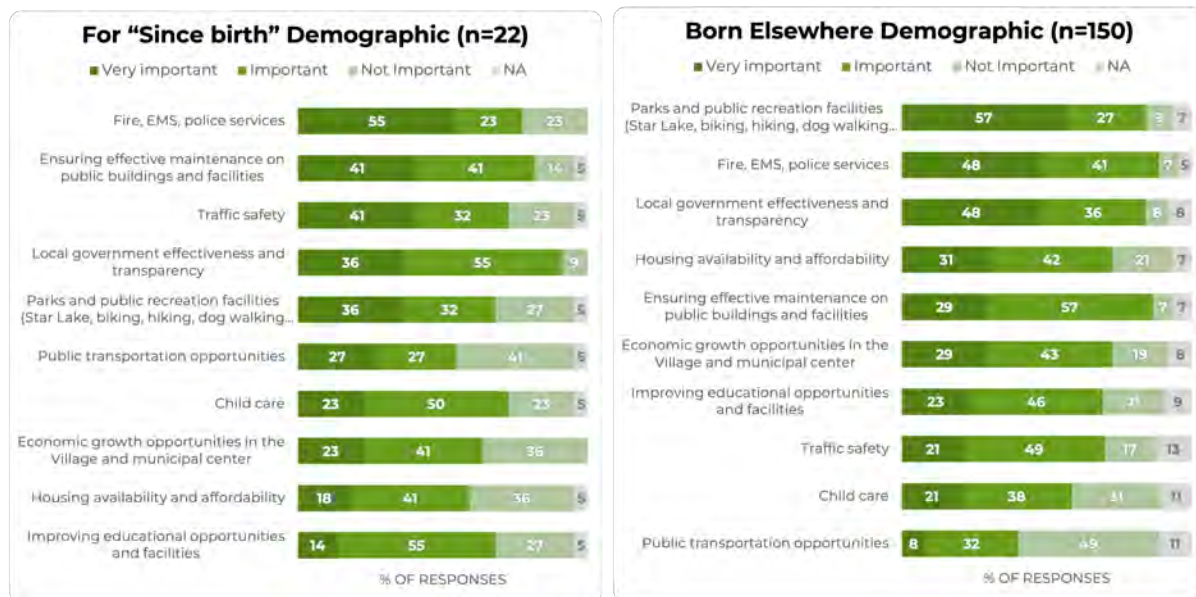
Both demographics share the top five values but with minor differences in the order: **natural beauty, outdoor recreation, sense of community, small-town feel, and access to village amenities**. The SBD values **outdoor recreation** (hunting, fishing, etc) and **public safety** slightly higher while the BED values **small-town feel** and **arts / cultural opportunities** slightly higher.

Question 9 - How do you rate the importance of these challenges facing Mount Holly over the next 5-10 years?



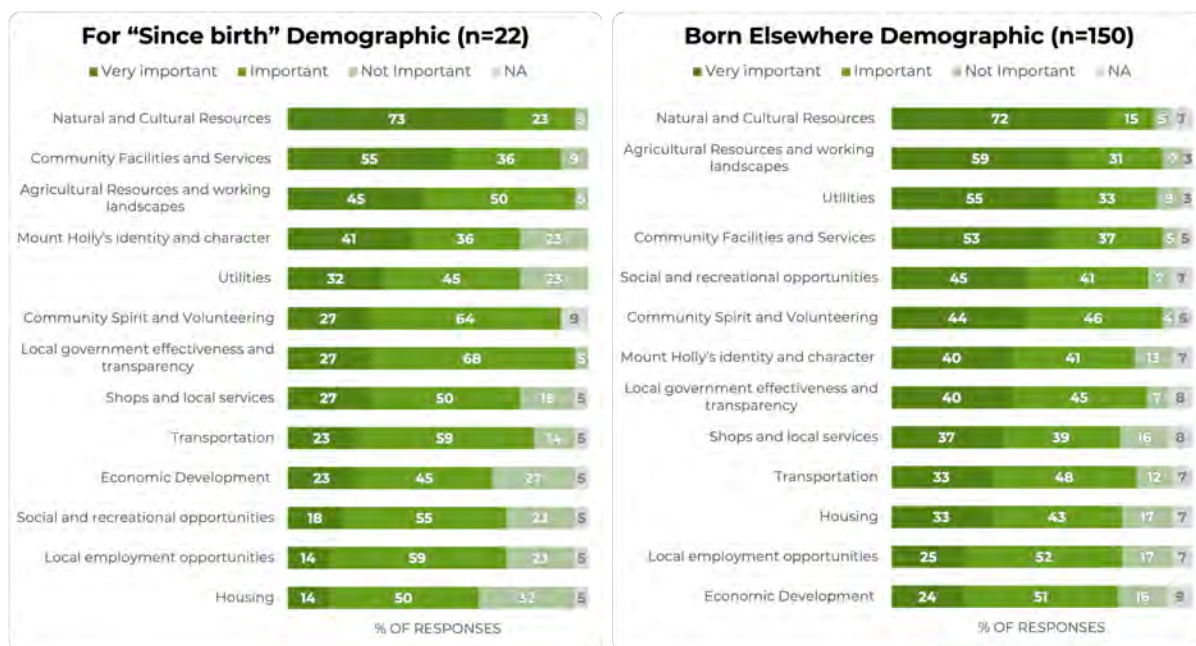
It is noteworthy that both demographics share the top three priorities: **preserving natural resources, rural character, and conserving forest and agriculture land**. The SBD ranks **controlling taxes** and **emergency services** slightly higher.

Question 10 - Which of these topics do you feel needs immediate attention in the Town within the next 2-3 years?



It is on the question of immediate priorities where we see the biggest difference between the two demographics. The SBD prioritizes **public building maintenance** and **traffic safety** higher. The BED prioritizes **public recreation** and **housing affordability** significantly higher. However, there is general agreement on prioritizing **emergency services** and **government transparency**.

Question 11 - How do you rate the importance of investment or enhancement in the following over the next 5-10 years?



Both demographics agree on the top priority being investment or enhancement in **natural and cultural resources** (protection of surface water quality, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, streams, springs, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, woodlands, rural character, culture, events). There is also close agreement on prioritizing **community facilities** (parks, police, fire, EMS, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities, libraries, schools, governmental facilities). The SBD prioritizes town **identity and character** (website, brand, etc.) higher. The BED prioritizes **agricultural resources and working landscapes** (protection of productive agricultural areas used for crop or forage production, keeping livestock, forest management, conservation), **utilities** (water, septic systems, electric, broadband, stormwater, garbage, emergency power and communication), and **social and recreational opportunities** higher.

Key Themes

Several themes were identified throughout the survey as being important for the future of Mount Holly.

1. Rural Identity and Character

There is overwhelming support for the town retaining its rural (and working) landscape and character and employing a variety of tools to do so.

2. Natural Environment and Outdoor Recreation

Healthy natural assets (Star Lake frequently mentioned), some of which are available for outdoor, nature-based recreation and others serving as wilderness.

3. Residential Diversity

A healthy community composed of diverse ages, income levels, residential statuses, and backgrounds with specific attention paid to affordability, attracting and retaining young families, and better supporting older full-time residents.

4. Community Amenities and Services

A community store (whether privately owned, community-owned, or cooperatively owned) as well as village-focused development of affordable housing, senior housing, and small, local businesses.

5. Utilities and Infrastructure

Many mentioned the need for village water and sewer to support additional village development. Others mentioned the need for better broadband and cell service, more renewable energy, and EV chargers.

6. Community Strength and Culture

These two seem to go together, as they're about building social capital in Mount Holly. Social capital is trust, relationships, and networks in a community's population. When a community has strong social capital, it can accomplish more.¹ This can be done in many ways, including through events and other ways of building connections between people.

7. Governance and Public Safety

An inclusive and transparent local government and emergency services

¹ The Eight Capitals. WealthWorks.

<https://www.wealthworks.org/basics/explore-regional-wealth-building/wealth-eight-capitals>

composed of engaged citizens providing for the general welfare. Furnished with modern and well-maintained facilities and equipment.

Rural Identity and Character

Many respondents are eager to maintain Mount Holly's rural character, preserving a particular quality of life for those who, as one person said it, "have settled here for the peace and tranquility of the area," while maintaining the services residents have come to expect. Often, these respondents are seeking to focus on Mount Holly's status as a small, rural community and a year-round home for many. Others mentioned not overdeveloping Mount Holly. Many mentioned maintaining a school in Mount Holly. Regulatory tools were discussed as a way of accomplishing these goals. Part of this vision of maintaining rural character is preserving the natural resources that surround the community, while also maintaining recreational opportunities and working lands occupations, economic opportunities and affordable housing in a village setting.

Natural Environment and Outdoor Recreation

Mount Holly is home to a variety of natural assets. Star Lake was mentioned by many, in terms of restoration, working on invasive weed issues, and transforming it into more of a recreation asset. Other discussion around the natural environment was focused on creating more recreational opportunities by building on recreational assets. Preserving wilderness around Mount Holly was also mentioned. There seems to be a divide between those who are seeking to use natural assets for recreation and those who would like to see natural assets left alone, as wilderness. Climate change was mentioned by several people, in terms of understanding the impacts of climate change and attempting to mitigate those impacts.

"We must prioritize protecting our natural environment, preserving our two lakes and helping people access local recreation in the town."

"Working farms should be protected and supported and subdivision of these parcels - as well as woodlands - discouraged."

"Preserved natural environments, habitats, and outdoor recreation areas."

"Ideally, environmental decisions would be made for the sake of the environment and biodiversity rather than aesthetics and human desires (for example, let Star Lake become a marsh as it would naturally become without human intervention)."

"My hope is that Mt. Holly will retain it's natural beauty and protect the environment while growing and developing in a way that enhances life for full time residents while also maintaining open spaces, forests and views, as well as the sense of community and volunteer spirit."

"I hope Mt. Holly is able to maintain the wilderness aspect."

Residential Diversity

Many mentioned the need for affordable and diverse housing, implying that this would help to attract and retain young families, single people and aging populations. Often, this was as a reaction to the many second-home owners in Mount Holly and their perceived “McMansions.” Many mentioned having more affordable housing in the Belmont village area, so that residents would have walking access to town amenities. Development of this affordable housing might require town septic/sewage and water systems. This was also often mentioned as a reaction to people buying investment properties and offering them as short term rentals through Airbnb and others.

“I would like to see Mount Holly take measures to protect its rural character and natural beauty, while at the same time also taking steps to create economic opportunities and affordable housing in a manner that does not detract from those gestures and values but rather is consistent with and promotes them.”

“Housing that is affordable for families should be available to preserve our community.”

Many respondents were hoping that there would be more jobs in the area to help attract and retain young families and young people. Others were interested in supporting the development of more local businesses. Small artisanal and IT businesses were mentioned; with Mount Holly’s excellent broadband, it could be an ideal place for IT businesses that require good broadband. Boutique farms were also mentioned, as were tourism related businesses.

“Thriving small businesses and abundant jobs for community members.”

“Encouragement of small artisanal and IT businesses and boutique farms with an emphasis on sustainable, organic, humane farming practices.”

Schools were discussed, including good schools to attract and retain young families, a new school principal, and less focus on testing.

“New school principal”

“Separate the school from Ludlow and the rest of TRSU--right now it's focused so much on testing, the students have two ELA and two math classes a day with only a hour of social studies/science per week. It's not the school a lot of people want to think it is. “

“Funding should be made for our schools and recreational use “

“2040 would continue to see a thriving elementary school. The school building and grounds would be clean, up to date, organized and well run. Remaining a desirable school.”

Many mentioned having Mount Holly be a place that is welcoming and accessible for people of all ages, but specifically for youth and seniors. Much of the discussion

around seniors was focused on affordable senior housing near the village so that seniors can get around more easily.

"Maintaining the town's rural lifestyle and active and vibrant community while encouraging a diverse population (including age and economic diversity as well as other factors)."

"Affordable & Senior Housing So Seniors Can Remain In The Area They Love"

"More affordable homes for single people, or seniors."

"I want Mount Holly to continue to build a strong sense of community and to develop programs and services for the elderly."

Along with affordable housing comes the need for available and affordable child care. This is an issue in all communities, creating challenges for those young families that communities are seeking.

"I hope we can attract young families by facilitating affordable housing, increasing child care opportunities and working to promote good jobs in the region."

Community Amenities and Services

Many respondents mentioned the importance of the general store, the Belmont Village Store, as critical to casual community gathering. Several mentioned transitioning it to a publicly owned/community owned store. A few mentioned Pierce's Store in Shrewsbury as a potential model.² Community stores in rural areas do serve as third places, where social connections are fostered.

Other community facilities mentioned were cell service, town septic/sewage and water systems, reviving the Mechanicsville aqueduct, library, museum, community association, senior housing, speed bumps, public transportation van, EV charger and better roads.

"A general store is critical to community gathering casually and regularly. Perhaps the store should be a publicly owned building (like the library/community center) that is leased to an operator."

"...our Belmont Village Store needs investment and structure to run as a Community Store. Maybe it goes more in the direction of Pierces Store with a co-op approach."

"we continue to have a store. In Mr Holly. Do we need a Co-op? Will we have the means to support people to age in place?"

² <http://www.piercesstore.com/>

"Would love to see mount Holly build more local shops and restaurants. Also have more of a public safety presence and add a cell tower."

"Would be nice to see a couple more 5-7 day a week businesses in village, which would definitely include a general store. Road maintenance would be a high priority, and perhaps some zoning would be reasonable to keep the town looking and feeling good."

"I think it's important for the town to maintain and enhance a vibrant town center in Belmont, which will encourage people to live and visit the town. We have lots of room to grow without jeopardizing the small town character we all love. Some ideas I would like to see pursued include: 1. Apply for Vermont Village Center Designation in Belmont...there is no downside and it opens up grant and other opportunities. 2. Partner with the Vermont Village Wastewater Initiative to explore wastewater system upgrade options for Belmont...this would help to protect Star Lake and also open up options for community development and upgrades 3. Support a vibrant village center...supporting a general store is so important to this. See what the Brownsville Butcher has done for West Windsor. It's like glue for the community and really enhances quality of life. If we could solve the waste water problem, we could also support other businesses and community amenities 4. Work with LAST and VMBA to develop mountain bike and sport trails through Mount Holly. These could cross private land (with permission). Mountain bike trail systems have become important amenities in many Vermont communities, which make the town desirable to line in and visit. 5. Make Star Lake usable / swimmable if possible (realize this is not an easy problem to solve)."

"New town office and fire/rescue station. "

Community Strength and Culture

Having a welcoming and inclusive community was also high on people's lists. There was also discussion of getting away from an "us" vs. "them" mentality, and oldtimers vs. newcomers.

"Warm, welcoming, inclusive community"

"It's critical to pay attention and awareness to care the creation of a healthy and diverse community by being inclusive of difference and divergent ideas. How are we creating community in the town of Mount Holly? How are we including ALL and supporting the health of our community regardless of difference in socioeconomic status, race, gender? Just because it has always been doesn't mean that is should be that way. Creating space for shifts is critical for change, as change is constant. How is Mount Holly creating space for change and how is it hindering it?"

"I hope we can continue to avoid/reduce any 'us' vs 'them' mentality. I'd like to see the community assn, odd fellows, town events and town govt feel like they belong to and represent all of us - regardless of whether we were born here or

chose to make Mt Holly our home. Newcomers should feel welcome and encouraged to contribute, and old timers should feel their voices are heard and needs met as well. “

“A caring community of people from all kinds of backgrounds!”

Arts and culture was mentioned by a few, including support for local artists and local galleries and shops.

“more grant opportunities for local artists (and local galleries/shops)”

“I think there should have been a question related to culture on the survey.”

A potential challenge to community strength exists in the dichotomy between year-round and seasonal residents, including the challenges around housing as a result of seasonal residents, the different expectations of seasonal residents, and the reduced engagement from seasonal residents.

“We (currently) do not appreciate people moving in from out of state who want to change it into a less rural environment/town/village. We also do not appreciate (currently) the attitudes from folks visiting or second home owners who judge (voice it in public settings - totally not appropriate) others who are full-time, year round residents who may not have the physical, financial, or educational skills of those who may have attended a higher end institution(s).”

“My preferred vision consists of keeping the year round residence numbers from declining, and ideally seeing that number go up.”

“We are more than happy to pay taxes so our kids are well educated! A quieter, wilder, peaceful, vibrant town preserving its local traditions while welcoming NEW COMERS in a way we all win!!! “

“what about second homers driving up housing costs?”

“I would like Mnt Holly to stay rural. Would rather not see the area owned by out of staters”

“We have become a second home community. That is an impact on our locals school and services. “

“I would like to see a Mount Holly where housing is affordable, so that living is here is possible for average Vermonters. You shouldn't need to make 6 figures just to live here. Something must be done to offset the extreme gobbling up of houses by out-of-state homeowners. Make them pay more taxes than... “

“More positive engagement from visitors/second home owners in keeping our town character and social/economic viability. “

"Less of a distinction/divide between newcomers and those who have lived here for generations. Increase in proportion of full time residents who live in and contribute to the community year round."

Governance and Public Safety

Governance was mentioned in several ways, including desire for a five-person Select Board, increased government transparency, responsiveness, enforceable laws around noise and junk, and traffic safety.

"The Select Board needs to be more responsive to important needs and transparent about finances and expenditures including those paid to staff members."

"A five person Select Board to keep politics from sneaking in"

Public safety was mentioned by many, including more of a public safety presence, enhanced fire and emergency services, new fire/rescue station, and more volunteering for public safety agencies.

"Also have more of a public safety presence and add a cell tower."

"Lack of emergency services has always been a concern (no local police, for example); of course this is a small town."

"I hope to see enhanced fire and emergency services and public safety"

"New town office and fire/rescue station."

"To keep it as rural as it has been, get more people involved in volunteering for local agencies (ie. rescue, fire)"

Specific Ideas Offered

Respondents, in their comments, offered a number of ideas for future action or investigation. These are collected and summarized as follows:

Rural Identity and Character

- Preserve scenic roads and views
- Consider historic designation for Belmont Village
- Protect and support working agricultural and forestry lands
- Better promotion of identity to outsiders and newcomers through website
- Consider updating regulatory controls to manage growth

Natural Environment and Outdoor Recreation

- Compile available options for Star Lake
- Explore compensation for landowners keeping land undeveloped
- Create a plan for public parks, municipal forest, and trail systems
- Explore partnership with private landowners for trail network
- Explore options for a community beach on Lake Ninevah
- Create a guide to local recreation opportunities

Residential Diversity

- Encourage affordable housing for young families
- Expand senior housing options
- Invest in child care services and facilities
- Ensure school remains high quality and well respected
- Plan for senior transportation option
- Consider controls on short-term rentals
- Encourage more long-term rentals
- Consider identifying areas capable of increased development (such as hamlets) in order to avoid sprawl and loss of rural landscape
- Consider ways to create and sustain an affordable housing fund
- Consider changes to Subdivision regulations to support smarter growth

Community Amenities and Services

- Revitalize and improve Belmont General Store (perhaps as a co-op)
- Improve or enhance public gathering spaces
- Support existing producers of local food and products
- Incentivize new producers of local food and products
- Consider how to maintain facilities and services without overreliance on few volunteers and private fundraising

Utilities and Infrastructure

- Create a parking and transportation plan for Belmont Village
- Create a plan for addressing wastewater deficiency in Belmont (to enable revitalization of store and enhancement of opportunities in whole village)

- Explore additional cell phone coverage
- Add an electric vehicle charging station
- Consider adding a park and ride / bus stop on Route 103

Community Strength and Culture

- Encourage participation in community
- Consider alternatives to volunteer labor for some tasks
- Encourage “all in this together” problem solving
- Consider more support for local artists and artisans
- Establish a central meeting place for large events and gatherings
- Support historical preservation

Governance and Public Safety

- Continue to enforce Junk Ordinance
- Continue to enforce Traffic Ordinance
- Monitor unsafe on-road ATV use
- Increase Select Board to 5 members
- Use website and technology to increase transparency
- Create a plan for new Town Office / Fire / Rescue facilities
- Consider a noise ordinance
- Consider removable speed bumps
- Consider options for more policing

Next Steps

The responses collected in this survey, and the themes and ideas identified within, are critical pieces of information that will be used to assess community concerns related to housing, economic development, and public infrastructure.

Future planning work will draw on the values identified by the respondents as important and the vision they outlined.

The Town will continue to engage the community as we continue to identify barriers to development and consider methods of removing those barriers.

Updates will be posted to the [project website](#) and sent to the [Mount Holly Newsflash](#).

If you have any questions or comments you may contact the team at mounthollycommunitysurvey@gmail.com.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Mount Holly Community Vision Survey

Mount Holly residents and landowners, we invite you to take an anonymous 5-minute survey to help the Town understand what is important to you and help inform our future priorities.

Your input is essential to this process. Your answers will guide us in maximizing the benefit to the community from our American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and any other grant funding to address community challenges.

Please complete and return this form to the drop box in the Town Office or the Library by November 30, 2022.

If you have any questions, please contact mounthollycommunitysurvey@gmail.com.

Thank you for your participation!

1. What is your residential status? (Check one)

☐ Year-round resident

☐ Winter resident

☐ Summer resident

☐ Other _____

2. How old are you? (Check one)

☐ Under 20

☐ 21-40

☐ 41-60

☐ 61-80

☐ Over 80

3. How long have you been in Mount Holly? (Check one)

☐ Less than a year

☐ 1-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-20 years

☐ More than 20 years

☐ Since birth

4. How are you involved in the community? (Check all that apply)

☐ Own a business here

☐ Work the land here

☐ Have kids in school

☐ Go to school

☐ Own property

☐ Own rental property

☐ Rent a home/property

☐ Volunteer here

☐ Serve in the town government

☐ Work here

☐ Care about Mount Holly's future

☐ Other _____

5. Do you commute to work outside of Mount Holly? (Check one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Retired

☐ Other _____

6. Do you work remotely? (Check one)

☐ Yes, all the time

☐ Yes, sometimes

☐ No

☐ Other _____

7. How important are the following to you as to why you live in Mount Holly?

(Check either "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" for each row)

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
My family lives here	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordability of housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational opportunities and quality of schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of the natural environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellent broadband connectivity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rural lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to outdoor recreation areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: Please describe			

8. How important are the following to your rural Mount Holly lifestyle?

(Check either "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" for each row)

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Small town feel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to village amenities (General Store, Post Office, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arts and culture opportunities (Cider Days, Library, Museum, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proximity to state highway	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor community space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural beauty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: Please describe			

Mount Holly Community Vision Survey

9. How do you rate the importance of these challenges facing Mount Holly over the next 5-10 years?

(Check either "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" for each row)	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Accommodating growth and development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing adequate housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conserving forest and agricultural land	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controlling property taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring high quality schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preserving our rural character	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintaining roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliance on volunteerism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging economic and job growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preserving water quality and natural resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhancing public safety and emergency services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: Please describe			

10. Which of these topics do you feel needs immediate attention in the Town within the next 2-3 years?

(Check either "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" for each row)	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Housing availability and affordability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving educational opportunities and facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parks and public recreation facilities (Star Lake, biking, hiking, dog walking trails...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic growth opportunities in the Village	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local government effectiveness and transparency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transportation opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fire, EMS, police services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring effective maintenance on public building and facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: Please describe			

11. How do you rate the importance of investment or enhancement in the following over the next 5-10 years?

(Check either "Very Important", "Important", or "Not Important" for each row)	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Community spirit and volunteering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing (supply and affordability)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation (roads, trails, public transport, safety, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilities (water, septic systems, electric, broadband, stormwater, garbage, emergency power and communication)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Facilities and Services (parks, police, fire, EMS, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities, libraries, schools, governmental facilities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agricultural Resources and working landscapes (protection of productive agricultural areas used for crop or forage production, keeping livestock, forest management, conservation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural and Cultural Resources (protection of surface water quality, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, streams, springs, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, woodlands, rural character, culture, events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic Development (business retention, recruitment, expansion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local government effectiveness and transparency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mount Holly's identity and character (website, brand, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local employment opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social and recreational opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shops and local services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: Please describe			

12. Describe your preferred vision for Mount Holly in the future. You can consider questions such as: What does it look and feel like in the year 2040? What is the same, and what is different?

Appendix B: Qualitative Responses

Below are the complete, unedited responses from each of the freeform / write-in sections of the survey.

Question 7. How important are the following to you as to why you live in Mount Holly?

Lake Ninevah
Community activities
Community cultural organizations & activities
Ancestral family ties, family has maintained ties for generations
We moved here 20+ years ago because of the rural lifestyle, small town and tranquility of the area.
To live in a peaceful place where people are respectful of each other
A safe community.
Senior citizen support
Exceptional community
We admire the conservation policies of the Wilderness community.
To have a locally owned store such as the Belmont Store.
conservation orientation of land owners
I value that Mt. Holly contains a Wilderness Community that makes a mission of sustainable land use and forestry management
If access for snowmobiling or leg trapping or using hounds to hunt our wildlife then we can all do with less access. If "access" means enjoying and preserving our natural wildlife and environment in a compatible way (hiking, snow shoeing, bird watching, camping and ethical hunting (deer) then I'm all in)
Local produce and food

<p>The community used to be more welcoming ----to everyone. In the past several years there seems to be (like the rest of the country) a "them" and "us" mentality...rather than a "we"...and I think as a result ----no one benefits. "We" is what made this community in the past strong and vibrant. The history of Mechanicsville has been that it has ALWAYS been a collection of year round residents and residents who owned second homes. (In fact the town changed its name to Belmont to welcome those new tourists) Even today many of the village homes are owned by the friends, kids or grandkids of the people who lived "elsewhere" in the 20's and 30's but came to Belmont for summers.</p> <p>Change is difficult if you feel it is being "done unto you". In fact it becomes a totally different experience if you are participating and helping to guide it. So my hope would be that everyone that has a stake in the future of Mount Holly ---join together to move the village forward, to make the changes that will allow it to thrive in the next 100 years, rather than sitting on the sidelines, blaming the "others" for not maintaining the status quo.</p>
Small town
Quality Of Life
Managed, rural setting.
Small community
It has always been home for many generations of my family.
Protecting and preserving the environment and habitat
Diversity of natural resources
Owned property here since 1959
WE only tent camp on our land in the summer.
I share ownership of the property with my brother. It is overlooking Lake Ninevah. We love nature and the naturalness of the area. Hope it remains quiet and peaceful, not congested.
Short distance to urban services when needed
Great community spirit, many interesting characters, great library, many socially and environmental active groups.
Connection to history of the town and my family's life here going back 200+ years
Friendly neighbors
Family reunions, traditions, love of the town
Peaceful

General store, access to staples close by

Question 8. How important are the following to your rural Mount Holly lifestyle?

Good neighbors
Access to local, healthy food and agriculture.
Need senior housing or way for seniors to stay in MH. Historic stone walls, street trees, views, etc. are important. Volunteerism in community,
Don't want to see further development from people from out of state, building massive houses or subdividing lands. We are losing our rural life style and it's becoming unaffordable to live here.
Enjoying all the natural beauty and peace.
Star Lake! It's lovely but not very useable
Maybe some senior trails
Might not be a bad idea to start thinking seriously about architectural guidelines for new building (wherever possible and if it's affordable) as historic districts do. Vermont boasts styles from the mid 18th to middle of the 20th century of architectural models to work from that make our area visually pleasing) Not talking about McMansions that aspire to classical proportions but actually adopting historical styles and using architects that are classically trained There are about 5 firms in the state, that I know of, that fit that bill.
Community Activities Close Friends
Planned and managed development
Proximity to Ludlow's restaurants is important.
healthy wildlife habitats, climate resilient forests, and protected wetlands
Proximity to amazing cycling, skiing, hiking etc.
Enjoyment of the lake
Star Lake!!
Mount Holly needs to do a better job enforcing the junk ordinance. Station Road is an absolute disgrace. I will move is something is not done over the next year. My taxes are too high to have to live near a pig pen.

Availability of quality local food
Star Lake
Feeling that our community is open and welcome to all. Whether it's visiting the store, a local event, or just a quick trip to the post office.

Question 9. How do you rate the importance of these challenges facing Mount Holly over the next 5-10 years?

No responses.

Question 10. Which of these topics do you feel needs immediate attention in the Town within the next 2-3 years?

Partnership with law enforcement to reduce aggressive driving and SPEEDING.
ATV usage on paved roads is extremely dangerous. The constant flying up and down our dirt roads on ATV's makes for an unsafe environment for the ATV operator and other drivers on the road. Someone is going to get killed (AGAIN).

Question 11. How do you rate the importance of investment or enhancement in the following over the next 5-10 years?

There probably never will be many good jobs in Mount Holly. The town should work to promote economic opportunities within our region.
Improve public engagement, expand select board to 5, active public health.
senior housing option needed; bury power lines and replant street trees along roads; protect historic look and feel of community;
Enforcement of speed limits and vehicle noise control
Can

Just want to say that the 5-10 year list seems like a perfect medium term plan. Especially if child care gets taken care of earlier: we need investment in this along with affordable housing if we are to attract and retain the young families that are crucial to a vibrant community.
Really sick of seeing the confederate flag in town.
A store in town, a coop perhaps, would be a great benefit to the town. Safe walking, some opportunity for van service, and housing for seniors would enable many to age in place. Of great importance is continued and increased speed control . We should consider removable speed bumps. Safe walking on our country roads is one of the great pleasures of living here.
The store in Belmont is critical to our community, not only for its convenience, bur for the role it plays as a hub for those of us who live here. Perhaps a Community Supported model could work, such as the Brownsville Butcher.
General store must continue! We need it!
Urgent.need for cell service in rural Mt. Holly, esp. for emergency conditions.
The Belmont village needs a parking area to increase tourism and economic activity. Maybe create a municipal parking area next to the fire house and walking path to the center of town, this would also help drive business to the new brewery and the general store. Both of these establishments need parking if they are going to be profitable. In addition, the outside of the general store is badly neglected and reflects poorly on the town.
Why isn't CLIMATE CHANGE and all of the above being addressed and specifically mentioned and integrated into planning and vision process? There is an all war on destroying wetlands in our town by killing beavers and thus destroying the wild life corridors they create AND important sources of WILDFIRE protection. Efforts should be made to stop farming in flood plains(which would otherwise be beaver habitat) to decrease wildfire spread and increase wildlife corridors. There are now Carbon Sequestration programs (we are participating) that will pay us to NOT cut down trees and manage our land with wildlife and climate change in mind. We are working with our forester and the Family Forest Carbon Program which is compatible with the current land use programs.

Maintaining "Mount Holly's identity and character" is very important to me, but I don't think our "(website, brand, etc.)" have much to do with Mount Holly's identity or character.

I'd love to see more community facilities and services. I'd value investment in the following services more heavily:

- * More community dinners at Odd Fellows' Hall
- * Parks
- * Cemeteries
- * Libraries
- * Public gathering places (community center, odd fellows hall)
- * Child care facilities

And, while these services must be maintained to keep pace with Mount Holly, I value incremental improvements in these services less heavily:

- * Police
- * EMS
- * Health care facilities
- * Schools

Mt. Holly needs to have a better website. Right now there is no "official" web. That just isn't right. If you are posting (and you should) agendas, minutes, etc. and community information, then there should be an official local government source for that information and not an "unofficial website" as currently exists.

Wondering if regional planning has ever been considered? Where nearby towns can work together to share cost services

Restoration of Star Lake to its previous beauty and recreational functionality s VERY important to me - top priority!

Health of the lake

Grants to support our Belmont General Store! So important to this community!

Continuing to focus on controlling the visual eyesores around town

Star lake, as a lake, not a swamp.

Taxes I pay as a non resident shouldn't be MORE than a resident. I receive less services than a resident and am a far lesser impact to the environment, services, etc. I know those higher taxes are imposed by the state but towns/villages benefit from second homeowners quite a bit. If this practice continues, some of us will have to give up our homes unfortunately.

Good local food available and local products

Limits or better control over short term rentals in order to make more opportunities for local renters.

Question 12. Describe your preferred vision for Mount Holly in the future.

You can consider questions such as: What does it look and feel like in the year 2040? What is the same, and what is different?

I hope we can attract young families by facilitating affordable housing, increasing child care opportunities and working to promote good jobs in the region. We must prioritize protecting our natural environment, preserving our two lakes and helping people access local recreation in the town.

Keeping identity of mount holly the way it is. Strong active community, keeping local schools, preserving our services

Focus on sustainable development, not economic growth. Climate change resilience, renewable energy, public health, zoning to manage development.

Mount Holly should retain its small town feel and I would love to see it keep a small school maybe just K-4 then go regional. Star lake needs to be restored to an actual lake and our Belmont Village Store needs investment and structure to run as a Community Store. Maybe it goes more in the direction of Pierces Sore with a co-op approach. Future children need a small place to grow up. It's where they learn about the importance of community.

I would like to see Mount Holly maintain it's rural nature. I believe it is of utmost importance to preserve the quality of life for those year round residents who have settled here for the peace and tranquility of the area which, in the past several years, has come under fire from second home owners who think this area is the "wild Wild West."

To continue to have land, farms, clean water, and local emergency services. Expanding food growth of vegetables, fruit, cattle, chickens, etc. to see all people utilizing renewable clean energy.

It should not be so different that we do not recognize it but it should keep up with the regulations and be supported to at least remain as it is.

I feel saving Star Lake is important for the town. I realize the state has a strangle hold on their idea of treating the lake but those laws need to change. I feel the only solution is to petition Montpelier on how the DNR is killing lakes in the state rather than saving them.

<p>It's critical to pay attention and awareness to care the creation of a healthy and diverse community by being inclusive of difference and divergent ideas. How are we creating community in the town of Mount Holly? How are we including ALL and supporting the health of our community regardless of difference in socioeconomic status, race, gender? Just because it has always been doesn't mean that is should be that way. Creating space for shifts is critical for change, as change is constant. How is Mount Holly creating space for change and how is it hindering it?</p>
<p>Do not over develop. Turn on the cell phone service.</p>
<p>I hope it will be the same - Clean air, forests, space, quiet, nature, good neighbors, active community. I hope it doesn't become built up and suburban.</p>
<p>Rural life handed over to OUT OF STATE , PART TIME RESIDENTS.</p>
<p>We need a mix of housing so the community does not become strictly 2nd homes and mcmansions. We need to make sure families can afford to live here/work here and there is a way for seniors to stay in town as they age. Young families bring energy and volunteers. 2nd homeowners pay for services but do not bring volunteers or sense of community. Seniors have time to volunteer. We need to support families who keep land open, rather than sell for the high land prices that second home owners can afford. A general store is critical to community gathering casually and regularly. Perhaps the store should be a publicly owned building (like the library/community center) that is leased to an operator. We need a 5 member select board.</p>
<p>I want it to stay rural, if we keep going like we are it will become another ski town like Ludlow and will loose it's charm. Everyone hates zoning, but I feel it needs to be introduced for all future development to keep our town small.</p>
<p>Mount Holly is a gem but we have to change with the times. We have to guard against the NIMBY theory. Not in my backyard. A good example of that to me was the Cell Tower debate</p>
<p>It looks and feels like residents care about the town and the town cares about its residents.</p>
<p>I believe Mount Holly will continue to be built up and subdivided. There will be less forest and fields. I would estimate population increase to 1500, with equal numbers of part time and full time homes being added.</p>
<p>we continue to have a store. In Mr Holly. Do we need a Co-op? Will we have the means to support people to age in place?</p>
<p>A robust volunteer fire/rescue squad, the Belmont Village being revived especially the historic Belmont General Store-perhaps a "coop model' such as Pierce's Store in Shrewsbury and the horrible invasive weed issues at Star Lake-clean it or fill it for a park.</p>

I would like to see Mount Holly retain its rural character, (i.e. not become an extension of Okemo). I hope our population will increase somewhat, with a mix of young working families, along with people of all ages living here full time, many of them working remotely and all of them enjoying and caring for the natural beauty of our area and participating in community activities. Many of us here now will be elderly but will still be around and hope to stay in our homes. We will only be able to do so if our community has further grown and diversified in this way.

Getting to this point requires investment in the infrastructure that will make an active community possible: we already have the broadband we need and should advertise that further. It's important that the Mount Holly School keep its high quality and good reputation. We then need more affordable housing, aimed at people who will live here full time and work here or near by. Ideally this would be developed in Belmont village, so that people would have walking access to town amenities, and the presence of more people would in turn help keep these open and vibrant. This would likely work best with some investment in town septic/sewerage and water systems. How about reviving and updating the Mechanicsville aqueduct for example? Hopefully this would also help both keep our store and post office in operation and perhaps result in a few additional businesses in town or nearby that would benefit.

Working farms should be protected and supported and subdivision of these parcels - as well as woodlands - discouraged.

I hope we can continue to avoid/reduce any 'us' vs 'them' mentality. I'd like to see the community assn, odd fellows, town events and town govt feel like they belong to and represent all of us - regardless of whether we were born here or chose to make Mt Holly our home. Newcomers should feel welcome and encouraged to contribute, and old timers should feel their voices are heard and needs met as well.

Maintain peaceful village character.

Earm, welcoming, inclusive community

It is vitally important for Mount Holly to be able to attract young people to our town. This would involve attending to all the items above which are most important to me. Top of the list would be insuring the community spirit of the town and developing ways to integrate all of the town residents whether they have been here a year, or their entire lives.

I don't know

A town where the residents on the north side of Rt.103 feel connected to the folks on the south side and vice versa.

Retain its rural character with open undeveloped land available for a wide variety of activities including, but not limited to farming (very important because it will make most of the other activities possible) hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, XC skiing, horseback riding. Current rates of development along roads and on open land is putting a limit on many of these activities.

Looks much as it looks today, with more affordable housing clustered in the villages and local businesses thriving... a store in MTHolly. More farms.

Rural with mowed fields and meadows, open spaces, woodlands enhanced, affordable housing, sense of shared community, diverse opinions accepted
People don't get divided by politics.
I would like to see Mount Holly take measures to protect its rural character and natural beauty, while at the same time also taking steps to create economic opportunities and affordable housing in a manner that does not detract from those gestures and values but rather is consistent with and promotes them.
Small town and community values
My. Holly in 2040 will continue to have an excellent elementary school, school choice for junior high and high school, vibrant library, museum, and community association, senior housing near Belmont center,(available to various income levels), respect for walkers, speed bumps, excellent broadband, a "village association" to support older residents and families, and a village store.
I would like to see the rural nature of Mount Holly maintained. I fear that we are quickly becoming a place of second homes for the wealthy. When the homes being built are ridiculously large and energy hogs, when people who stay in them are here on a part-time basis, they do not see the community as a place where people raise their children, and support their community. I prefer to know my neighbors. This contributes to safe communities. I would also like to see the population of Mount Holly made up of all ages - a place where young people can raise their children, and live affordably.
retain a rural environment with modern services, especially for the aging population
Well maintained roads and homes. Active Belmont village. Many families of all ages.
similar but better
Preserved natural environments, habitats, and outdoor recreation areas. Thriving small businesses and abundant jobs for community members.
The area may expand and develop, but it is essential that its conservation, wildlife, and natural beauty be preserved.
Maintain natural beauty & environmental improvements, keep it small town feel, historic preservation.
Better road maintenance (especially lake Ninevah road, which becomes detrimental twice yearly), more grant opportunities for local artists (and local galleries/shops), affordable childcare would be great!
Retain a rural, clean environment with support for small locally owned home businesses. Support keeping Belmont Store open perhaps following the Pierce's Store model.
A caring community of people from all kinds of backgrounds!
Keep development in check, want it to remain as rural as possible. No overflow from Okemo.

Same. Hunting, fishing, outdoor activity, small town feel.

We (currently) do not appreciate people moving in from out of state who want to change it into a less rural environment/town/village. We also do not appreciate (currently) the attitudes from folks visiting or second home owners who judge (voice it in public settings - totally not appropriate) others who are full-time, year round residents who may not have the physical, financial, or educational skills of those who may have attended a higher end institution(s).

I am also not a proponent of the junk ordinance being applicable to those who scrap metal for a living. If, in fact that is how they are getting by.

I think there should have been a question related to culture on the survey.

A vision that provides a balance, somehow, between the needs of having a stable local community and the inevitable growth that comes from being increasingly a magnet for second homeowners. While some second homeowners become involved in and are assets to the community, many come and go with little interaction with the community. This adds little for the stability needed for businesses and services as well as involvement and volunteerism.

Hopefully Mt. Holly and surrounding areas will be able to maintain the bucolic and friendly spirit that now prevails. My family loves the area and we devoutly hope things stay about the same while maintaining the best for the whole community. I would hate to see our town, surrounding forests and lakes overtaken by big commercial developments and I suspect this will be a big problem in the future. Also Dave, I want to thank you for all your devotion and hard work through many years.

Mount Holly looks similar to today, with more small stores and businesses, more hours of community services, more farms and a public transpo van. Some appropriately designed (historic feel) multifamily housing in the town center.

Retains it's rural character but has more paved roads and better maintained dirt roads

Would love to see mount Holly build more local shops and restaurants. Also have more of a public safety presence and add a cell tower.

I would like it to visually stay the same yet solve the affordable housing problem and create more local employment.

Housing, schooling, health services & utilities are available and affordable for year-round residents; preserved lands continue to be used sustainably for recreation and forests are managed/protected from development; small businesses and community thrive

Maintaining the town's rural lifestyle and active and vibrant community while encouraging a diverse population (including age and economic diversity as well as other factors). The town has the capacity to manage its resources and opportunities to the benefit of all its residents - with capacity meaning both people (the right skills as well as volunteers when needed) and adequate finances to be able to ensure that the town does not lose things we have now (such as Start Lake), that we can maintain opportunities and facilities without being concerned about relying heavily on a small number of active people and a lot of private fundraising.

Community
Most move or live in Mount Holly because we like it the way it is. There are many other places to move to if they don't like what we have.
Keep the small town feel but increase economic activity by improving the town center.
Perhaps more affordable housing in "downtown" areas, using more European village models and addressing architectural compatibility (not McMansions please) as a requirement so no one can actually tell the housing isn't 19th or 20th century. MORE lands are put into conservation trusts, beavers have created more water filled wildlife corridors so that some of us were able to save our houses and properties from wildfires when the droughts and heat waves outstripped our ability to avoid them. Encouragement of small artisanal and IT businesses and boutique farms with an emphasis on sustainable, organic, humane farming practices. MORE designated wildlife refuges with no hunting allowed and permanent posting system put in place for ALL residents who find current posting requirements onerous. We are more than happy to pay taxes so our kids are well educated! A quieter, wilder, peaceful, vibrant town preserving its local traditions while welcoming NEW COMERS in a way we all win!!!
Continue to be a great place for families to live that isn't just for those with money, time to be outside, enjoying life.
Keep things the same!
More full-time residents, taxes low
New school principal
Ideally, environmental decisions would be made for the sake of the environment and biodiversity rather than aesthetics and human desires (for example, let Star Lake become a marsh as it would naturally become without human intervention). Separate the school from Ludlow and the rest of TRSU--right now it's focused so much on testing, the students have two ELA and two math classes a day with only a hour of social studies/science per week. It's not the school a lot of people want to think it is.

<p>The hope would be that Mount Holly becomes not only a great place to live...(good schools, great management of local government, recreation activities, great housing with lots of protected open space) ...but it also attracts commerce, tourism and supports economic growth. Plew Farm is a perfect example of this kind of success....as is Crowley Cheese. Ludlow has done an amazing job in the past several years of recruiting chefs/restaurant owners to open facilities that not only support the local residents but provide fantastic meals to visitors: The Cookster, Homestyle Hostel, Harry's, etc. all great examples of businesses that are in keeping with the culture of the community...yet provide much needed economic growth opportunities. Mount Holly architecturally should preserve its historical charm, while supporting the advancement of different types of potential growth opportunities that will benefit the town. That might mean actively and strategically thinking as a collective community about what that might look like. It is exactly what the residents needed to do in the late 1890's when the toy factory closed...and there was no major source of employment/revenue. The town came together.....They changed the town's name, switched gears and became " the destination site for tourists". The industry brought much needed jobs, revenue and opportunity. We need to figure out what "that" is for 2022 and beyond. It needs to come out of feeling that we are all in this together...rather than how much will it benefit me? Change can be a potential gain...not necessarily a potential loss...if you carefully and collaboratively move forward.</p>
<p>Mount holly shouldn't change much too much in the future. The small town community and character should be preserved. Housing that is affordable for families should be available to preserve our community. Funding should be made for our schools and recreational use</p>
<p>The same small town I'm in now</p>
<p>Let's not Jersey Mt Holly!</p>
<p>I'd like to see the school and community thriving with young families who can afford to live here.</p>
<p>My preferred vision consists of keeping the year round residence numbers from declining, and ideally seeing that number go up.</p> <p>Very importantly I would like to make sure there are regulations in place to ensure Airbnb and vrbo and other property rental companies are not a detriment to community!!</p> <p>2040 would continue to see a thriving elementary school. The school building and grounds would be clean, up to date, organized and well run. Remaining a desirable school. Would be nice to see a couple more 5-7 day a week businesses in village, which would definitely include a general store. Road maintenance would be a high priority, and perhaps some zoning would be reasonable to keep the town looking and feeling good.</p>
<p>I am happy with the way things have been over the last 65 years.</p>
<p>A community centered group of folks coming together for the better good of the town. A central meeting place for events and social gatherings.</p>
<p>The Select Board needs to be more responsive to important needs and transparent about finances and expenditures including those paid to staff members.</p>
<p>what about second homers driving up housing costs?</p>

fix the lake, speed bumps on Belmont Road, General Store thriving, continue annual town events, retain town charm,
I love Mount Holly as it is, but I do know that growth in many areas must happen. The future Mount Holly may not reflect my desires, but I hope that the changes will be minimal.
Peaceful village with dog trails, maybe another store or 2. Lake looks better
Small town, beautiful natural environment, excellent community involvement, excellent school
My hope is that Mt. Holly will retain it's natural beauty and protect the environment while growing and developing in a way that enhances life for full time residents while also maintaining open spaces, forests and views, as well as the sense of community and volunteer spirit.
Affordable & Senior Housing So Seniors Can Remain In The Area They Love
I'd like to preserve much of what Mt Holly has. The small town, rural feel combined with the beauty of VT. I'm a seasonal resident but I think the most important step needed is to attract full time residents. This will mean emphasizing schools, local businesses and services and housing. My vision would be to have Mt Holly look very much like it Dora's now but have a more vibrant year-round population. It will be hard to invest in things like Star Lake, Belmont business or other things unless we have that key core.
Keep the small village feeling
I hope it looks very much the same as today- just well preserved
To keep our quaint beautiful town similar to what it is today! Keep taxes affordable and it is so important to improve our dying Star Lake! A community beach area on Lake Nineveh would be ideal!
Strong friendly community, abundant natural resources and conservation lands, small town feel
To keep it as rural as it has been, get more people involved in volunteering for local agencies(ie. rescue,fire)
I hope Mt. Holly is able to maintain the wilderness aspect.
A community that prioritizes livability, conservation, and connection with each other. Less of a distinction/divide between newcomers and those who have lived here for generations. Increase in proportion of full time residents who live in and contribute to the community year round.
More business on 103. More affordable housing. Clean lakes. Walking trails. Continued quality education. Expanded services (health and cultural)
Preservation of open space, natural environment, conserved agriculture space and forested areas, minimal subdivision and development. A thriving village (library, store, etc.)

Ensuring rural community feel and protecting affordable housing as VT becomes a more desirable state to live in. Incentives for local small businesses and locations!!
<p>I see a real risk of Mount Holly losing its beauty to over-development in the next 20 years. I've seen similar patterns elsewhere over the last 20 years. That is, I've seen previously beautiful and rural areas become strung-out suburbs through the slow but insidious trudge of "economic improvement"</p> <p>If we only value what every other town values, we'll become unrecognizably bland. I _like_ that our cell reception is spotty, and honestly, I'd prefer to have the unmarred view. The aggregate effect of 20 years of this type of incremental improvement will be a town bereft of character.</p> <p>I hope we can preserve Mount Holly's soul, but it will take care and intention.</p>
As more development/subdivisions and building is happening - and as we are receiving this survey, there is clearly an interest in the future direction of our community. With this in mind, there needs to be a very basic zoning plan. To only rely on the state regulations ignores that we are our own unique community, complete with our own special needs, vision for the future and requirements. It doesn't need to be overly restrictive, but would give us some teeth in how we want our community to look and feel as we head into the future. It sometimes feels very backward as exists currently.
I'd like to see more affordable housing and an EV charger
Hopefully the town grows and becomes more attractive and available for business opportunities that will allow our community members to live and work here in our community and bring more availability of eating a real living here to our home.
Preserved wildlands, healthy natural environment adapted to changing climate, supported local agriculture, caring and friendly community.
Would love to see the plan address ways the town is better understanding the impacts of regional climate change in the next 10-20 years in Mount Holly and surrounding areas, especially if we start to see a rise in average temperatures and increase in extreme weather events. What are the risks to residents, agriculture, and our natural resources? And from this understanding, decide if there is anything the town can invest in to mitigate any negative impacts, promote climate resiliency, or provide educational resources to the community.
To remain the nice quiet town it currently is while still moving forward with modernization and adapting to the influx of new residents.

<p>I think it's important for the town to maintain and enhance a vibrant town center in Belmont, which will encourage people to live and visit the town. We have lots of room to grow without jeopardizing the small town character we all love. Some ideas I would like to see pursued include: 1. Apply for Vermont Village Center Designation in Belmont...there is no downside and it opens up grant and other opportunities. 2. Partner with the Vermont Village Wastewater Initiative to explore wastewater system upgrade options for Belmont...this would help to protect Star Lake and also open up options for community development and upgrades 3. Support a vibrant village center...supporting a general store is so important to this. See what the Brownsville Butcher has done for West Windsor. It's like glue for the community and really enhances quality of life. If we could solve the waste water problem, we could also support other businesses and community amenities 4. Work with LAST and VMBA to develop mountain bike and sport trails through Mount Holly. These could cross private land (with permission). Mountain bike trail systems have become important amenities in many Vermont communities, which make the town desirable to line in and visit. 5. Make Star Lake usable / swimmable if possible (realize this is not an easy problem to solve) .</p> <p>Finally, since w</p>
Continuation of the feel of a very special place, in a very special State
A more vibrant community in terms of job force and school age children, continued protection and enhancement of natural resources, incorporation of state agencies in discussions of natural resource quality, inventories and comprehensive links between parks and recreation areas
Warm caring community, rural, services inclding emergency response, local businesses
<p>KEEPING THE LAND IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY GOOD WAY- PRESERVING THE NATURAL SURROUNDINGS..WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE WILDERNESS COMMUNITY</p> <p>MONITORING OF PUBLIC USE. WE CAMP ON OUR MEADOW ABOVE THE FISH AND GAME LAKE ACCESS AND ARE OFTEN DISTURBED BY THE NOISE - PEOPLE AND MUSIC- AND DRINKING -AT NIGHT. (MANY BEER BOTTLES IN THE MORNING)</p> <p>AND PEOPLE WHO COME INTO OUR SPACE TO USE IT AS A TOILET.EN-EVEN THOUGH THERE IS A PUBLIC POTTY AT THE LAKESIDE.</p>
Need smart development to maintain character of town. Broadband competition to make it more affordable and accesible
I enjoy Mt Holly presently as it is, rural. Think Ludlow and Rutland need to be upgraded and considered for housing, and good schools. I am unaware of the need for housing in Mt. Holly. But it should keep public institutions and government buildings and local services in good, up to date condition.
no comment
Looks the same only better!
I hope Mount Holly changes as little as possible

My preferred vision for Mount Holly in the future is one where it maintains its rural character and protects its natural resources.
Local food. Affordable housing. Charging for electric cars. Good friends.
Quality stores, restaurants; quality government; amongst a beautiful protected woodlands, streams, lakes, forests
I would like Mnt Holly to stay rural. Would rather not see the area owned by out of staters
Leave it the way it is
I would like for the community to feel the same in the year 2040
Remains rural. Control sprawl. Add a town forest with recreational trails. New town office and fire/rescue station. Prettify School Street. Safer Belmont / 103 intersection with a park and ride and bus stop. Plan for better parking and more growth in Belmont.
Keeping it a small Town feel
Hoping for a balance of the best of what exists now , how to sustain it and plan for a regional planned growth.
community
The the range of communal activities and general services in village center of Belmont (general store, library, community center, museum, ...) will not only be kept but also expanded.
Affordable housing for younger folks with kids to move to Mount Holly is offered, so that also the local elementary school can expand.
Same feel, it offers participation and housing for new full time residents and young families
Keep the small town feel
Small town feel
To stay as rural as today. With beautiful nature protected by all of us.
Need to keep Belmont store open, all else could remain same.
Restoration of Star Lake to its previous beauty and recreational functionality s VERY important to me - top priority!
Main concern: preserving the lake

<p>A clean lake where residents and guests can swim, boat and enjoy.</p> <p>A general store that serves the community's needs with an owner who truly cares about the community.</p> <p>NO over building</p> <p>Keeping up with technology needs -internet</p> <p>Otherwise, love it how it is!</p>
<p>My preferred vision would still be rural for Mount Holly. Growth of Okemo will continue to affect our town, and hopefully in a positive direction. We have become a second home community. That is an impact on our locals school and services.</p>
<p>A five person Select Board to keep politics from sneaking in</p>
<p>Won't be the same - need to put some laws in place that are enforceable - noise (excessive gun fire on Stewart road from out of staters) , junk & trashy properties</p>
<p>I wish my children could return "home" and be able to afford to live here. Currently they cannot!</p>
<p>Attract more business and housing to the area. Clean up the pig pens.</p>
<p>Keeping the same rural feel but with better parks and hiking trails, fixing Star Lake mess, helping fund general store as it's critical to community, and events on weekends.</p>
<p>Seeing the growth in a manner that doesn't take away for the village and community. Not so many air b& bs...</p>
<p>Community activities continue vibrant and interesting. People helping people. Star lake a central part of the community and a draw for new folks (as it was for my family in 1950).. Country store and US post offices.</p>
<p>Controlled development. Affordable housing. Open Spaces for the public. transportation</p>
<p>Keeping the rural feel while providing good services to residents. Not over building.</p>
<p>I would like to see zoning regulation that preserves Mount Holly's residential and rural character. For example, letting storage facilities build right in view on Route 103 really mars the area's natural beauty.</p>
<p>Small community charm with more to do, places to visit etc.</p>
<p>Maintaining the local population and keeping the Beauty and seclusion of living here!</p>
<p>A Small town that values the individual and individual responsibility</p>
<p>Traditional rural Vermont town.</p>
<p>A peaceful, bucolic small town with friendly neighbors, well-maintained roads and a library, with a mix of young families and older people, surrounded by wilderness</p>

As a part timer, my vision most likely differs from full time residents. The rural charm is what attracted us to the Mount Holly area 30 years ago. Roads plowed and maintained are essential. Lack of emergency services has always been a concern (no local police, for example); of course this is a small town.
2040 needs the "town center" with the General store and Post office (needs to be upgraded) and green. Offering education and housing opportunities is key. Communication (broadband, mobile coverage!!!!) is essential for economic competitiveness.
Would love to see the town still a Vermont little town, but improved. Star Lake brought back to be used as a local swimming place and a family friendly beach, as it used to be. Would love to see the waste water problem of Belmont solved.
To maintain the "small town" feel but with improved infrastructure and zoning limits. Where fulltime residents are more accepting of non-fulltime residents who care and contribute to the town, and increased support to local farms/small businesses.
I want Mount Holly to continue to build a strong sense of community and to develop programs and services for the elderly.
Not to grow anymore, the outdoors is activities and recreation already have good school and emergency services
I hope to see enhanced fire and emergency services and public safety. A sense of community around a variety of events. More affordable homes for single people, or seniors.
Mount Holly has such a wonderful community and I want to see it grow. I'd really like to see more conservation around Star Lake and paths.
MH currently has a very different character as a town from where I lived before. The localness of the town and the townspeople is extremely different, but beneficial. I see this as a critical aspect to survival as a local town that wants to remain basically the same for the next 20 years. Need to keep it local, manage it with local people, be inviting and less restrictive regarding changes that will ultimately benefit all, not just a few.
Star Lake being 70% clear, water management upgraded and up to 2040 current standards,
Overall status matching standard of similar VT townships.
Open land without being cluttered with solar panels everywhere
Maintain rural character...

Assuming growth is inevitable, it would be a shame to see the rural landscape of Mount Holly chopped up by developers, as I have seen happen where I grew up in PA over the last 30 yrs. I feel strongly against mass development of rural lands, and would prefer to see development happen in existing town centers and hamlets, along transportation arteries, etc., thereby increasing density at these nodes and not promoting sprawl. If done in a thoughtful way that is respectful of existing historic structures and community fabric, I think more density at these nodes could be quite lovely.

With this in mind, I think Mt Holly could support more long-term rental properties-- perhaps some farmhouse-type duplex units in Belmont or other hamlets. This could be accomplished by renovating existing structures or building new structures on previously developed lots.

Other areas of potential development (dwellings, businesses, amenities) could be: -At the blinking light intersection on 103 near the post office and school, -East Wallingford, -Along 103 between Harry's and Wright construction

I'd also love to see more trails and park-like areas in Mount Holly for residents to explore and enjoy year round. Perhaps old roads/class 4 could be brush-cut for this purpose. Or agreements could be made with land owners who have Vast trails on their property to allow pedestrians to hike along trails in summer and fall. Perhaps Lake Ninevah could be encouraged to publish a map of areas where the public are able to hike, swim, launch a boat. I've lived here almost 5 years and, aside from Healdville trail, finding access to outdoor recreation in Mt Holly in warmer months has not been straightforward.

Thank you for reading my comments!

Addressing the proliferation of investment homes being used as short term rentals on Airbnb and such like. When homes that are potentially affordable for young families are listed for sale they are purchased with cash by investors for use as short term rentals. When you can no longer attract young families or couples to town because they have been priced out of the housing market the community will die. That's what we see happening here. We need to adopt a tax structure that penalizes these sort of investment purchases and makes them unfavorable therefore reducing their number. Short term rentals do nothing to add to our community and as AirBnbs own research has shown the presence of short term rentals in a town contributes to rising rents. A 2-3% tax on every real estate transaction, to be paid into an affordable housing fund would be a good start.

Mount holly should be a leader in preserving the rural and historical character of the area and prioritize preserving open land and views as well as discouraging major developments and large houses "McMansions"

More positive engagement from visitors/second home owners in keeping our town character and social/economic viability.

Address Star Lake

Keep town affordable for young families. Restore Star Lake.

Keep rural country feel, keeping the farms, minimum commercial activity, maybe light industry and minimum government interference.

Other on Q. 10: ATV usage on paved roads is extremely dangerous. The constant flying up and down our dirt roads on ATVs makes for an unsafe environment for the ATV operator and other drivers on the road. Someone is going to get killed (AGAIN).

I would like to see a Mount Holly where housing is affordable, so that living is here is possible for average Vermonters. You shouldn't need to make 6 figures just to live here. Something must be done to offset the extreme gobbling up of houses by out-of-state homeowners. Make them pay more taxes than...

What doesn't look and feel like in 2030?

What is the same - will be different in years. Too come for sure - some will be good - and some not so good.

C - MEETING NOTES

MEMO

Belmont Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Public Workshop - Presentation

May 24, 2023 5:30pm - 8:00pm Belmont Community Center



Introduction:

A presentation and discussion was held at the Belmont Village Community Center to introduce the planning project to the public, review the results of the Community Survey, and present a series of draft recommendations for discussion. Mr. Allen of Regrowth Planning began the meeting with a brief presentation, after which he opened the discussion by taking questions and comments from members of the public. A PDF copy of the presentation slides was made available on the planning webpage, as well as a link to a video recording of the discussion, posted on YouTube. Attendees were encouraged to provide any additional comments in the coming weeks to the project email address: mounthollycommunitysurvey@gmail.com.

The following represents notes of the public comments and discussion which took place after the presentation. This is not intended as a transcript. Where possible, comments have been organized by topic.

Public Comments:

Stormwater Improvements. Would this plan incorporate storm water improvements?

- Yes, the plan would incorporate some of the stormwater improvements that may be needed, but do not have detailed information on what those areas would be yet. Two areas along Belmont would need to be addressed to incorporate some of the on street parking envisioned here.
- Speaking for the church, that area basically from the fire station coming across the churches a lot and then down past the Village Green there where you have the walkway, every year it's getting washed out because you have storm water running right down the side of the road. And of course, our, our access to the church is getting washed out every, every year or more often as well. So, right down on the south side of church street. Right where your walkway is essentially. Right out of where we are, where the church down here. So, I, I don't know if this is the place to do, but I was gonna talk to the planning commission about maybe having a, a culvert installed that would carry that underneath which would potentially support a walkway as well.
- If roadways are dug up for new stormwater or sewer piping, would be an opportunity to build a new walkway.

Septic. To what extent is the septic infrastructure going to be, how large an area are we talking?

- It comes down to what the feasibility study would tell us. That is one of the first cogs in the wheel and without that, some of these other pieces don't fall in place. So that is kind of the first piece that needs to be figured out, in the feasibility study.
- To what extent would some of this expense be recaptured by what would be in effect user fees if you build a house or if you're replacing your septic system, that's 10 to \$40,000 out of your pocket, right? But if you hook up to a community septic, I'm assuming that there is some manner in which the people that are benefiting from the community septic are buying into this to the extent, not of a \$30 a month user fee. It's something of some substance that be the rough equivalent of what you would be doing this as an individual.

- So you would have to pay in a certain amount just to maintain the system and so on and so forth, there would be some sort of user fee. I do not know what it would be and I think one of the things the feasibility study must look at is give some numbers on what the user fees might be for certain sized systems depending on how many properties are hooked up to it.
- What would be the approximate cost for each user under different scenarios?
 - It depends on how many people choose to connect to it, and how big the system is, but give us some, some guidance on how much would it cost per
 - If I had to replace my Septic for \$30,000, then I'm out \$30,000. Nobody is saying, we'll work it out you just pay \$50 a month for it. It would have to be amortized over time.

Trails & Walking Paths. I think this is beautiful. This paths and I envision people walking and parking and living. But there has been no mention about public restrooms, would bring people to town. There's no place to go to the bathroom. That's a glaring omission.

- I was just kind of trying to say that, I think overall it's a great plan. I think it has a lot of nice elements, having small businesses in the area, nice housing, waste water for environmental and trails. I think there are a couple of ways that I wanna chime in on and just incorporating pedestrian and bicycle safety, routes, into the plan, for example, going up and down the **Bilbo** Road or going down Belmont to the school where they built a nice little mountain bike trail down there and a pump track with the kids. Be nice if you could somehow do a trail or connect that.
- Good biking and running population in the area.
- I really like the ideas of the walkways and paths you have here. The question is, can we do something to greater Mount Holly to make it possible to walk, not on the road, but next to it in some other part of town?
- In that plan, you said there was money for like walking paths. You can divide up this thing and get little things going, so you won't have to wait for some big thing to get anything done. You have nice paths in the drawing, would be a nice thing to do. And everyone mentioned the safety of walking. That would be a safe and fun.
- We have to consider the community that we have right now and we have to consider that more than a community that may or may not materialize five years from now or a decade from now. And you brought up a good point, activity brings more activity. We have, for whatever it's worth, more of a senior population. I think, I think one of the first things that we can benefit from this is the ability to walk through the town or so, you know, walkways, fix the storm drains, et cetera. So that people can just be out and about. And of course, that's gonna agree, hey, there's somebody outside, I'll go outside too, et cetera and eventually build from there. So I, I think that's a good thing.
- Don't you have to have some property to put it on?
 - Part of the hope is we have this community discussion and maybe somebody in the town says, well I wouldn't mind selling some of my land to the town for this or, or maybe the town has to approach some folks and say we're looking to do this, would you be interested in selling some of your land so we could do this, or donate an easement? But obviously, yes, the the town would need to acquire some land.
- So, if somebody had some land, would they have to go through the planning permission and all of the expense to do that?
 - In this scenario that we're envisioning the town would be doing that for them, but
- Would the taxpayers of the town have to be fronting these costs?
 - Part of the goal of this is to try and identify funding that is not tax based because obviously that's not something that people are super excited about. So, if we can find funding for this acquisition of land then obviously that's the preferable route. In that scenario, the town would be acquiring the

land and then going through the process of getting all the necessary engineering and permitting done and so forth to, to make this a reality. So if they wouldn't be putting it on the homeowner.

Star Lake/Water Quality: I just wanted to point out as Michael mentioned that a lot of these things are all interconnected. And Anna is probably the most expert on the lake here in this room. I was just asking her about how much of the issues of the lake are related to overflow septic, run off into the lake, but apparently after a major rain it is a big problem. So for example, one way to improve the lake is to have a better community septic system.

- The runoff in the lake is not really necessarily from today's septic but from last century agricultural runoff.
- There are possibly different views. But I think my point is we get back to this idea that that, that there are so many things. I mean, connected elements, I am not sure how we're going to be able to move forward, in terms of a plan will be prepared but you know, we need to at some point agree on ideas. Speaking as a planner a lot of the issues that are mentioned are about, for example, housing is how do you set things up in such a way that it encourages private developers to develop that kind of housing. This is not about the town, you know, town is not gonna do this, maybe the town will facilitate some of these things through, the septic, or whatever. But there are intertwined.
- This issue of water quality on Star Lake is a much bigger issue than the village alone, it is a bigger area outside the village. So, looking at the contamination of the lake, we need to look at the larger area, and what septic systems in that area may be potentially contributing to that contamination. That needs to be looked at somehow.
- I think Phil made a very interesting point. Phil is on the Conservation Commission and they've been very involved with Star Lake. And, I had heard before the point that he made was that a lot of the pollutants that you might find in Star Lake after heavy rain aren't necessarily from individual septic systems, but the result of generations and generations of agriculture.
- There's also a septic system that lead directly toward that lake.
- I'm just throwing this out here. If you look at the topography of the land here, every building for the most part, every building in the village with maybe the exception of the Oddfellows Hall is downhill from Star Lake. Every septic system on there drains away from Star Lake, not into it. So the only exceptions are these here do slope down towards the Lake and then every house that's between the road and Star Lake going up Belmont road. Well, where are their septic systems? Downhill? What else is downhill? The lake. As a farmer, I don't buy the whole 100 years ago, cow waste is polluting our pond today. Don't buy it.
- It's a manmade lake and the bottom of it has come up as time has gone on and it's not the pond weed grows because the light can get down to the soil. That's our biggest problem. It's shallow.
- Our biggest problem is that when we were rebuilding the dam, we need to drain the lake and dredge it and the state of Vermont wouldn't allow. That's our biggest problem.

Housing. I'm not crazy about suburbia over there [the housing concept in presentation]. May be better as sort of a farm or real village look.

- I think we are living in the dream, all of us are dreamers. We came here as dreamers 20, 30, 40 years ago. Some of us have some history here. But these issues, they are not new, back when you know, 16, 17, 18 years ago, back then you were planning and dreaming and shooting ideas, you know how to deal with the waste water, how you deal with the lake, and how to deal with the senior citizen provisions for living. These issues are not very new for some of us. They are not new. The main thing for some of us is where is the real money? We are talking grants, we are talking availability of money, you know, some of it started by idea of we may get the grant and there is a lot of money there. So we are shy of asking how much we are talking about. We know that some of the stuff can be estimated, raised, put on the table at least approximately, nobody sealed with the

wastewater system dealings. It's huge for each of us individually. But there are guys who can come here, spend some time. Some of them would do rough pro-bono work, and then we know dealing with the waste water for the village it is x amount of money. Is there money hanging out there somewhere that could match? It's a beautiful idea. I actually drew a bunch of plants and sketches on the meadow, not like cluster like this but actually reincarnation of the old time that we do the documentation and pictures. The dream for us back then 15 years ago was to reincarnate something for senior citizens. But you need the developer, you need the bank, you need the collective collaborative activity that will you know come to fruition again, it could be estimated. So, maybe eight bedrooms will start, maybe 16 bedrooms, and maybe 24 bedrooms. I'm not sending these numbers just out of the air. I know what the meadow can hold, for example. Uh But I think for us just ordinary people, we need to know what what is the number, how much will it cost?

- You know, we're all getting to the age where we need somebody that he lives next door. But, um, what are we gonna do? How are we gonna get those guys to get involved? One of the, the ideas that you have is the intergenerational housing or, or units cluster housing or we wanna call it, that is perfect because we've got aging people that feel they can't live here any longer because either their spouse has died and they're living in this big house or our house is too big or too much work for them. And we've got young people that are having trouble getting their first little place, whether they're single or their families. That sounds not, certainly not enough, but it certainly would serve well for a lot of people. And the walking path is, I'm one of the people that walks out on the hill road often, I mean, I am constantly jumping into this side and I, and this hill bill is the saying and a lot of Belmont road, the wasn't around here, no matter how many times you put up signs, it's just not working. There's not a safe place to walk. If you're a mother with young kids, trying to take your young four or five year old for a walk, it's treacherous. There's no place to do that. That a walking path would be huge. And what you had described earlier, both of those, solves a lot of those issues and there's a huge senior population and it's, you know, there's almost 350 seniors living in Mount Holly, not in Belmont, but a large portion of those are in Belmont, the area and it, it's becoming, I'm one of them that says, I don't, I love this place. We worry about our cemetery plots. I don't know who can continue to live here without some kind of support.
- I think one of the reasons why people come here is because of all the reasons that you articulate, you know, that it's the natural beauty and it's the rural atmosphere and the community. Two of the people that are filled out the survey are under 40 are my daughters, the two of them. Right. So, where are all the other people? I think that a lot of people, a lot of kids that are young, they want to live here and can't afford to live here. My kids can only afford it because we have the land and we gave it to them and can afford to live here. And now I come up to this village and it's dead. There's nobody walking around out here and, and I, I think that these are all really good ideas to help all of us.

Senior Needs. I'm part of a group that is a support group for seniors and we've been working with seniors. We did our own survey, a really good breakdown of the needs, and a lot of it was social, housing, worried about can I stay in my own home? That was, that was a huge thing. Am I gonna be able to stay in my house? Either because the home is too big or I don't think I can manage it myself. So some sort of senior housing, you do that, and seniors will take care of other seniors, they will, I know this community, they're happy to do it. It's just they can't drive to and to see so and so very often. The other thing is as a group, we're planning a lot of new activities, and they would be open to the whole community. The seniors want more activities. We're talking about a lot more social things happening. A lot of it would be here and the seniors can walk from that location if we do something like that. But so can everybody else can be part of it, We're talking about lectures and movie nights, game days, game afternoons, game nights, brunch, Sundays, all kinds of things that anybody is welcome to do and we'd love for it to be intergenerational that would benefit everybody.

- Starting a senior organization, we've been meeting weekly since January and you know, we've made a lot of progress. It will be a run as a 501(c)3 organization. I've already had a lot of volunteer interests. So I think the volunteerism is there. There may be a membership fee, if there is, because of the liability insurance. So it might be like a \$50 or \$75 a year, just to cover liability. Some places do it without a

membership fee, but they're taking a little bit risk. We try and get scholarships, and people would be willing to sponsor someone that can't afford it. So it would be inclusive. We were thinking about getting kids from the schools that have to do their volunteer service, maybe to help with gardening work, things like that, that seniors can't do anymore, changing light bulbs and getting their porch furniture in and out each season, jobs like that.

- Seniors, you know, we put in this, we've done all the duties we've had to do, pay the taxes paid for school even though we're no longer using schools I figure, you know, why should I have to pay because we do that all the time. But we're some of the most diligent voters. We're the volunteers because once we retire, we are out there helping other people and then we, we can't do it anymore. So, you know, can we need a little payback?

Short-Term Rentals/AirBnB: The problem isn't short term rentals. The problem is the rental market in Vermont, because of the rules for landlords, against landlords, are atrocious. You get someone in, they could stay in for 6 to 9 months and there's nothing you can do about it. Its own contraction apartments or nothing you can do about getting it fixed. So the rental and short lives there is no, the low end rental market, the ones that would be for the young kids who would like to live here or perhaps like to live here. It's the rental rules of Vermont that's preventing it, not Belmont that's preventing it. But it's the rental rules because it's just incredibly difficult to be a landlord.

- I don't even know if my question is relevant anymore. But you had asked how we felt about trying to limit the number of short term rentals. Part of me feels like if a property owner has a property, they should get to decide how they're going to use it. That's one part of me, and the other part have other towns had any success trying to put a cap on that?
- There are a lot of communities right now scrambling to put something on the books, the full range from the extremely strict to the very light touch to do the minimum. To have some sort of a safety valve. But every community is different, obviously everybody has a right to do what they want with the property and that's fine but at the same time need to protect our neighbors and property values.
- I don't have a short term rental and I'm not gonna have one Air B N B, but it actually brings investment to the town. I can list the number of homes that have been improved because of it. The other thing it does is it introduces younger people to the town. They would not come to this town, as a long term rental, they'll come as a short term and maybe fall in love with the town, maybe be one of the new residents 10 years from now. So the Air B N B is a big positive and I haven't seen any big parties or anything else from the air B N B but it, improves homes from it.
- As one of the people who moved here recently, I'm interested in a couple of things and I think that, you know, this is very great for the way that you're responding to this survey that people have filled out. And I'm wondering how you're thinking about the plans in terms of like the next couple of decades and how this area might potentially change with more people coming in from cities and things like that and climate migration and all of that. There's gonna be more people my age coming into this area. So we are thinking more about things, that sort of, sort of that community and as it, as it might be, you know, like if you're thinking about developing new types of housing or apartments or even for senior housing, which, I mean, this is just like a cost effective thing too. Are you thinking about like, how to do that in the most sustainable way? Like, if you're building new properties, are you thinking of building them, or keep existing things like that? And I don't know but, and I also wonder, not to like look up 1000 questions but where are the sort of basis for, for one in short term rentals? I'm not close to that in any means, but I just wonder where the demand is because I know for folks like me who, right, we came here because we didn't want to rent for the rest of our lives and, and we could never buy in the city. So, so while I think that's a wonderful idea, I think there should be more, you know, spaces and opportunities for a number of people who, who like us who basically had to buy the only house in Mount Holly that vacation renters didnt want. I wonder what this town would really be like if that's like a long term trend or not.

- I love it when new people move to town. If you look around, a lot of people in town are older. There will be a lot of vacancies in a few decades.
- I second what he just said. We moved here the same way, we moved here without intending to stay originally. You have to stay for many of the same reasons, that we just really like the community, but I would respectfully push back a little on the comment that Airbnbs are not necessarily a bad thing because I think they do tend to lock up properties and, and they can shift sort of the economic demographics of the area. And so I think they're in fact one of those questions because right now, I think when those properties, senior housing and other property start to open up, they will be bought up by developers, they will be bought by people who are just buying them to Air BnB. And they may not and I hope they're the people that come in and say, oh I bought this for my ski house, but I love it here and that's wonderful and I hope that happens, but I don't know how real it is now in this market.
- There are ways that you could just like it can be so that you, you can't buy a house and just use it as an airbnb, you have to live in it like six months of the year or something like, I mean, those kinds of things, it really is another issue. But there are ways of regulating, without forbidding.
- The other thing is to talk to state representatives to do something in a state level in terms of regulating air B N B, because that's what a lot of states are doing.
- Going back to this issue of short term rentals, it is true that you could try the zoning route, but also you don't have to because there are various state regulations which actually apply to keep short term and some things that the town could consider is having a registry, having some system of checking that these properties are in fact, compliant with state regulations, which is mainly about public safety, you know, that is up to code, high suppression, all that kind of stuff, which is also an issue that we would be, we would be interested in as a town anyway, are so there are ways that you can do all this without having to kind of jump to the Burlington approach.

Local Assets. While it may not be relevant specifically for Belmont because of the small size, don't leave the school out of the equation. It's providing the only young demographic really to this town and Mount Holly schools is a magnet for the state compared to other schools. People move here to work somewhere else and live here to go to Mount Holly schools. We have maybe 112 and 114 kids. Cavendish right now is thinking about closing because they have a low uh they have 79 Ludlow only has 88. So we have more kids than Ludlow or Cavendish. So we need to keep that school viable.

- The fiber optic speed here is great. So that's what's attracting young workers who have young families because they can work from home.

Vehicle Safety. No stop sign southbound on Belmont because there is no real place to put a sign at the corner where the store parking is.

- Stop sign might help a little, but many people would just ignore it, like they do the others.
- I think the stop sign might help, but it is not gonna take care of the problem until we figure out something. I'm in danger every day that I walk my dog on Belmont Road and Hill Bill Road is just terrible. And there was in the news flash today there's a letter from a woman, poor woman was on crutches. I mean, I had it out with some guy the other day who came down the road because I was so angry. Until we have some enforcement or until they put something across the road that we can pick up in the winter time. We need those bumps all around the town in the historic area to keep these people from doing this. They're gonna kill somebody.
- I hate to say it, but I live on a dirt road. I live on Tiffany Road and a they drive 40 45 miles an hour.
- One not very expensive possibility, you could paint like a bicycle lane line on the road that cars could go on.

- Or instead of painting a lane, is there town right away big enough that it could go somewhat separate from the road, so it's so there's a space between the road and the trail, the space for walking on?
- Improving that intersection that you mentioned, the triangle intersection, it is really confusing. If you are coming from this way, you don't know which way to go around, and it is pretty dangerous since it is a blind intersection sometimes. If it was a T intersection, it would be a lot more logical. I think that would solve a lot of it and it would actually look pretty good, It's taking up so much space right now. If you're looking for priorities that are simple to accomplish, that would be easy to accomplish and it would actually make the village safer.

Local Business. One of my concerns is, yes, we're happy that we're gonna have our store back, but I also noticed in what you were talking about in your point before is that people seem to want businesses and as someone who lives in the village, I don't think I'm too excited about having any additional businesses. We have a parking area and a septic area surrounding all of that, which we don't even know how that's ever gonna get taken care of. We're talking about a lot of pie in the sky things and I think we have to think more seriously about what needs to be taken care of right now, and for me, that subject seems to be at the very top of the list. You also mentioned we don't wanna be Ludlow. So yeah, having the store is great, but I don't know that there's a lot of us who wanna have a lot of businesses around.

- I don't think that if we don't get to decide what businesses are gonna come. So, how it would be great to say, yes, let's have a little tea room or whatever, but it doesn't necessarily stop it. So, I mean, once you open yourself up to having businesses, we don't have control over it.
- I feel like what I'm hearing a lot is something that's really central to the Belmont community, I think there's like maybe a middle ground that you could find in terms of like maybe having a business but not maybe having it being long term business if you were able to mitigate the milkweed problem, at least somehow, um which I'd love to learn more about why. If that was possible, you had a bit more recreational area around the lake you could potentially, try to somehow get people to come in with food trucks and have festivals and you may be having things like that that give you, not a brew pub, but are here for a weekend in the summer of fall or something. So maybe there's a middle ground.
- One thing I noticed about the survey was consistently the lowest concern was economic and jobs, but we also need to remember our history as well. The reason there are all these houses here in a cluster in this village is because they grew up around businesses. Right? It was farms, it was creameries, it was a toy factory here at Star Lake. Right? If we, if we want this town to grow and more people to be here and have the community that we all want. There's got to be economic incentive to move here because who's moving here, it's people who can afford the high prices for the housing and want the rural recreation. It was at the top. It's not, I'm moving here because there's a business opportunity and I can be part of a community. It's, I'm moving here because I can go play in the woods. Forgive me, it's hyperbole, but I'm moving. Right. So the incentive for people to move here, the demographics of people who will be moving in here is gonna fit that mold. It's gonna be part of what our history is as Vermonter as well. It's I'm on my own, I'm self-sufficient and I just want to get away from it all. If the one issue isn't addressed, the more of the same that's been happening for the past, well, I guess my lifetime here, is just gonna continue to happen. I mean, I cried in my heart at least every time I drive by houses at night with the lights off, especially Christmas time. Two out of every three houses I pass are empty because nobody lives there. Breaks my heart. That's part of the reason why we're lacking in community.
- I was just thinking about what you're saying about the cluster here because there was this business and a factory, but that was before the automobile. I mean at this point Vermont itself is known for recreation, golf, skiing and whatever, snowmobiling golf. And the businesses grow from that, the restaurants and the people who serve the people who come up with the recreation, I feel like money in this town would be well spent on making the beach that it used to be a really nice place. And now in the middle of the summer it's like a swamp and people used to used to be swimming all the time and now it's kind of disgusting and people don't go there anymore and I think that would tend to bring a lot

of some people, summertime activity here. But if the water isn't cleaned up, I mean, it's the water quality, if we can't get rid of the invasive, which so far the state is not helping us to do in any way, shape or form. If we can't get that people aren't gonna go to the beach. You know, I mean, if, if you look at the water, it's full of weed. Right? Isn't that what you are saying? I think it would be great but we gotta have state help. I don't think it's possible, people here have worked on that for years and years and years, decades to try and get the state to allow us to dredge the lake or whatever. It's not happening, and enlarging the beach, I would love to see a nice lake and a be an enlarged beach that would be great. But unless the water is good, there's no point enlarging the beach.

Activities. I think that the age of the people who took the survey is important, the first thing when we had the meeting here about the store and I went home and I was reporting to my kids who are 40, 42, and 38. I said, you know we're talking about putting in a micro brewery and a little cafe and they were like, that's great! Some place to go and something to do! Here's the thing, when our kids were all little, there was a lot to do, there was people here, people had things going on. We spent the entire summer on Star Lake Beach. I had to buy the brightest bathing suit that I could find because there were so many little kids playing in the water, but there were so many little kids in the water. We lived here because we could afford to live here. I'm embarrassed to tell you what we paid for our land here. And so it was easy for us.

- I wanna point out when I first moved here and our kids started doing Halloween and things like that, by Labor Day it was like the sidewalks were rolled up and most of the houses in the village were second homes. So even back then it was a summer community and it was a summer community. Our poor kids would go door to door and they couldn't even fill up their candy bags. That was before the ski industry got so massive, because I'm talking 65 years ago, it was the summer people, town was flooded in the summer and that was it. So I mean if we still had a lot of the seasonal rentals back then how do we put our finger on what's changed?
- There's not a draw to this village. What is it that brings people into town, into the village? One of the big things was the store, that was the place you came, you got your mail. You went for a walk with your friends, you got a bite to eat. Gossip, find out what is going on.
- When we first moved here, we were gonna be one of those houses with the Christmas lights off, but we were Jewish so that was ok. But my question is we had no intention of living here. It was a ski place, and this community was so active that the people we knew were wonderful. We, our lights are on, on Christmas because we've moved here and it's been 20 years and we love this community. And the point I'm trying to make is we don't wanna leave, but there are things we are not capable of or will not be capable of doing, but we do now. So so there's two benefits, I'd love to live in affordable housing and let some young people move into my house. But my point is you want to fill those houses at Christmas time? Make this a community like it was when we moved into the area - and active area, great path to walk, a vibrant place where they don't want to go back, just like we didn't want to go back. I think we benefited in some ways. We've been active in the community, benefited in many ways but it's time to get more people coming here. The active, the love of the community wants to make you stay the interaction with the friends you have, you're not gonna get that anywhere else. So by doing some of these things, by trying to make this community a little more active, by doing little things like walking paths. Those second home homeowners won't want to go home.
- Beach activities. Volleyball, pickle ball, bocce.

Zoning. Isn't the easiest problem of all of these things zoning? Isn't that how we can control what happens, Isn't that how we know how much development occurs by saying this is the type of development we want in this area?

- Zoning would be one tool, yes. We can also control short-term rentals, potentially without the zoning. But it is my understanding that this community has shot down the notion of zoning I think twice now.

General / Other Topics.

- So let's say you have a consensus on a great plan here. I'm a little confused about where it goes from there. Is there someone who's gonna be responsible for shepherding the whole process? Is there someone that's gonna be applying for the grants? Is there someone who knows how to do all the granting? I mean, where does it go from a great plan?
 - So let's say step one is we finalize the plan, the town board approves it and says we endorse this. Then the it would be mostly the town boards responsibility to implement some of the stuff, folks in the planning Department would probably be, such as Jon on the Planning Commission, would be responsible for writing up some of the grant applications to pursue some of this stuff. Ideally what we'd like to do in the plan is identify some short term steps and then longer term steps. So if we can identify the first couple of things to say first thing we need to do is this, this and this, and we can work that out. But probably the first step right out of the gate is pursue some sort of grant funding for this community sewer system.
- What would be the relationship between this plan, and the Mount Holly Town Plan?
 - Ideally and what I would recommend is that when the town plan for Mount Holly is updated, that this plan be incorporated as an addendum to it and it adopted with it officially. You don't have to do that, but I would recommend it because it just, it carries more weight.
 - The yellow boundary, Village Center Designation boundary, that I mentioned earlier at the beginning of the presentation, that was renewed in 2016. And so now I think it's up for renew renewal next year. One of the questions we have is, do we want to use this opportunity to renew and revise the boundary, expand it? The Village Center Designation basically gives us priority status for a number of state grants that are available. So, so we would be get access to the number of grants for other communities that don't have the Village Center designation. It also opens up some tax incentives and tax breaks for certain revitalization projects, particularly some historic or job creation projects.
- Would imminent domain come into play with this?
 - Not imagining it would, would prefer to go the route of voluntary easements and property purchase.
- You said that 18% of the adult population did the survey. Of that 18%, what are the ages?
 - 21-40 = 10%, 41-60 = 30%, 61-80 = 53%, Over 80 = 5%
- Just three months ago there was a program on where would be the safest place to live in 20 years, safe from climate change. And guess what was the number one place? A little town up in Northern Vermont. It means that, some people are coming here and they're gonna be coming here. So we do need to think about that.
- The town is as I understand currently investigating some potential options for how to deal with the future of a fire/EMS facility because the facilities that they currently have are very out of date and in bad shape, something needs to be done. One of the options that I think they're considering is constructing a new facility that would be a consolidated facility where you have everything all in one spot. So they're weighing the pros and cons of that approach. I think in that scenario, one question might be do they still need the firehouse that's here in the village that was built back in the 1800's? What would folks think about losing the local Belmont branch firehouse?
 - How would this affect your insurance?
 - The one by town hall is just as close. As long as you are within a certain circle, it is the same.

[** END MEETING 7:52pm**]

Written comments collected via the project email address to date copied below:

[Verify? No new comments collected to date]

MEMO

Belmont Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Public Meeting - Draft Presentation

August 16, 2023 5:00pm - 7:00pm Belmont Community Center



Introduction:

A presentation and discussion was held at the Belmont Village Community Center to present the Draft Plan for the Village of Belmont. Mr. Allen of Regrowth Planning began the meeting with a presentation, after which he opened the discussion by taking questions and comments from members of the public. A PDF copy of the presentation slides was made available on the planning webpage (<https://www.mounthollyvt.org/planning-commission/municipal-planning-grant/>), as well as a link to a video recording of the discussion, posted on YouTube. Attendees were encouraged to provide any additional comments in the coming weeks to the project comment form, linked at the planning webpage, or available here:

<https://forms.gle/HbZHNEKkex6j158x9>

The following represents notes of the public comments and discussion which took place after the presentation. Responses to audience questions provided by Regrowth Planning (or Working Group members) are bulleted. This is not intended as a transcript.

Public Comments & Questions:

My house is on Belmont Street across from Lake with the barn. Suffered significant damage in the storm flooding. When the culvert under the road is replaced, I would like them to find a solution where my house does not have to be torn down or relocated, but instead find a solution where the culvert does not have to go under my house. Should relocate the culvert and water away from the house instead.

Will houses outside of the designated village boundary be eligible to hook up to the proposed wastewater system if they want to? You mentioned that the boundaries could be adjusted.

- Not sure what the rules on that would be. We are suggesting that when a wastewater feasibility study is conducted, that it include some outreach to identify which households may be interested in potentially being included. That may be an opportunity to identify folks outside of the boundary who would want to be included. The state very much wants to encourage people to get on a septic system, so we probably have some leeway.

To the extent that the village center designation unlocks funding, is there any reason that we wouldn't want to make the village boundary bigger, double or triple it?

- When they draw the initial boundary they try to keep things relatively compact and focused within the historical built village, idea is to prevent sprawl. We can look into expanding it, but I don't think we want to make it arbitrarily big.

I know you have researched the different funding options available, but who is actually going to do the actual grant applications? Is that the town?

- I can assist the town, and may need to if we are putting grant applications together in the immediate short term before this plan is completed since there is at least one grant deadline coming up very soon. Otherwise will probably be volunteers like Jon on the Planning Board.

- There needs to be very vocal support for this, speaking in terms of the selectboard, so they know the residents really support the idea of the wastewater improvements. People are going to have to step up and say they want it.

Is it possible to apply for the wastewater funding now, but then turn it down if it turns out there isn't enough people or support to move forward?

- That may be possible. I think there needs to be a group of people in the village who are calling for this, it would be helpful if there was an active group of residents who are requesting the wastewater solution. It can't just be the people working on this plan who are pushing for it. There needs to be a show of public support.
- As a volunteer donating their time on this plan, don't have a lot of excitement or time to do more of this work for free unless there is a real desire for it.
- Needs to be an active interest if the town is going to undertake such a effort.

How do you measure the level of community support?

- A subcommittee or committee formed up, maybe with a formal request to the Selectboard that they support this initial study going forward. It will need to be a multi-step process to get something like this done, multiple grants, but need to put it into the plan first if it is something we want to see happen.

Is there a way to send out something to all residents to measure their support, solicit if they are interested in the town selectboard at least looking into this? Get some feedback?

- There are ways we can get that information. We have email or phone contact information for many people, if you are a resident in the village put your email on the meeting sign-in sheet and we can connect it with your property address. If we are looking to measure support for a specific topic, such as a grant application, we could send out a poll or something.
- In order for it to be successful, the burden of a village wastewater system needs to be on those that are hooked up to it. In many towns they have water or fire districts which is how they are able to have systems like that. The end goal isn't to put the burden on everyone, which is why it is probably important to have a committee or group. We are here to help but we cant do it all ourselves.

I recommend that you send out a letter to all the property owners in the village to see if they would support a village wastewater system. I live up the street and would definitely be interested in it. I would be happy to support that rather than potentially have a property that is useless because it doesn't have viable septic.

I think most people would feel that way, even if you just knocked on doors. Part of the problem also is that a number of the people don't even live here full-time, but we are fortunate that the people who are here are very invested in the town. These are people who care, but not all of them are here tonight, they are here on weekends. Need to get them involved also, but might not get them going door-to-door.

Should push the village boundaries, at least for the discussion, even if it doesn't change.

- There is nothing stopping us from soliciting input from outside the village designated boundary, which might give us a measure of interest in the septic participation or future boundary adjustments.

Standing in front of the post office a few weeks ago, a car came down by the church, never even slowed down. Went right straight across onto Tarbellville. A number of years ago there was a major crash at that intersection for the same reason. So, to add to your idea for the seasonal speed bumps, suggest that might be an appropriate place for them. Stop sign there right now is just totally ignored. Should add a seasonal speed bump coming down Church toward the intersection and also the other way coming up Tarbellville. Also, coming up Tarbellville road there is an issue of sight distance on the left. There always was parallel parking in front of the Belmont Store up until the Devros(?) sold it to the next owners, who painted vertical parking lines which changed it to perpendicular parking instead. This made it a lot less safe because it is harder to see cars coming. I suggest going back to the old parallel way, which would also make it easier to access the gas pump.

There wasn't really parallel parking, people just parked however they wanted. First come, first serve. It forces people to come up slowly to the intersection, but I agree 4 speed bumps are needed so there is one from each direction. People aren't stopping totally and are going too fast. Also, the cross paths connecting Church Street to Lake street, those were created by us as kids, running and riding our bikes. We just went wherever we wanted. I don't think there is any formal easement or anything you are going to find for those paths.

The path that runs next to my house and Dave Tilly's house, if you look at the old photographs from the 1800's, there is actually a path there.

Well those paths were created before me, but we kept them active.

The house that was behind mine, I was always curious why their front door faced Dave Tilly's house. It didn't make any sense to me until I found this photograph of the path, so it was because there was a road there. And what I found out from the owner before me is that they used to have baptisms at the church, and they would walk people from the church down through the path across over to the Lake and then baptize them.

Maybe it's an ancient road.

In regards to the septic, would it affect all of Mount Holly's taxes, and when?

- That's what we would have the feasibility study look at, but the idea is that it would be self-funding so that the users of the system would be the ones paying to have it operate. Hoping to get grant money for the construction, and then once it is operational would be funded by the users. It is hard to estimate right now because it depends on how many people would connect, how big does it need to be, how far away is the septic field, land acquisition costs, many variables. Feasibility study should work out the numbers for that under various scenarios. The intent here is that it would not impact the taxes.

If the village folks want to vote on creating a water district, they will have to vote on it and it has to go through the legislature, and be created. They do create them, but this is a pretty small village. Im interested in if the tests come back from the Lake, showing that there isnt a serious sewer problem, then does it mean we are going too fast on this?

The scariest slide for me in the presentation or this draft was showing how close the septic are to our well water. My house is in the village, and I know that my well water taps into the village aquifer, and if that aquifer were to get contaminated, I'm dead in the water. It really is scary. The density in the village is the issue, if I lived outside on another road, I don't think I would be that concerned, but the properties are very close together here. So if the water gets impacted it will affect all of us.

Can you tell us more about the land west of the village which is to be considered for other housing? Is that something that the town owns? Is it one parcel?

- We identified that as an area for more housing because it is immediately adjacent to the village, and the state encourages that we look for more housing density in these already established village areas and to avoid sprawl. We have this existing field which is one large parcel, right next to the village, it is privately owned, and they have already expressed an interest in possibly providing housing there, so it was a logical spot. The Town can't mandate what they do there, but we can work with them to encourage something which would help address our local housing needs. We would rather see it be used for senior apartments or long-term rentals if possible. There is one parcel, and it is privately owned.

There are really only 30-35 homeowner buildings within the village boundary. Another thing, instead of stop signs, just put a 4-way stop light at the intersection, then the stop light becomes the speed bumps, and people have to stop. Also suggest we move the recommendation of renewing the village designation up to be a higher priority, because it has to be done within a few months or so, by April of next year. I was told by people in the

fire department that part of the problem with water coming off the dam is that the outflow was $\frac{3}{4}$ blocked by foliage like milfoil, and that the fire department had been trying to spray it off.

I was there and they were in a kayak pulling it off with their hands because spraying it off with the truck wasn't working.

It would have come out in a more controlled way.

The volume of water would have been the same if it went through the inlet or over the top, either way.

I'm assuming that any development of housing would need to be done by a private developer, correct?

- The town is not going to do that, correct.

Do we have anybody lined up for that?

- No.

The town would have to accept that we wanted it.

Last time I got a copy of the Grand List, it came to me as an Excel Sheet, which could then be sorted by street, and then you just get one street or the other, very efficient list of every resident with their address. Assuming it is still in Excel, a quick sort would give you contact info of residents. Secondly, where the flood water went did not affect what happened down on Belmont Road. All of that water was either going to go down through the drop inlet, over the primary emergency spillway, and the secondary spillway under that fence. So although there were issues, all it did is change which route water went, it did not make a difference to what happened down on Belmont Road.

I feel it did effect the amount of flow at the time.

I was there the whole time watching it.

I was there also, four times that day, and have video. I don't think that's an issue. Keeping the debris out is an issue.

[cross-talk about water and flooding]

- In a low-flow environment, it would result in an orderly flow of water down the sluiceway, but we were in a catastrophic flood condition and the dam was going to be overtopped regardless. The volume of flow as mentioned is not changed by the direction it goes, and there is no way the culvert under Belmont Road could have handled that volume. If you look inside it you know that it is about ready to collapse.
- And also I think we should consider that whether the flow is coming from the inlet or over the spillway, that the engineers who will be replacing it will be looking at that.

Regarding the septic, there was a presentation given by Lynette Claudon from the state, a copy of that presentation is on the town website. It showed the various options that different towns have done with community septic. The kind of numbers that we are talking about here are along the lines of maybe 24 bedrooms or 24 buildings which the system could handle. A relatively small number of homes unless you start to talk about much more serious wastewater systems such as treatment plants. So want to give people a realistic idea of what we are talking about here to manage expectations, it would probably be somewhat small. Being able to meet everyone's desire for it may not be possible.

- We have talked about trying to prioritize properties who are limited in what they can do because of septic limitations, and properties where their system is currently failing or anticipated to fail shortly.

I concur with the importance of the well issue because it is such a concentration of septic systems and wells in a small area. Those are the homeowners who need to be encouraged to be on the list, could respond yes or no

in a poll or survey. Also I heard that the location of this proposed community septic field would not be in the meadow behind the store but in a different location, is this true?

- We have not identified a specific location or property for the potential community septic field, but it is true that we were not imagining it being in that meadow. We have soils mapping info which tells us that there are some locations downhill from the village further west which have drainage much better suited for a septic field. Those would be more ideal locations for such a system. We have no idea if any of the owners of those areas have any interest in selling any property for this purpose. At some point the town will have to approach these property owners and ask if they are interested in selling some land to the town.

How long do these feasibility studies take? 2 years? 10 years?

- Probably less than a year, depends on how much we ask them to do. It may be more complicated by having them look at the coordination of wastewater and stormwater as a combined project. But we would at least be asking them to look at different scenarios, such as how big would the septic field need to be for X, Y or Z number of properties, what would be the cost for pipe runs, land acquisition, etc.

The culvert in front of the museum has been clogged up, and has been probably for a number of years, grass has been growing there. This is contributing to some of the problems.

- I agree, and think we would also benefit from some additional drainage points in places where there aren't enough, such as coming down Church Street.

The culvert there is also blocked. [cross talk about different culverts]

The one that has been washing out the church driveway, the catch basin in front of the fire department goes underground for about 20 feet and there is a plug, then it pops out at the church driveway and washes out the driveway. That's all the gravel that washes down to the intersection. That needs to be dug out and figure out what is plugging it, just open it up and fix it. Don't need a study. The gravel that washes down is super dangerous because you slide on it when you try to come to a stop at the bottom of the hill.

Earlier there was mention of the potential taking of the "vacant parcel" at number 36 in the draft plan. We take issue with the nomenclature, it is a bit misleading. It may be vacant in the sense there are no buildings on it, but you are calling it vacant to make it sound like it would be easier to take. That term should be stricken from the plan. It should only be referred to as a piece of private property that the town would seek to "take" from the private property owner at some point. Vacant is misleading. The property owners strenuously object to its taking.

Regarding the idea for housing on the land behind the store, you can't really have any density on that land until the community septic is installed, and so that additional density has to be part of your calculations for sizing the wastewater system. In order to accomplish a similar objective, I suggest you consider putting the senior housing and other housing on Route 103 because as you get older you may not be able to drive and that area has better access to public transportation options. Could put a bus stop there. Would better accommodate a school bus drop off or EV charging. If you are living there it is much easier to get to Rutland or Ludlow. The Rutland bus service is not going to be stopping behind the store to pick people up. Only downside is there is not a store there.

The seniors who have lived here most of their life, and who want to remain here, would rather be here in the center of the village, where things happen. It's not out on Route 103. Arrangements can be made for senior transportation. It's the store, the community center, the library, walking paths - these are the things that people want to be near.

The walkability package.

Regarding the walking paths, I'm the property owner - between Peg's and Wilson, I'm the Peg - next to the town owned park. I find that the walking path proposed through my property, my vacant lot, is going to cause a big trespassing problem. We should work on the Lake issue before we work on the walking path. The lake is not a draw to anyone right now. Before a walking path is put in there and improvements made to the park, the lake has to be improved. The lake should be a priority, but as long as we have walking paths making a loop around the triangle in the village, it does not have to go through my private property. I know that there is an easement there that is owned by the town, but that easement is in the Selectboard minutes as being for emergency vehicles only. It will cause a big trespassing problem.

- You mentioned there is no need to connect to the lake until it is improved, but you agree there is nothing wrong with having some of the other walking paths like the ones you mentioned going around the triangle, correct?

Walking paths around town are fine, but I don't see the benefit of going right through that yard to the beach when the beach isn't ready.

- We did mention earlier in the presentation that we received that comment, and because of that we would probably not go this route from Belmont along the lake outlet but would instead have the path go along Lake Street up to the park instead.

Regarding that gentleman's comment about the vacant land, the plan mentions that the town-owned park parcel includes a narrow strip of land with frontage along Belmont Street, which could be used as a secondary access to the park. I'm assuming it is talking about her land, and it isn't town owned land.

It's town land.

There is a town easement of 18 feet according to the survey, however it has been said in Selectboard meetings that it is for emergency vehicle use only.

- Either way, I don't know if that strip of land is actually an easement or is owned by the town, but for the purposes of this meeting we have resolved it because we would not be coming in that way with a proposed path, but instead coming along Lake Street to avoid that as I mentioned.

Did I read someplace in the plan that part of the idea was to bury the overhead utility lines in the center of town? When you bury the wires it really enhances the town. When I go to other places and you don't see those poles, I can tell the difference.

If we are going to be digging up the roads anyway...

- Yes. that's correct. A couple of reasons that idea was raised is that it would clean up the visual clutter of the overhead wires and poles, and also because some of these poles are in the way of things, such as plowing for on street parking and getting in the way of park improvements. Would like to relocate or underground some of these lines where possible.

I'm not a homeowner or property owner here, am visiting. 50 years ago my wife brought me here to see family farm, and I love your town. Chester county where I am from in PA is the most affluent county, I have friends who have kids who are concerned their kids will not be able to live in the area. We also got into sewers a long time ago, and it was the best decision we made. I just want to say, good luck, you have tough decisions, you have a great town. Hope you don't lose your small town ambiance. I'm not a fan of the walking paths, we did paths where we live, if you don't maintain them regularly they look bad with trash, weeds, feces, cigarette butts, etc., and we have parks and recreation employees to do this but it is just too much work for them, and you may have that problem.

[discussion on Hanna Teter, gold medal winner]

What are your plans to improve the lake water?

- The plan has recommendations for pursuing a vegetative aquatic management plan including a vegetative buffer, shade along the shore, town continue testing, putting down barriers. There is funding available to do much of this. It is also part of determining where the source of the pollutants are coming from, such as a trace test which will allow us to determine if it is coming from any of the houses around the lake, tell us if it is from animals and former agricultural activity or from human septic systems to get us going in the right direction.
- Reminder that the town website, www.mounthollyvt.org, (town government > planning board > municipal planning grant) has copies of this draft plan and other materials, as well as a link to the comment form so you and others can submit any additional thoughts. Will be collecting comments and then sitting down with the Working Group to decide on further edits before this is finalized for consideration by the town board, or incorporated as an amendment to the next Town Plan update.

There is a new group which has been formed to spearhead Star Lake improvements, taking over for the group which used to be known as the Friends of Star Lake. They will be starting up and going around to talk to people in the area soon. They are looking at additional options to improve the water, including harvesting. It used to just be a milfoil problem years ago, now it has gotten bigger than that. They don't have a formal name yet.

[** END MEETING ~6:45pm**]

Written comments collected via the online comment form (to date) copied below:

Storm water remediation - Support this as 1st priority as it is a risk to the health, property and sustainability of the village.

Shared septic - Strong support for this as well related for the reasons expressed in the plan.

Parking - I think additional solutions should be considered. Current proposal is not workable in winter months when room for snow is required. Can church or other nearby lot be repurposed (outside of church activities) for event and store parking?

Walking Path - Like the idea. There is no existing easement available to the Village to use our property or bridge over the creek. There is an agricultural easement for specific people and specific purpose, but its not general use. That said, we are happy to discuss a future easement and related conditions.

Hello - Our family owns 68 Lake Street in the Village. We wanted to commend the steering committee and their consultants on the fine work. We completely support the initiatives described, especially procuring an engineering feasibility study for wastewater mitigation options. Let us know if you need our show of support, or involvement, as "Community Project Participants". Kevin McAleer and Joseph DiGiovanni (p.s. we are unable to attend the August 16th meeting in-person).

I have a few thoughts. Hope they are helpful.

1. I think that the highest priority needs to be the infrastructure, e.g. a long term plan for a sustainable septic design with ongoing maintenance, because if that system doesn't exist, or the current individual sites fail..the rest of the plans don't really matter. We would have a huge problem. Not that the other things like housing, walkways, community gardens etc aren't important – but they are secondary.

2, Realistically getting a septic system designed and implemented will take some time, so as an interim plan while that is happening, would the selectman consider requiring that all houses in the village maintain their septic by having them pumped/inspected once a year and provide proof annually that they are in "good

working order". For those where this might prove to be a financial burden, maybe the town/state would offer financial grants? This might mitigate the chances of a truly disastrous event where our water supply gets contaminated by a failed septic system. It would only be an interim requirement until the new septic design was in place.

3. Although walkways might (in the years to come) provide residents and visitors alike with ways to get from one resource to another, right now the resources are not really there....so you'd be walking to nowhere. So once again, in terms of what should be prioritized, I would emphasize 1. Restoring the Lake so it can actually be used for boating/swimming through a comprehensive and ongoing plan to address the invasive plants and , 2. then Redesigning the park next to the Lake so it truly can become a gathering place and finally 3. Collaborating with the new owners of the store, to open a fully functioning "General Store" which is what I think most of the folks in town want.

4. Finally when we do get to the point that we would consider pathways, my request would be that they be made of stone dust (more in keeping with rural communities) and any path on Church Street be put on the house side of the street, NOT along my stone wall. The acreage I own across the street is constantly mistaken for being public land, and although an occasional person sitting on my wall, or walking in my yard happens, putting a sidewalk there would invite that mistake to be made consistently....I fear I would have to resort to a physical barrier to prevent that from happening, which would clearly interfere visually with the whole rural feel of that space. In fact there is a historic precedent for putting the path on the house side of the road depicted in an 1890's photo I'm happy to share. I'd be fine with that. I also do not think we need a path running alongside the eastern portion of the stream between my house and Alice Perry's from Lake Street to Church Street. This is not part of the town's property and I think even the proposal to place it there, lacks some sensitivity to us as residents. Probably a longer discussion, but wanted to note my opposition to that idea.

I believe the town did have an "easement" to get from Church Street to Lake Street in place years ago (which is clearly visible and documented in old photos) The road went from the Baptist church on Church Street to the Odd Fellows home by the Lake (it ran between what is now David Tilly's property and what is now my property in the front and Joe DiGiovanni's in the back). I'm not sure why the town let the previous owners of David's property build a structure on the easement....so it remains a puzzle to me why it was not maintained? (But I'm sure there is an explanation)

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

The village of Belmont is notable for its museum and library. As a community, we are anxiously awaiting the opening of the General Store, which serves not only as a convenient place to shop, but a meeting place for folks who live in town and out of town visitors. We need a general store, it reinforces Vermont's commitment to community.

The suggestion of putting in sidewalks is not only expensive, but ignores the fact that no one wants an easy ingress and egress from the lake because of its lamentable shape.

The first priority, or one that should be at the top of the list, is improving the quality of the lake. The lake generates business for the town, provides recreational activities of all sorts for everyone, and if it was in good shape, provides the foundation for maintaining the natural beauty of this bucolic village. Additionally, sidewalks would take away from the pastoral feeling of this picturesque village and give it a city-like feel. People come to Vermont to escape city living and enjoy nature in all its splendor in places like our village.

Let's keep our focus on the two mainstays of the village - the opening of the General Store and vastly improving the quality of Star Lake. It is of incredible importance to improve the lake as it generates pecuniary value because people want to patronize the General Store, and people love the water for fishing, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, and all the things we enjoy as children and adults. Thank you for kind consideration in this matter.

Thank you for the well thought out plan. It's an inspiring, well thought out vision for our town. Thank you for all of those who put in the time to make this happen.

I have a few suggestions:

I would consider expanding the boundary of the Belmont Village designation—it seems arbitrarily small to me. I would extend it in all directions to where the relatively densely settled area ends. I would extend on Belmont Road to Teer Road. I would extend Tarbelville Road down to the Doty Lane area. I would extend on Healdville Road to be at least even with the Western Edge of Star Lake.

I am particularly in favor of aspect of the plan that enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety I support the addition of as many speed bumps and traffic calming measures as you can. I would like to add a mention that “the goal for these traffic calming measures is to integrate with an overall traffic calming/traffic safety vision for the town”. At the meeting it sounded like there was overwhelming support for pedestrian safety enhancements.

I think the multi-use or walking paths are an excellent aspect of the plan and support a safe walkable community. Like my comment about traffic calming, I would suggest adding a statement that “the goal for these walking paths is to eventually integrate with a town wide multi-use trail network”. (Or something to that effect). My thought is to memorialize this in the village plan, so that we can think about integration into a wider network of trails as we are (hopefully) building the village trails.

I like the plan to expand the area of the village green near the church and adding parking to support events like Cider Days.

[End of Online Comments To Date - Collected Monday Aug 21, 6pm]

D - INVENTORY MAPS



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