

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Open Space and Resource Protection Summary**

Holland's natural resources play an essential role in defining the town's identity. Large tracts of forest, numerous recreation areas, and working landscapes maintain the town's rural character and are a vital component of its local economy. Protecting and preserving Holland's wealth of natural resources is essential if the town is to retain its unique rural heritage and high quality of life standards.

The Open Space and Resource Protection element of this plan is intended to provide guidance to the Town of Holland as it seeks to balance future development with the protection and preservation of its valuable open space lands and natural resources. The open space and resource protection priorities established by the plan were determined by citizens of Holland at a public forum held on November 19, 2003. .

Residents of Holland identified the following open space and resource protection priorities at the public forum held on November 19, 2003:

- Preserve present and future drinking water supplies
- Preserve the rural character of the Town
- Provide recreational opportunities for residents of the Town
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Preserve natural areas, scenic views, and historic sites
- Protect and manage water resources for recreational use
- Preserve working landscapes (cropland, pasture, forestland, etc.)

The Holland Community Development Planning Committee established four main goals for the plan based on the priorities determined by Holland residents:

- Protect present and future water resources
- Provide recreational opportunities for residents
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Preserve the Town's rural character, natural areas, scenic views, and historic sites

Based on these four goals, the Holland Community Development Planning Committee and the staff of the Office of Geographic Information and Analysis developed the following recommendations for the Town of Holland:

- Adopt a Lake/Pond Overlay District in order to protect the town's surface water resources.
- Adopt a Seasonal Conversion Bylaw to ensure that conservations of seasonal homes meet appropriate year-round residence standards.

- Permanently protect lands adjacent to Hamilton Reservoir to reduce the negative impacts of dense residential development on the reservoir ecosystem.
- Enter into a partnership with the Town of Brimfield to protect the aquifer recharge area that supplies water to the moderate to high-yielding aquifer located in the northern section of town.
- Establish a committee to pursue the acquisition of additional public playing fields for the town.
- Establish a committee to map the numerous trails and bike routes in the northern section of town and develop a trail network that connects the Town Center and the Lake Siog (Holland Pond) area.
- Secure permanent protection for open space lands that connect existing habitats and thereby create a wildlife corridor in the western section of Town
- Implement design recommendations for the Town Center presented in The 1995 Holland Master Planning Study
- Map the location and historic sites in the original Town Center area and gather personal histories from senior members of the community
- Form a committee to study the possibility of adopting a Historic Overlay District for the Town Center

## **Housing Summary**

The Housing element presents an overview of housing characteristics and affordability in Holland. The key findings are below.

### **Key Findings:**

- As of 2000, Holland had 1,317 housing units, compared to a population of 2,407. The number of housing units has increased 6 percent since 1990. There is currently an average of 2.68 people per occupied housing unit.
- As of 2000, 97 percent of Holland's housing was single-family homes. Of all the Town's housing units, 58 percent are occupied by owners, 9 percent are occupied by renters, and 31 percent are vacant or used seasonally.
- Housing in Holland is currently affordable for most residents. Housing is generally considered affordable when households spend no more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. On average, Holland households spent less than 30 percent of their incomes on housing. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, renter households

spend 20 percent of their incomes on housing costs on average and homeowners with mortgages spend 20 percent, and homeowners without mortgages spend 11 percent.

- Although housing is affordable for most residents, it is not affordable for some, particularly low-income families. For households with incomes under \$20,000, 68 percent of homeowners and 100 percent of renters spend 30 percent or more of their incomes on housing costs.
- According to population forecasts, Holland's population is expected to grow by at least 594 people between 2000 and 2010. Assuming an average household size of 2.68 people per household, the new 506 residents will occupy 222 homes.
- The Town's zoning allows a variety of housing types. In all zoning districts single-family homes are allowed by right. Open space communities are allowed by special permit in all districts. In the Garden Apartment district the only residential uses that are allowed are single-family homes and garden apartments.

### Development Suitability Maps

The latter portion of the Housing element evaluates which areas may be the most suitable for future residential development.

### **Economic Development Summary**

The Economic Development element reviews Holland's current economic base and labor pool characteristics, and current zoning for commercial development. Below are the key findings from this review.

#### Key Findings

- In 2001, Holland had 1,093 residents participating in the labor force. In 2001, the unemployment rate for Holland was 6.5 percent, higher than the rates for Hampden County (6.4 percent) and the State (3.7 percent) overall.
- Holland has a high labor force participation rate, with 75 percent of residents aged 16 and over in the labor force. Massachusetts overall has a labor force participation rate of 66 percent.
- Holland residents are well educated. Overall, 14 percent of Holland adults have a degree from a 4-year college and 5 percent have graduate degrees. In addition, 83 percent have a high school diploma or higher. Statewide, 85 percent of adults have a high school diploma.
- Holland has higher incomes and less poverty than Hampden County and the State overall. only 7.2 percent of Holland residents live below the poverty level, compared to a poverty rate in Hampden County overall of 14.3 percent.

- Nine-tenths of working residents in Holland commute to jobs outside of Holland. This includes 13 percent who work elsewhere in Hampden County, 63 percent who work outside of Hampden County elsewhere in the State, and 14 percent who work outside of Massachusetts.
- In 2000, 18 percent of working Holland residents were employed in the manufacturing sector. The next largest sectors were educational, health, and social services (16.7 percent) and retail services (12 percent).

### Development Suitability Maps

The second section of the Economic Development element assesses current infrastructure in Holland, including water, sewer, transportation, and telecommunications, and analyzes which areas may be the most suitable for future commercial development. This analysis starts with the potentially developable areas identified on the Land Use Suitability Map, and then screens these potentially developable areas to meet additional criteria.

### Selected Recommendations

#### Zoning and Other Regulatory Strategies

- Create a village center zoning district that allows for mixed residential and commercial uses.
- Allow more types of appropriate and desired uses in the zoning bylaws (see the appendix for a list of types of businesses that residents support), including suitable types of commercial development.
- Create a zoning district that specifically allows for commercial uses.
- Consider expanding the definition of home businesses, and allowing additional home-based businesses by right.
- Implement a phased growth bylaw that only allows for an appropriate amount of development within the Town each year.

#### Non-Zoning Activities

- Increase the commercial tax base within the Town.
- Utilize Holland's location right off the highway and equidistant from big cities to attract new employers, while still ensuring that new development is appropriate for the character of the Town.
- Investigate improvements to technology infrastructure such as telecommunications and fiber optics that support technically advanced businesses and industries in an effort to provide the latest technology for current and future development.

- Encourage clustering of similar business development as a way to increase the effectiveness with which companies can operate.
- Promote investment in public infrastructure to encourage economic development in designated target areas.

### **Transportation Summary**

The Transportation Element examines Holland's transportation infrastructure in terms of current condition, level of utilization, deficiencies that need to be addressed, and safety concerns. This element of the plan consists of five components:

- An existing infrastructure report that summarizes the current transportation infrastructure of Holland based on a pavement management system
- A traffic count report that identifies roads that are the primary routes of entrance and egress to Holland
- A problem identification report that identifies transportation problems and potential responses
- An examination of the sidewalk network in the Town Center and recommendations for improvements