

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

Regional Context

The Town of Holland is nestled in the southeast corner of Hampden County, Massachusetts on the Connecticut border. It is bordered by the towns of Brimfield to the north, Wales to the west, Sturbridge to the east and Union, Connecticut to the south. Nipmuck State Forest in Connecticut forms the southern town border while Brimfield State Forest lies west of Town, and Tantaigue Reservation lies east of town. Holland is within commuting distance of the Springfield; Worcester; Boston; Providence, Rhode Island; and Hartford, Connecticut areas. Access to major highways is convenient with Interstate Route 84 cutting across the very southeastern corner of town, and the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) and Massachusetts Route 20 running north of Town.

The Town of Holland encompasses about 13 square miles of rolling, wooded hills. Though there is some open land, forest dominates the uplands. In the hardwood dominated forests are scattered wetlands providing biological and scenic diversity. The town is bisected by the headwaters of the Quinebaug River and the associated water bodies of Hamilton Reservoir, and Lake Siog (Holland Pond). The river, ponds, reservoir, and numerous wetlands make up a wetland complex that not only dominates the town's character but also is important in terms of its recreational value, scenic beauty, and wildlife habitat. Holland also has large areas of undeveloped forested lands, which are of regional conservation value.

Besides sharing history, land uses, and landscapes, Holland and its neighbors share municipal services such as emergency response and schools. This cooperation, primarily between Holland, Wales, and Brimfield, allows each town to benefit from improved services difficult for a small town to provide on its own.

Holland is located within the Quinebaug Watershed, which is part of the Thames River Basin. The Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor was established by the federal government to protect the unique cultural and natural resources within the area. The Massachusetts Quinebaug and Shetucket River Valleys Heritage Commission assists towns within the watershed to protect wildlife habitat, promote tourism, encourage appropriate economic development, and conserve natural resources.

History of the Community

Before European settlement, Holland was populated by members of the Nipmuck tribe of Native Americans. The Quinebaug River, meaning Long Water, was part of an area called Kesioge or Quesiog by Native Americans. Lake Siog was named after the abundant and fine pickerel (*siog*) found in the lake. There is evidence of a Nipmuck Indian village on what was called Indian Field Hill and burial grounds on the Elisha Marcy homestead. Native use of the fish resources of the river and lake has been documented. In 1644, two Nipmucks, Webomscom and Nodowahant,

deeded to Governor Winthrop “ten miles round about the hills” in the area of Tantiue, later called the Black Lead Mines area. This deed, dated and signed August 8, 1644, was in consideration for “sundry goods.” This deed was later reformed under protest because Winthrop’s heirs did nothing with the land and this impeded settlement of the area.

The earliest settler was Joseph Blodgett who settled in an area later known as Polly Place in 1730. Early settlers farmed the bottomland and utilized the abundant fish, timber, and water resources. Some of the present names of places in town, such as Blodgett Hill and Williams Hill, were named after these early settlers. Holland was once part of Brimfield but discontent with the distance to the district church led to a split and the district of Wales was formed. Another conflict over the district church was resolved with Holland becoming an independent district in 1783 and an official town in 1836. The first road, built in 1731, was South Meadow Road linking Brimfield with Union, Connecticut. Holland was on the stage line between Hartford and Worcester, bringing travelers such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who later wrote “Holland Inn” in his Tales of a Wayside Inn.

Holland followed the typical pattern of settlement found throughout early New England. Farming was concentrated along the floodplain of the Quinebaug River and mills were built along its length to provide power to saw timber and grind grain. Though mostly modest in scale, there were a total of at least 17 mills that operated along the river over a period of time. One successful venture was the Fuller Factory that produced fabric and thread from 1833 to 1851, until it burned down. While the mill operated, a small mill town, called Fullersville or Fuller’s Village, existed with tenements and stores close to the mill. The mill that had the greatest effect on the small town was the Hamilton Woolen Company that, in 1865, dammed the river to provide hydropower for its mill located in Southbridge. The unfortunate result was the loss of much of the sandy, fertile agricultural land that was annually replenished by seasonal river flooding. Though the dams and mills fell into disrepair and farming became less prevalent, Holland maintained its small rural community character over the years. Eventually, Holland’s idyllic scenery and Hamilton Reservoir attracted seasonal visitors and small vacation camps were built along the reservoir.

One of the most significant events to occur in Holland in recent times was the flood of 1955. In August of that year, over 18 inches of rain fell and caused severe flooding that destroyed the original dam that created Hamilton Reservoir. The owners of the dam were unable to make the necessary repairs and this led to the town taking over control of the dam and its surrounding facilities. The dam was rebuilt with governmental assistance and the reservoir once again became a major site for recreation and water sports. In an effort to prevent a repeat of the destruction caused by the 1955 flood, the Army Corps of Engineers and the federal government purchased approximately 170 large parcels of land to absorb potential floodwaters.

The presence of Hamilton Reservoir, one of the town’s most valuable natural resources, has played an important role in Holland’s recent history, particularly in terms of its economic impact. Every year, hundreds of tourists and seasonal residents are attracted by the recreational opportunities the reservoir provides. During the summer months, this influx of visitors results in more than a doubling of the community’s population. In addition to providing benefits to the town, Hamilton Reservoir also presents challenges that need to be resolved in order to protect

this valuable water resource. The preservation of water quality and the added pressures created by the conversion of seasonal homes to full-time residences are two major challenges that need to be addressed.

Between 1970 and 1980, Holland experienced substantial population growth. During this period Holland's population increased by 70.6 percent. This increase was likely due to the desirable characteristics of the town, including proximity to employment centers, a relatively affordable housing stock, and Holland's small town, rural character. Development pressures in adjacent communities have also shaped Holland's recent history. Rapid development in neighboring communities, rising home and land prices, and the State's fiscal crisis has had a substantial impact on the town. Due to Holland's many desirable characteristics, increased pressure for residential development is likely to continue in the future. Balancing new development with the preservation of the town's unique natural resources will be a major challenge.

Population Characteristics

Open space and recreation initiatives undertaken by the town should be based on an analysis of its population and demographic information. This section of the plan provides population counts and demographic data for the Town of Holland acquired by the United States Bureau of the Census in 1990 and 2000 (United States Bureau, 1990, 2000). This information will be utilized to assess Holland's future open space and recreation needs based on the population and demographic characteristics of the town.

Based on data gathered during Census 2000, Table OS-1 provides detailed information relating to Holland's total population, population within specific age cohorts, and the median age of town residents. The table indicates that Holland's population and demographic information reflect trends that are occurring on both the State and National level. The maturing of the Baby Boom Generation has resulted in a "population bubble" in the middle age group. When population of the 35 to 44 year age group and 45 to 54 year age group are added, the combined population of these two groups accounts for nearly 40 percent of Holland's total population.

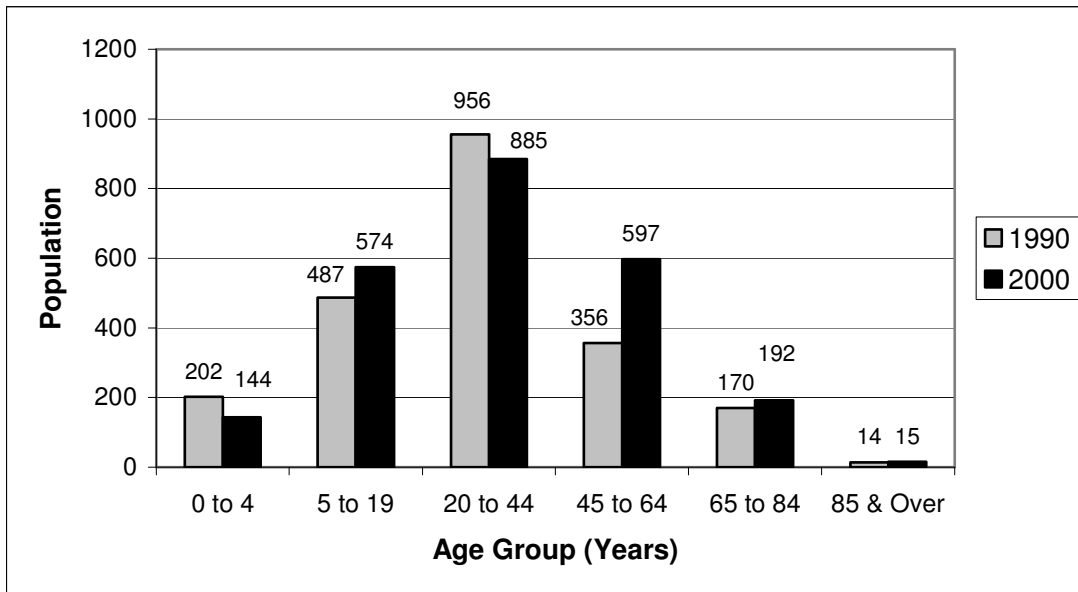
Table OS-1: Census Data, Town of Holland, Massachusetts, 2000

	Number	Percent
Total Population	2,407	100.0
Sex and Age		
Male	1,224	50.9
Female	1,183	49.1
Under 5 years	144	6.0
5 to 9 years	208	8.6
10 to 14 years	221	9.2
15 to 19 years	145	6.0
20 to 24 years	89	3.7
25 to 34 years	274	11.4
35 to 44 years	522	21.7
45 to 54 years	401	16.7
55 to 59 years	125	5.2
60 to 64 years	71	2.9
65 to 74 years	128	5.3
75 to 84 years	64	2.7
85 years and over	15	0.6
Median age (years)	37.0	(X)
18 years and over	1,736	72.1
Male	878	36.5
Female	858	35.6
21 years and over	1,667	69.3
62 years and over	249	10.3
65 years and over	207	8.6
Male	103	4.3
Female	104	4.3

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

Figure OS-1 provides population profiles of Holland for the years 1990 and 2000. The data indicates that over the ten-year span, the 45 to 65 age group experienced major growth, an increase of approximately 68%. This substantial increase in the 45 to 65 age group suggests that the town's population profile reflects the national trend of a maturing population. The implications of a maturing population should be considered when planning for the town's current and future open space and recreation needs.

Figure OS-1: Holland Population Profiles, 1990 and 2000



Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Census 1990, Census 2000.

Age group distribution patterns can provide guidance when planning for future open space and recreation needs. Different age groups can have significantly different recreational needs and preferences. Consequently, planning for open space and recreation should be guided by an understanding of the unique needs of each age group.

The 0 to 4 Age Group

The recreational needs of pre-school children are addressed primarily in the home. Home-based recreation is often supplemented with trips to a playground that provides play apparatus designed to develop the child's gross motor skills. In addition to exercise, the playground also provides an opportunity for socialization. When young children interact with their peers at the playground, they begin learning acceptable social behavior within a group. Playgrounds also provide informal meeting places for parents to share parenting information.

Holland possesses one playground with play equipment suitable for young children. It is located at The Holland Elementary School and includes the following equipment: swings, a slide, climbing apparatus, jungle gyms, and a playhouse. The addition of new play equipment would enhance the playground's appeal to younger children. One of the major advantages of modern play equipment is that it is designed to encourage group play, creative play, and socialization. Today's playground equipment is also designed to encourage a balanced approach to exercise by combining apparatus that develop both upper and lower body strength and fine motor skills. The greatest obstacle to acquiring additional playground equipment is likely to be cost. Due to high cost, many communities purchase new playground equipment in phases. This approach is possible since modern playground equipment is often designed as modules to be combined together to form larger play structures. Although acquiring new playground equipment would be

desirable, it may not be a major recreational priority for the community since population data indicates that the 0 to 4 age group has declined over the past ten years.

The 5 to 19 Age Group

The recreational preferences of young children and teenagers have evolved significantly over the past several decades. This age group has shown an increasing interest in organized team sports. In addition to this increased interest, a growing awareness of the social and health benefits of team sports has encouraged parents to enroll their children in organized sports leagues at younger ages (Michelli 1996). Accommodating increasing participation in team sports such as baseball, softball, football, and soccer often requires additional playing fields and the associated infrastructure (roads, lighting, storage buildings, etc.). The need to construct additional playing fields in Holland has been identified as a major recreation goal by the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee.

The Town of Holland maintains three Little League playing fields at Hitchcock Field, a 4.5-acre parcel of land adjacent to the Town Hall. The playing fields primarily serve the community's Little League Baseball teams, but also accommodate the town's adult softball and youth soccer leagues. Maintenance of the fields and scheduling of games and practices are overseen by the Holland Recreation Committee, a committee of three members appointed by the town. In addition to donations of goods, money, and services from local residents and organizations, the Recreation Committee receives funding through the Holland Town Budget.

It is important to note that meeting the recreational needs of the 5 to 19 age often provides an important social benefit to a community. The recreational facilities used by this age group, such as sports fields, playgrounds, and recreational centers, provide convenient meeting places for residents of the community. Attending a youth sporting event at a local playing field brings residents together and provides an informal forum to discuss community issues. In a small rural town such as Holland, public playing fields can bring people together on a regular basis and this can generate a sense of community spirit among residents.

The 20 to 44 Age Group

Increased mobility provided by personal transportation greatly expands the recreation opportunities available to members of the 20 to 44 age group. This is especially true in Holland since the town lacks a public transportation system. Recreational pursuits for this age group often involve family members, since this is the time when young adults often marry and establish families of their own. Family outings may involve traditional outdoor activities such as camping, boating, fishing, hiking, and bike trips. Members in this age group may choose to participate in organized sports such as softball leagues. Organized sport leagues provide participants with both recreation and an opportunity to socialize with their peers. Increased mobility and disposable income often allows members in this age group to take advantage of recreation opportunities outside of the town.

The 45 to 65 Age Group

The 45 to 65 age group experienced the greatest increase in population from 1990 to 2000, an increase of approximately 68 percent. This increase is consistent with National and State trends and reflects the maturing of the Baby Boom generation. Since the population in this age group is likely to experience continued growth in the future, Holland's recreation planning should reflect the needs and preferences of this particular age group.

Maintaining and improving health through regular exercise is a characteristic of the 44 to 65 age groups. In addition to memberships at health and fitness clubs, middle-aged adults tend to favor more traditional outdoor recreational pursuits such as golf, tennis, running, walking, hiking, cycling, fishing, and hunting. Many of the recreational pursuits favored by this age group require large expanses of open space land maintained in its natural state. Meeting the recreational needs of a maturing population suggests that a greater emphasis should be placed on preserving the natural lands on which these recreational pursuits are based.

65 and Over Age Group

Developing recreational programs for the 65 and over age group provides two important benefits for the town. First, these programs can greatly improve the quality of life of those residents who are currently in this age group. Secondly, establishing these recreational programs today will help prepare the town to meet the needs of the large number of residents who will be entering this age group over the next two decades.

The recreational needs of older seniors can be significantly different than other age groups. Recreational programs for older seniors are often designed to increase physical activity, maintain health, and provide important social interaction. These programs often require indoor facilities and community sponsored transportation.

The Holland Council On Aging (COA), located at the Senior Center, administers a variety of services for seniors. One of these services is to provide recreational opportunities for residents of the town. Activities hosted by the COA include lectures, trips to theatres and recreational areas, and holiday celebrations. One of the COA's programs involves intergenerational gatherings for seniors and local elementary school students (Annual 2002 p.26).

Socioeconomic Characteristics

This section provides data relating to the economic, employment, and educational attainment characteristics of Holland's population. Table OS-2 provides a comparison of income and poverty level for Holland, Hamden County, and the State. Two statistics worth noting in this comparison are median household income and poverty level. Holland's median household income is higher than that of the State and significantly higher than that of the County. The percentage of Holland's population below the poverty level is lower than that of the State and the County.

Table OS-2: Income and Poverty Statistics, 1999

Area	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Percent of Population Below the Poverty Level
Holland	\$21,770	\$52,073	7.2%
Hampden County	\$19,541	\$39,718	14.3%
Massachusetts	\$25,952	\$50,502	9.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

Table OS-3 compares labor force and unemployment data for Holland, Hamden County, and the State. At 6.5%, Holland's unemployment rate is higher than that of the County (5.9%) and the State (5.3%).

Table OS-3: Labor Force and Unemployment Data, 2002

Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
Holland	1,093	1,022	71	6.5%
Hampden County	224,101	210,968	13,133	5.9%
Massachusetts	3,486,400	3,301,300	185,100	5.3%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training, 2002

Table OS-4 shows the types of employment sectors in which residents of Holland are employed. In general, the percentage of Holland workers in each employment sector is similar to that of the State and the County. However, there is one employment sector in Holland that is substantially higher than that of the State and the County and therefore is worth noting. The percentage of Holland workers in the Construction sector is more than twice the State and County percentages. It is also interesting to note that despite its numerous large tracts of forestland and recreational water bodies, the percentage of Holland residents employed in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining sector is half that of the State and County.

Table OS-4: Employment by Sector, 2000

Employment Sector	Holland		Hampden County	Massachusetts
	Number of Workers	Percent of Total		
Educational, Health & Social Services	219	16.7%	23.7%	23.7%
Manufacturing	247	18.8%	16.5%	12.8%
Retail Trade	169	12.9%	12.4%	11.2%
Construction	157	12.0%	4.5%	5.5%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	59	4.5%	6.0%	4.2%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food Services	106	8.1%	7.1%	6.8%
Wholesale Trade	47	3.6%	3.8%	3.3%
Professional, Scientific, Management, & Administrative Services	70	5.3%	6.4%	11.6%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	87	6.6%	7.1%	8.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Mining	3	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Information Services	36	2.7%	2.5%	3.7%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	61	4.6%	4.7%	4.4%
Public Administration	53	4.0%	4.9%	4.3%
Total Employed*	1,314	100.0%	206,062	3,161,087

*Employed civilian population 16 years of age and over.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

Highest educational attainment is an important factor in a community's ability to attract and retain commercial development. In today's service sector economy, the ability to draw upon a highly educated pool of potential employees provides a company with a competitive advantage in the market place. Companies seek to locate their operations in areas that can provide this highly educated labor pool. Table OS-5 provides statistics on highest level of educational attainment of Holland residents.

Table OS-5: Highest Educational Attainment, 2000

Area	Population Age 25 and Over	Percent High School Graduate (Total)	Highest Level of Educational Attainment				
			Percent High School Graduate	Percent with Some College	Percent with Associate Degree	Percent with Bachelor's Degree	Percent with Graduate Degree
Holland	1,602	83.0%	32.2%	24.0%	7.0%	14.2%	5.6%
Hampden County	295,837	79.2%	32.6%	18.1%	8.0%	12.8%	7.7%
Massachusetts	4,273,275	84.8%	27.3%	17.1%	7.2%	19.5%	13.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

Growth and Development Patterns

Patterns and Trends

When Holland officially became a town in 1836, its small population was concentrated along the floodplain of the Quinebaug River. Early settlers had selected this location due to its suitability for farming. The soils in this area were fertile and the land was relatively level. As the town grew, the economy began to diversify and mills were built along the river to saw lumber and grind grain. Gradually the original settlement expanded and development began to spread outwards from this original population center.

Through most of its history, Holland was an agricultural community. Although agriculture and forestry still play an important economic and historical role within the community, Holland has evolved into a residential community where close to 90% of its residents are employed outside of the town. The town's proximity to major employment centers and its small town rural character make it a desirable location for future residential development

Today in Holland, residential development is concentrated along major roadways and Hamilton Reservoir. The land surrounding Hamilton Reservoir exhibits a pattern of development that is common in communities throughout Massachusetts. In these areas, small, narrow, rectangular building lots are clustered along the waterfront and accommodate small houses that were built to serve as summer vacation homes. In recent years, rising residential property values have led to an increase in the conversion of seasonal homes into year round residences. The consequence of this trend is often greater environmental pressure on the water ecosystem. Increased pollutants in the form of domestic run-off (fertilizers, household cleaners, and effluent seepage) create additional stress on an ecosystem that is already under stress from dense development along its shores.

Infrastructure

The Town of Holland has limited public infrastructure. The town's public infrastructure consists primarily of its road network and municipal buildings and offices such as the Town Hall, the public library, the elementary school, and the fire and police stations. There is no public sewer system and both private and public buildings are serviced by individual underground septic tanks. There are numerous unpaved roads, both public and private, surrounding Hamilton Reservoir. Many of these roads are located on steep slopes with soils that are susceptible to erosion. These unpaved roads pose a threat to Hamilton Reservoir as eroded soil is carried away by storm water run-off and deposited into the reservoir.

Transportation

Private automobiles are the primary method of travel. The town's main access roads are: Brimfield/Mashapaug Road, Stafford/Sturbridge Road and East Brimfield Road. Access to The

Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) is available in the neighboring town of Sturbridge. There is currently no form of public transportation in the town.

Water Supply Systems

Private and public buildings draw their water supply from individual shallow and deep well systems. There is an area in the northern section of town that possesses a high-yielding aquifer that could serve as a potential municipal water supply in the future. Protecting this water resource for future use involves preventing or limiting development over the aquifer recharge area through permanent protection status.

Sewer Service

There is no public sewer system and both private and public buildings are serviced by individual underground septic tanks. Currently, there are no plans to establish a public sewer system and treatment facility in the town. Inadequate and faulty septic systems pose a serious threat to Hamilton Reservoir, the town's most important water resource.

This plan presents several strategies for addressing this problem. These strategies include the adoption of a Lake Protection Overlay District, implementing a water-monitoring program to locate faulty septic systems, and adopting a Seasonal Conversion Bylaw that requires an assessment and upgrade of inadequate septic systems before a property can be converted to a year-round residence.

Long-term Development Patterns

Although Holland does not currently have a Master Plan, grant funding has been secured to begin the Master Planning process in September 2004. In the absence of a Master Plan, development in Holland is guided primarily by the Town of Holland Zoning Bylaw, the Town of Holland Zoning Map, the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, and the Holland Board of Health Regulations. The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act prevents development on wetlands and regulates development adjacent to wetlands. The Wetlands Protection Act is administered locally by the Holland Conservation Commission. Holland's Board of Health Regulations establishes health and safety requirements for residential development and commercial establishments.

Similar to the majority of communities in Massachusetts, Holland utilizes zoning as its primary method for regulating residential and commercial development. The town's zoning bylaw regulates the types of development that can occur within specific zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where these districts are located in the town. Holland's seven zoning districts are: Residential (R), Agricultural/Residential (AR), Garden Apartment (GA), Business (B), Rural Business (RB), Flood Plain (FP), and Special Conservancy District (SC). The majority of Holland's land area is designated as Agricultural /Residential (AR). The town's Business (B) district is designed to accommodate commercial development and is located primarily in the Town Center. In addition to the Business district in the Town Center, a small section of land on the eastern shore of Hamilton Reservoir is designated Business (B)(Town 2000).

Future development in Holland is likely to follow the pattern of development that has occurred within the town over the past several decades and will primarily be guided by the Town's Zoning Bylaw. This development pattern is characterized by expanding residential development along main and auxiliary roads and limited commercial development in the Town Center. Based on current development patterns, the main form of future development in Holland will be residential, primarily the construction of single-family homes. If the current real estate boom continues, the pace of residential development in Holland is likely to increase as developable land in neighboring communities becomes scarcer.