

Mount Holly Town Plan

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I. Introduction

A. Background

The purpose of this Mount Holly Town Plan, hereinafter referred to as “the Plan,” is to provide clear, written standards for orderly development that preserve the town’s distinctly rural character and appearance while providing community services and recreational and cultural opportunities. It is intended that the Plan be used positively as a tool in guiding the direction of growth and development in an economically feasible and environmentally appropriate way. Our success in achieving these goals will be measured by the future residents’ quality of life.

The Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act ([Title 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117](#)), hereinafter referred to as “the Act,” authorizes but does not require towns to develop plans. This Act, first enacted in 1967, sought to assist towns in their efforts to avoid some of the results of development that were dramatically changing the character of the state at that time. Since then, it has been the basis on which local communities, through thoughtful planning, have successfully managed growth and development to preserve Vermont’s natural beauty, a cornerstone of both its unique character and its economy.

Importantly, through the Act, the state does not discourage development but rather seeks to enable a town to:

1. Protect its residents from overcrowding, traffic, and loss of privacy and quiet
2. Direct growth and development to provide an optimal natural and cultural environment
3. Protect private property
4. Reduce property taxes

Also important, the state limits the authority of towns that do not plan. For example, towns without current plans are not eligible for certain state grant programs, may not adopt a capital improvement program or levy impact fees, can not adopt or amend land use regulations, and have no standing in State proceedings in which development proposals are evaluated for their impact upon the town.

This Plan is the vision for growth expressed by the town and is the underpinning for any local regulation. Under Vermont law, this Plan has a role in certain regulatory processes, but only if the plan contains specific policies

and standards to be enforced. General language supporting rural character is insufficient.

The best-known process in which this Plan has a regulatory role is Act 250, Vermont's state land use and development law. [Act 250](#) regulates development on parcels that are an acre or more in size in towns without both zoning and subdivision regulations ([10 V.S.A. § 6001](#)). Accordingly, this Plan is essential if Mount Holly is to have any say in state proceedings concerning development within the town.

The Act has been amended on several occasions since 1967. The first major revision occurred in 1988, with the passage of Act 200. The second major update occurred in 2004 as part of Act 115. These laws sought to integrate local, regional, and state agency planning in a bottom-up process; strengthened the role of town plans regarding local, regional, and state decision-making; and established state planning goals.

[24 V.S.A. § 4382](#) specifies twelve elements that must be included in this Plan. In addition to containing all the required elements, the Plan must also be consistent with a series of statutory goals listed in [24 V.S.A. § 4302](#). Consistency with the goals means that the goals have been considered and addressed in the process used to prepare this Plan, not necessarily that this Plan includes all the goals.

B. A Vision for this Plan

The vision for this Plan is to reflect the collective values and goals of the town's residents and to develop policies designed to guide future development in alignment with these values and goals. The official adoption of the Plan represents a conscious community decision about the town's future character, its priorities for land use, and its conservation of natural resources. It is based in large part on Mount Holly's sense of identity as a town and its residents' desire to carefully preserve those qualities that distinguish it.

This Plan will help ensure some local control over the future of our community. It directs state agencies to take only those actions in the town that are compatible with the goals and policies of the Plan.

This Plan sets forth goals and policies that establish a standard for review in Act 250 proceedings and other state regulatory processes. The language used is intended to be sufficiently clear for any citizen to understand and be guided accordingly. Our policies will be heeded by the state only if they are "mandatory in nature" (by using "shall") and contain sufficient specificity to withstand a legal challenge.

Additionally, this Plan describes future projects and tasks (“action items”) needed to meet the current and anticipated needs of the community. This Plan identifies these action items in indented and italicized text. Projects specifically listed in any approved plan of the town are given priority in federal and state grant funding. This is one of the most powerful non-regulatory functions of a plan. Grant funding is critical to maintaining existing infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, addressing deferred maintenance or replacement of community facilities, restoring historic structures, and making vital upgrades to the town that would otherwise be impossible to fund directly with local tax revenue.

Mount Holly’s residents believe strongly that their community is a unique and special place, a belief resulting in a sense of civic responsibility and shared commitment to the town’s welfare.

The unique and special character of Mount Holly is principally derived from the rural character of the community, its historical land uses and settlement patterns, and the natural beauty of its mountain setting, containing large areas of wooded and open land, ponds, wetlands, and other habitats.

Among other distinguishing characteristics of the town is its location along the spine of the Green Mountains, with two high-elevation ponds and thousands of acres of uninterrupted forest land. These lands and waters are home to a broad range of animal and plant species. Mount Holly sits between the northern and southern branches of state and national forests, and beginning in 1996 some private property owners in the town began creating a strategic “wildlife corridor” to bridge this gap by conserving their undeveloped lands through various means, including sales to the state and grants of conservation easements with rights of public access. This corridor has been key to ensuring sufficient continuous forest blocks needed by black bears and other large furbearing animals.

This Plan is designed to protect and reinforce all of these cultural and natural elements and, particularly, to preserve the rural nature of the town.

These aims are beneficial to both the individual landowner and the community at large, for it is the protection of the rural character and beautiful natural setting that underpins both the economic value and the aesthetic value of all land in the town. Achieving these aims may, from time to time, involve conflicts in specific situations between a landowner and the community. Adoption of clearly stated ordinances will help minimize such situations, and it is equally important that there be a variety of procedures and

forums for discussion and a willingness to listen respectfully to one another so that full and fair consideration is given to differing viewpoints.

Mount Holly today is facing increasing pressure to develop. Mount Holly is concerned about the impact of major projects within the town and surrounding areas. Our town is bisected by Vermont Route 103, one of the state's most important east-west travel corridors, which could easily bring development that conflicts with the town's historical settlement patterns. Mount Holly is also likely to experience development pressure in all areas of town due to the growth associated with the Vail Resorts' Okemo Mountain Resort.

Contributing to these pressures are recent advances in wastewater treatment technologies, which have made previously undevelopable land available for residential development, and major changes in communications technology. The arrival of cellular phone signal, being one of the few towns in the state to have 100% of homes served by broadband internet, and the pandemic-driven ability to work remotely, are all increasing pressure for new rural home sites in our town. In addition, as nearby towns see a proliferation of industrial-scale renewable energy generation sites, we wish to plan for the impact they would have on our town. It now becomes increasingly important to re-evaluate the town's goals and objectives and present them in a new Plan that accurately represents the town's best collective thinking.

Finally, Mount Holly anticipates that a changing climate poses multiple challenges likely to affect many aspects of our daily lives, from [changing growing conditions](#), to more [extreme and chaotic weather patterns](#) to [increasing numbers and varieties of invasive pests](#). Specific policies outlined in this Plan serve to address this serious concern.

The people of Mount Holly recognize that Mount Holly does not exist in isolation from the region and will be affected by what happens in the surrounding municipalities. However, this Plan does not suggest that Mount Holly should reflect the type and intensity of new development occurring elsewhere; rapid or incompatible growth will destroy those qualities that make Mount Holly unique. Through the implementation of the Plan, Mount Holly can contribute to the region and the State by protecting and preserving this special and increasingly rare place. In so doing, the town and its residents are exercising their best stewardship for these resources with which we have been so abundantly endowed.

II. Objectives

To achieve our vision, protect the natural environment, and guide future growth and development we identify the following goals:

1. Protect and preserve the rural nature, environment, scenic quality, and sense of community of Mount Holly.
2. Encourage, support, and maintain a community of residents and property owners with age, social, and economic diversity.
3. Address the town's changing needs through a continuous planning process involving input from members of the community.
4. Maintain the town's historic development pattern with a compact village center (tight, cohesive settlement patterns without residential strip development or rural sprawl) within a rural setting, surrounded by undeveloped forest land and open space areas.
5. Preserve the character of the village center with mixed uses at a scale appropriate to the architecture and historic character of Mount Holly.
6. Assure that any project to create or modify highways, roads, trails, and drives will be consistent with the rural character of the town, minimize the impact on the environment, foster desired development patterns, and ensure that the town and state roads permit safe travel within and through the town.
7. Assure that basic needs of health, safety, education, housing, and recreation will be met and maintained at appropriate levels to be inclusive of a diverse population, and per the Plan.
8. Allow for future growth opportunities in a way that will effectively meet community needs regarding education, highway, fire protection, first response, and other usual public services, but will not place an undue burden (financial, environmental, or otherwise) on the town to provide community facilities and services.
9. Require that, to the most reasonable extent possible, public utilities are located and maintained in such a way that they will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic quality, ecology, public health, and land values of the town.
10. Support diverse economic activity that will sustain a vibrant year-round resident population, while ensuring compliance with high environmental standards; minimizing traffic, congestion, noise, odor, and other disruptions of our tranquil rural setting; and aligning with the town's goals.
11. Encourage and preserve the use of working lands for agriculture and sustainable forestry to keep these resources productive, preserve the rural character of the historic landscape outside the village center,

support the local economy, and increase the availability of local products.

12. Protect and seek to expand large unfragmented forest blocks, habitat connectors, significant natural communities and habitats, vernal pools, lowland wetlands, and riparian corridors.
13. Encourage the development of cultural, educational, recreational, and performing arts programs and activities that may enrich the lives of town residents and visitors, and make the town attractive as a year-round destination.
14. Protect and enhance areas and opportunities for outdoor recreational activities.
15. Protect significant educational, scenic, environmental, recreational, historical, architectural, and archeological features.
16. Conserve and protect key scenic environmental features including open spaces, steep slopes, notable ridgelines and peaks, dark skies, and clean air and water.
17. Combat aquatic and terrestrial invasive species to preserve our natural environment and outdoor recreational opportunities.
18. Encourage energy efficiency, energy conservation, and non-polluting renewable energy production.
19. Prohibit incompatible and uncoordinated development activity and mitigate other development that may adversely impact any goals within this plan.
20. Provide for safe, convenient, economical, and energy-efficient transportation systems.

III. Land Use

A. Land Use Areas

1. Forests and Forest Blocks

Forest and timber lands cover much of Mount Holly. Healthy forests stabilize soils and slopes, prevent flooding, mitigate climate change, provide valuable timber, wildlife habitat, and recreational resources, filter air pollutants, and have important recreational, economic, and aesthetic value. Indeed, our forests are key to our economic well-being. Consequently, land use and development of forested lands in Mount Holly should maintain natural vegetative cover to the greatest extent possible. Steep slopes and higher elevations are more sensitive and require higher levels of protection and review. Logging, timber, and forestry activities must, at a minimum, follow the State's recommended Accepted Management Practices for maintaining water quality. In addition, loggers should employ strategies that ensure a long-term sustainable yield of timber, maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems, and minimize or prevent adverse impacts upon the land.

There are a variety of non-regulatory tools available for the protection of forestland. Much of the privately held forest land in Mount Holly is enrolled in Vermont's Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program. See also [Conservation](#).

The town encourages local participation in Vermont's Managed Forest Land Use Value Program, commonly known as the "Current Use Program," to support the viability and maintenance of our forest land.

Act 146 changed the UVA Program by adding a subcategory to Managed Forestland called Reserve Forestland. This change values and accelerates the development of old forest conditions in a pattern and at a scale that we would benefit from and are sorely lacking on our landscape, and it does so in a meaningful but conservative way that preserves working lands as the primary focus of the Managed Forestland category of the UVA program.

Maple syrup is an important non-timber forest product in Mount Holly. While the production of maple syrup from sap is an agricultural activity that occurs in the sugarhouse, the management of a woodlot for sap production is a forestry activity.

The town encourages responsible and sustainable maple syrup production.

Climate change imperils the forest products and maple sugaring industry in various ways. Extreme weather stresses trees. A warming climate may eventually make Mount Holly unsuitable for Sugar Maple and increases the risk of damage from invasive species.

A warming climate also makes Mount Holly, like the rest of south-central Vermont, more hospitable to invasive insects and plants that threaten the environmental health and economic productivity of our forests.

See *also* [Management of Invasive Species](#).

Forest blocks are areas of contiguous forest and other natural communities and habitats, such as wetlands, ponds, and cliffs, that are not fragmented by roads, development, or agriculture¹.

While they may appear superficially similar to smaller and more fragmented forests, contiguous blocks of forest provide many additional benefits. They provide a myriad of ecological functions for fish, wildlife, plants, and all the natural processes that sustain them and they contribute significantly to the local community's interests in its natural heritage, identity, and working landscape. These lands represent much of what makes life in this area unique and enjoyable. Further, they provide extremely valuable connections for people to enjoy and appreciate the land and its abundant resources through low-impact recreational activities.

To preserve their myriad contributions to our natural and cultural heritage for future generations, the town should work to inform landowners of the values of forest blocks and offer assistance for any conservation actions that are in keeping with the town's interests.

Maintaining and/or enhancing large, intact forests (such as by increasing acreage, external connectivity, or ecological functions) has a multitude of benefits, such as:

- Clean air & water
- Wildlife and plant habitat
- Hunting / fishing / recreation opportunities
- Flood resilience
- Scenic vistas
- Carbon storage and climate resilience

¹ Sorenson, E. and J. Osborne. 2014. Vermont Habitat Blocks & Wildlife Corridors, an analysis using geographic information systems. Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

Priority interior forest blocks are shown on the map included in this plan. The primary goal for these areas is to maintain the interior forest condition by avoiding permanent fragmentation from development. Limited development on the margins of large forest blocks may be permitted, provided it does not reduce connectivity between blocks or encroach into the forest block interior. Any development resulting in significant fragmentation of a priority forest block shall require mitigation.

The town shall conserve and maintain or enhance existing large forest blocks.

2. Recreation

Due to Mount Holly's location along the spine of the Green Mountains between large tracts of public land, the presence of an internationally recognized ski area, and its notoriety as one of the snowiest places in Vermont: our outdoor recreation culture is strong. Mount Holly hosts a wide variety of dispersed outdoor recreation activities.

Fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and various other activities have been constructed and maintained in the area immediately behind **Mount Holly Elementary School**. Swings and other pieces of playground equipment are maintained there as well. A major renovation of the fields was undertaken beginning in the summer of 1990 with the assistance of the Army National Guard Engineers from Springfield, Vermont. New playground equipment was installed by volunteers in 2005. The use of these lands by the public is restricted to non-school program hours.

The **Green Mountain National Forest** offers many miles of walking, hiking, and cross-country skiing along ancient roads and forest trails. Access is primarily from the Meadow Brook Trailhead. There is very little parking at the end of Greendale Road but access to trails is quite good. Other parking areas are located in pull-offs along VT-155 near Government Road, and the National Forest sign near the Weston line.

The town should work with USFS to improve parking, access, and signage.

Approximately 578 acres of **Okemo Mountain Resort** lie in the Town of Mount Holly on land leased from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. This encompasses the Summit Lodge, Upper Mountain Road, and a variety of downhill ski trails on Ludlow Mountain (referred to in this plan as Okemo Mountain as it is more commonly known).

Activities within the Okemo Mountain Resort lease area shall not reduce or cause harm to the critical habitat that surrounds it, or reduce opportunities for dispersed, non-commercial outdoor recreation. The lease area shall not expand unless it can be demonstrated that no such harm or reductions would occur.

3532 acres of **Okemo State Forest** (OSF) lies along most of the eastern boundary of Mount Holly. It is open to the public for dispersed, non-motorized use. The Healdville Trail is 2.8 miles from the trailhead parking lot at the end of Station Road to the summit fire tower. Access to the southern end of OSF is afforded from a parking area near the end of Government Road (off VT-155). Access to Buttermilk Falls, the public access lands of P.K. Brown, and the northern section of OSF is available from a parking area on the legal trail at the north end of Buttermilk Falls Road.

Private property owners have conserved at least 1700 acres in Mount Holly through an easement to the State under the U.S. **Forest Legacy** program, which grants the public a right of access for dispersed recreational activities, such as hunting, hiking, bird-watching, and cross-country skiing. The largest of these areas is 780 acres owned by Farm and Wilderness Conservation in the area around Lake Ninevah. Although the easement prohibits motorized and mechanized activities, it has an exception that authorizes the property owners to allow snowmobile use on designated VAST trails (see below).

Three ponds located entirely or mostly within the town are especially remarkable for their high elevation and minimal shoreline development, making them ideal for wildlife habitat and aesthetic enjoyment of their natural surroundings.

20 of **Tiny Pond's** approximately 35 aquatic acres lie in Mount Holly. It offers backcountry swimming and fishing, accessible from the Village of Tyson by a 1.3-mile public trail through the Tiny Pond Wildlife Management Area.

Lake Ninevah is a 176-acre pond in Mount Holly. Public boat launching and shore fishing access is available from the Joseph Wiltshire Boat Ramp, off Hastings Lane, maintained by The Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife. Motorboats are subject to a 5 MPH speed limit, and kayaks and canoes are the predominant types of boats. Farm and Wilderness Conservation (FWC), which conserves most of this lake's shoreline, employs greeters at the boating access to help reduce the risk of invasive species, such as Eurasian Milfoil and zebra mussels, being introduced via boats coming from other lakes. The greeter program is partially funded by the state through an Aquatic Invasive Species control grant prepared by FWC and then submitted to the state by the town,

and FWC pays the balance of the cost from its own resources. Eurasian Milfoil was twice found in the lake, but FWC was able to successfully eradicate it before it became widespread. There is currently no public swimming area.

Star Lake is a 62-acre pond lying in the Village of Belmont. Public boating and swimming access are available from the 1.4-acre **Star Lake Recreation Area** located off Lake Street. The pond supports populations of golden shiners, bullhead catfish, pumpkinseed, rainbow trout, and largemouth bass. Located at the northeast end of the lake, the **Star Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA)** is a 92-acre parcel of land owned by the State of Vermont and managed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. The WMA includes approximately 792 feet of lake frontage and wetlands associated with the lake. The WMA is forested with a mix of hardwoods and softwoods, and a varied habitat supports a diversity of wildlife, including a number of reptiles and amphibians in the wetlands. In recent years, the lake has had an abundance of vegetation including invasive Eurasian Milfoil, which the town and private organizations have attempted to address through various means. See also [Recreational Facilities](#).

The town should work with the State, private landowners, and other organizations to protect and enhance these ponds both as scenic, aesthetic, and ecological resources and as sites for tranquil recreational activities.

The town should continue to collaborate with and support private landowners and organizations, and seek aid from the State through the Aquatic Invasive Species grant program and other such programs when available, in combating the introduction of invasive species to these ponds and, where possible, eradicating them if they are introduced.

See also [Management of Invasive Species](#).

Snowmobiling is a popular recreational activity in town. The **Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Inc. (VAST)** maintains a network of snowmobile trails across public and private land throughout the state. The trails in Mount Holly are maintained by volunteers from the Mount Holly Snow Flyers Snowmobile Club. The majority of trails are located on private land and are permitted only through the generosity of property owners. Unless specifically authorized by the landowner, VAST trails are for winter snow-season use only. Permission to use snowmobile trails does not extend to the use of these trails by Fat Bikes, ATVs, four-wheelers, motor or mountain bikes,

hiking, or other uses unless specifically authorized by the landowner and club, and properly signed to educate user groups, and sanctioned by VAST.

The town should work with VAST, Vermont Snow Trails Conservancy/Charitable Trust, Mount Holly Conservation Trust, private landowners, and other organizations toward the goal of permanent protection of the VAST Trail through the town.

The **Catamount Trail Association** (CTA) maintains a north-south trail for backcountry ski touring. Sections 9 and 10 of the trail pass through Mount Holly—primarily over public land. The trail is maintained by volunteers.

The town should work with the CTA, and private landowners toward the goal of permanent protection of the Catamount Trail.

Class 4 highways and legal trails are popular and important places where residents hike, bike, ride horses, and enjoy nature. See also [Highways and Legal Trails](#).

The town should not lose, give away, or further improve class 4 highways and legal trails so they may continue to be used for recreation.

The town should convert unused highways to legal trail status rather than discontinue or extinguish them, so they may be used by hunters, dog walkers, bicyclists, horseback riders, and other non-motorized recreational users.

Climate change imperils winter snow-season recreation such as snowmobiling and skiing.

Surprisingly, the town has very few opportunities for walking and well-marked low-impact hiking in a natural setting.

The town should look for opportunities to create open forest land and other opportunities to enhance access to outdoor recreation in the town.

See also [Recreation Facilities](#).

3. Agriculture

With several working farms in the town, agriculture remains essential to Mount Holly's working landscape and is cherished by residents and visitors alike, even though it is not as dominant a land use as it has been in the past. Working farms are not only a key element of the town's rural appearance, but

they also are an important source of high-quality, locally grown food. It is important to conserve agricultural lands for these reasons and to provide for potential future needs. Therefore, the town will pursue all available tools to protect agriculture as a viable use of land and to ensure that high-quality agricultural soils will continue to be available in the future. Indeed, many believe that more localized food production will be a key component of future economic vitality in our region.

Proposed subdivision designs should preserve agricultural resources.

The town, primarily through subdivision review, shall carefully evaluate the presence of agricultural soils of primary and statewide significance and take measures to protect them. This may involve clustering of lots such that agricultural soils remain on a common conservation parcel.

Local farmers rely on and lease open space for hay and silage cultivation. Open spaces should be preserved and protected. See also [Open Spaces](#).

Without direct regulatory jurisdiction, municipalities in Vermont must rely on the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to enforce its Accepted Agricultural Practices and Best Management Practices for agricultural operations to ensure the protection of water quality.

The town encourages local participation in Vermont's Agricultural and Managed Forest Land Use Value Program, commonly known as the "Current Use Program," to support the viability and maintenance of our agricultural land.

The Vermont Right to Farm Law² protects farm operators from nuisance suits against long-standing agricultural activities that are consistent with the law and good agricultural practices.

4. Residence

Mount Holly is a rural town that is becoming increasingly residential. New building lots are typically created through parcel "subdivision." In 1998, the town adopted the current Subdivision Regulations to encourage more orderly growth.

The town should adopt policies and make efforts to avoid a suburban residential growth pattern.

² [12 V.S.A. §§ 5751-5754](#)

The 25-year-old Subdivision Regulations are increasingly out of date, overlap with State wastewater and potable water supply rules³, and are out of step with current needs and priorities. Out-of-date regulations are inefficient, costly, and confusing for applicants and impede supporting the policies and goals of this Plan.

The town should modernize the Subdivision Regulations.

To keep land in as large blocks as possible to retain Mount Holly's rural character and "working landscape" appearance, settlement shall be encouraged in the Belmont Village Center and immediate area.

Wherever development occurs, grouped development shall be encouraged. When land subdivisions occur, the subdivider should attempt to place houses in a small area grouped together while leaving the majority of the parcel undeveloped. This allows for retaining the rural appearance of the town and continues to foster the agricultural and forestry uses of the land. Development of this nature would provide the landowner with the same number of housing units while leaving most of the land open for traditional uses.

Conventional subdivision design discourages agriculture, creates rural sprawl, chops up open space into private yards, fragments wildlife habitat and recreational trail systems, and makes it difficult or impossible to provide efficient public services. It also does little to foster a sense of community or sense of place.

Developers shall be encouraged to use the "cluster design" principle. Cluster development is a type of subdivision design that tries to optimize lot layout to allow more of the site to be used for agriculture, forestry, private open space, natural resource protection, or similar open, undeveloped uses. The location of the developed and open areas should be based on the characteristics of the specific site.

New residential development proposals shall identify a building envelope that is located and sized to minimize site disturbance and to avoid fragmentation and adverse impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and resources, such as prominent ridgelines, steep slopes, ponds and wetlands, vernal pools, and habitat areas; and to avoid or minimize the impact on scenic vistas and viewsheds. Development also should seek to avoid significant increases in vehicular traffic and congestion on roadways and shall seek to preserve the rural and tranquil character of the community

³ [10 V.S.A. § 1976](#).

Proposed subdivision designs should demonstrate efficient provision of public services.

5. Commerce and Industry

Commerce and industry shall be located in appropriate areas that contribute to an orderly growth pattern, are served efficiently by town services, and are compatible and consistent with the rural character of the area. Utilities, roads, and other essential services shall be available and adequately serve a project’s needs. Commerce, industry, and related activities shall afford maximum protection to adjacent properties, and any nearby residential areas (existing or proposed). Traffic routes and access points shall be compatible with nearby residential areas. Commerce and industry shall provide adequate green space and landscaping to maintain the open space character of the area and to effectively screen commercial and industrial activity from other adjacent uses.

Any non-residential uses that adjoin residential land must preserve and, where necessary, add substantial natural screening and buffering to minimize or prevent adverse impacts upon adjoining residential lands. Measures should be taken to prevent or minimize impacts including but not limited to noise, odor, vehicular traffic and congestion, heat, light, glare, dust, vibration, overshadowing, and security risks. Non-residential uses must not channel significant traffic onto local or connector streets in or near residential areas, or on rights-of-way through or across neighboring residential property.

Parking facilities should be designed, consolidated, and reconfigured in ways that maximize the effective use of land while providing appropriate design, pedestrian and vehicular links, and natural screening. Consideration must be given both to patron traffic, as well as service and emergency vehicles. Parking areas must be screened or hidden as much as possible, ideally behind buildings, and with trees and shrubbery. Creative landscaping and screening should also be used as a buffer between parking lots and sidewalks or residential areas, and to provide delineated pedestrian pathways, screen cars from the road, provide shade, and provide year-round color and aesthetic beauty.

New development proposals shall identify a building envelope that is located and sized to minimize site disturbance and to avoid adverse impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and resources, such as prominent ridgelines, steep slopes, ponds and wetlands, vernal pools, and habitat areas, and to preserve the rural and tranquil character of the community.

6. Public and Semi-Public uses

Vermont's tradition of open access is as old as statehood, and the values that support this tradition are fundamental to our strong sense of community. The Vermont constitution has protected the right to hunt, fish, and trap on open, private land since its drafting in 1793.

Furthermore, Vermont's landowner liability statutes are designed to encourage public access by protecting landowners from liability. Provided that a landowner does not charge a fee, they are generally not liable for any property damage or personal injury to a person who uses their property for recreation.

In recognition of these rights and privileges, the town encourages landowners to allow responsible and respectful dispersed public recreation of their property. The town recommends asking for landowner permission before using or accessing private lands.

The town should continue to improve the accuracy of town parcel boundary maps to provide more accurate information to hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts.

However, despite this, we have seen a steady reduction in the amount of land with open access and we risk losing an important aspect of our culture. Reasons for this include: more land being converted to residential uses, landowners responding to irresponsible uses, increased strip development, and demographic changes. The town supports a variety of strategies to address this including using cluster development strategies, developing improved subdivision regulations, encouraging public access in conservation easements, and increasing public ownership of land.

Some important public lands include:

- The **United States of America** owns 3382 acres in Mount Holly, part of the Green Mountain National Forest.
- The **State of Vermont** owns 3902 total acres in Mount Holly, including: 46 acres of Tiny Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA), 92 acres of Star Lake WMA, 232 acres of the new "Doolittle" WMA, and 3532 acres of Okemo State Forest.
- The **Town of Mount Holly** owns 6.28 acres: the Star Lake Recreation Area, part of the Municipal Center, and a couple of other small lots.
- Private landowners have enrolled at least 1700 acres in the U.S. Forest Legacy program, under which permanent conservation easements to

the State including a right of public access for certain dispersed non-motorized recreational activities. See also [Recreation](#).

The town should participate in the preparation of plans for federal and state lands, such as the long-range management plans (LRMP) for Okemo State Forest and Coolidge West Management Unit.

Over the years, public lands have been acquired through significant private generosity.

7. Open Spaces

Open spaces and undeveloped lands are a defining characteristic of the rural Vermont landscape and a testament to our agricultural heritage. The Mount Holly community is united in support of retaining our rural character and has repeatedly asserted this through a series of community surveys reaching back decades. Unfortunately, as formerly agricultural land moves into residential usage, with the attendant proliferation of rural sprawl and residential strip development due to the lack of land use planning, these open spaces are at risk. Loss of open space adversely impacts recreation, economic development, scenic values, and wildlife. Subdivision proposals shall demonstrate the preservation of open space, such as through cluster development with shared access to open spaces.

The town should consider updating its subdivision regulations to encourage the preservation of open space.

8. Wetlands and Riparian Areas

Wetlands provide a transition between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water. A wetland has one or more of the following three attributes: (1) at least periodically, the area supports predominantly hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation; (2) the substrate is predominantly undrained hydric (wet) soil; or (3) the substrate is non-soil, and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year. Benefits provided by freshwater wetlands include flood and stormwater control, critical fish and wildlife habitat, protection of subsurface water resources, provision of recreational opportunities, pollution abatement, erosion control, educational and scientific research opportunities, open space and aesthetic appreciation, and provision of nutrients for freshwater food cycles. As such, wetlands should be protected from development. Before changes are made to streams, rivers, wetlands, or riparian land, consultation with appropriate state agencies is required. Streams and rivers are not just passageways for water; they are a

fundamental part of our ecosystem, and a watershed approach to land use management is important in protecting these resources. In addition to riparian buffers, setbacks from lake and pond surface waters should also be required.

The town should seek to increase the number of miles of naturally vegetated riparian streambanks and lakeshores in town. Natural vegetation should ultimately consist of native woody plant species except where natural meadows occur, usually in association with wetlands.

The State of Vermont maintains a Significant Wetlands Inventory (VSWI) Map, which is [available online](#). All wetlands depicted on the VSWI Map, are under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Wetland Rules (VWR). However, wetlands not on the VSWI Map may also be subject to other state regulations, and/or regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. There are a great many currently unmapped wetlands in the town.

The town supports improving the mapping of wetlands under the jurisdiction of the VWR.

The town shall protect wetlands from encroaching development, including roads and driveways, and disturbances harmful to wetland-dependent wildlife by restricting development and specific activities in wetlands and by maintaining and/or establishing undisturbed, naturally vegetated buffers around their edges.

Vernal pools are small wetlands characterized by a lack of vegetation (though they may support some herbaceous wetland species) resulting from the persistence of standing water for a portion of the year. Vernal Pools are regulated by the State of Vermont under the VWR. There are a great many currently unmapped vernal pools in the town. Vernal pools that are identified and mapped through ypatlas.org are hereby adopted by reference.

The town shall provide for the long-term stewardship and/or protection of vernal pools and associated amphibian populations.

The town shall provide for the long-term stewardship and/or protection or restoration of forested habitat between pools to provide dispersal corridors for dependent species, particularly amphibians.

Vernal pools shall be protected from encroaching development, including roads and driveways, by retaining and/or establishing adequate forested

habitat around all vernal pools in town. Dispersal corridors connecting adjacent pools will be protected to ensure the long-term viability of amphibian populations.

Development in proximity to known or suspected class I or II wetlands shall include a wetlands mapping.

Riparian areas are found at the transition from upland to a body of water such as a pond, river, or stream. They are typically low-lying areas adjacent to perennial waters or aquatic systems that are subject to periodic flooding. These areas include flood plains and river corridors.

The town recognizes that maintaining a healthy watershed and limiting and controlling development in flood-prone locations and along streamside slopes are key elements of protecting our community from flood and fluvial erosion damage. Consequently, healthy watersheds and controlled development in riparian areas must be priorities.

Development in flood plains and river corridors is regulated by the Mount Holly Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw. See *also* [Flood Resilience](#). In general, new development shall not be allowed or shall be limited in these areas.

Development proposals should include vegetative buffers around adjacent riparian areas and surface waters—including wetlands, lakes, ponds, and streams. See *also* [Scenic Areas \(Lake Wise Program\)](#).

Activities that alter the natural form and function of surface water, such as filling, dredging, damming, channelization, removal of riparian vegetation, and removal of large woody debris, shall be prohibited in all developments subject to review by the Planning Commission or Board of Adjustment. Furthermore, all permits (including conditional use permits and subdivision approval) will be issued on condition that the developer submit proof of compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations pertaining to surface waters, including, but not limited to: Section 404 Clean Water Act, Section 401 Clean Water Act, 10 V.S.A Chapter 47 Vermont Water Pollution Control Act, 10 V.S.A Chapter 41 Regulation of Stream Flow, 10 V.S.A 43 Dams, 10 V.S.A. Chapter 111 Section 4607 Obstructing Streams, and 10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 Vermont's Land Use and Development Law (Act 250).

9. Groundwater / Water Source Protection

Hydrologic features, aquifer recharge areas, and watersheds that replenish surface and groundwater supplies providing clean water for public consumption must be protected from incompatible development.

The primary source for the historic public water supply for Belmont Village, known as the Mechanicsville Aqueduct, is a set of springs located on the northwest slope of Hedgehog Hill. The public use of this water supply shall be maintained. Development or land clearing within this source's mapped water source protection area shall not be allowed.

All septic systems shall meet Agency of Natural Resources wastewater and water supply rules to avoid contamination of groundwater.

10. Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity

Wildlife habitat is the natural area inhabited by an animal, plant, or other type of organism. The basic elements of habitat include food, water, and shelter. Habitat is also a function of the physical environment related to factors such as temperature, elevation, soil condition, and hydrology. Habitat occurs at several scales including the landscape scale (e.g., large areas of a contiguous forest), the community scale (e.g., deep rush marshes), and the fine-scale (e.g., snags and logs). Some organisms (e.g., black bears) require large-area habitats to thrive.

Criterion 8(A) of the State of Vermont land use regulations known as Act 250 ([10 V.S.A. § 6086](#)) protects "Necessary Wildlife Habitat."

We define those areas as including:

- Wildlife corridor connecting GMNF in the south to Plymouth in the north
- Mast stands
- Ledge habitat
- Alpine spruce-fir forest
- Deer wintering areas
- Shrubland
- Early successional forest
- Grasslands
- Vernal pools and other aquatic and riparian habitat
- State-designated significant habitat and natural communities

The Vermont Use Value Appraisal (UVA) program (aka Current Use) now recognizes critical wildlife habitat as one of six Environmentally Significant

Treatment Areas (ESTAs) for which landowners can designate portions of their UVA-qualifying lands.

Wildlife road crossings that provide connectivity over or under roads are critically important between adjacent forest blocks and along linear riparian area networks. In addition, allowing for the passage of aquatic organisms through bridges or culverts is critical for the functioning of the network of rivers and streams.

The town should identify critical road crossings and update road management standards to allow specifically designated areas where: vegetation is allowed up to the road edge, ditching is limited, guardrails are not present, traffic speed is limited, and road width is minimized.

The town should convert unused or impassible roads to legal trail status to improve habitat connectivity.

The town should apply for grants (such as the US Federal Highway Administration Wildlife Crossings Program) to study and identify wildlife crossing hot spots and possible corrective actions.

Connectivity Blocks are the network of forest blocks that together provide terrestrial connectivity at the regional scale (across Vermont and to adjacent states and Québec) and connectivity between all Vermont biophysical regions.

Similar to Interior Forest Blocks, it is important to maintain the interior forest conditions in Connectivity Blocks by avoiding permanent interior forest fragmentation resulting from development. Connectivity within forest blocks will remain high if they remain unfragmented. For Connectivity Blocks, it is also critically important to maintain or enhance the structural and functional connectivity that occurs on the margins of these blocks where they border other blocks. This can be accomplished by maintaining forest cover along the margins and by limiting development in these areas of block-to-block connectivity. Any development resulting in significant fragmentation of a priority connectivity block shall require mitigation.

Riparian corridors are the connected network of riparian areas in which natural vegetation occurs, providing natural cover for wildlife movement and plant migration. Many wildlife species use riparian corridors for travel to find suitable habitats to meet their life requisites, but certain species are almost entirely restricted to riparian areas, including mink, otter, beaver, and wood turtles.

Habitat connectors, including priority connective blocks, are shown on the map included in this plan. Any development resulting in significant fragmentation or loss of priority connectivity shall require mitigation.

The town shall discourage the fragmentation of wildlife habitat.

Proposed subdivision designs shall demonstrate the preservation of continuous areas of wildlife habitat and create and maintain links between such areas.

11. Conservation

Our long-term success as a livable community depends upon how well we maintain and enhance our unique natural resource assets. Natural resources have inherent value above and beyond their perceived value from a human perspective. Natural resources are the foundation for life and the natural processes that form essential interconnections between all living species and earth systems. What happens to one resource invariably affects others, including human systems. Mount Holly's success over the past 200 years is inextricably linked to its natural resources and natural beauty. Thus, even from a purely human perspective, the town must take the long view, and protect and conserve its natural resources.

To advance the goals of this plan, non-regulatory strategies shall be employed whenever possible, such as:

- Encouraging landowners to have a management plan for their forest lands.
- Encouraging private land conservation.
- Establishing open forest land.
- Promoting succession planning, to ensure that forest lands are not divided up into small parcels during intergenerational transfer.

The town encourages landowners to seek the assistance of a local conservation organization (e.g., Mount Holly Conservation Trust or Farm and Wilderness Conservation) to learn more about the different ways that they can conserve their lands.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a federal grant program to protect forestlands from conversion to non-forest uses. The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation working in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service is the State Lead Agency for Vermont's Forest Legacy Program. The program is entirely voluntary. Landowners who wish to participate may either sell the property as fee simple title (all rights), or only a portion of the property

rights and retain ownership of the land. The use of conservation easements allows the land to remain in private ownership and ensures that important public values such as wildlife habitat, natural areas, forest resources, and outdoor recreation opportunities are protected. Mount Holly is home to one of the most notable achievements of the FLP in Vermont, an effort to connect the northerly and southerly units of the Green Mountain National Forest, known as the Mount Holly Wildlife Corridor.

Conservation areas include land subject to one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Shallow soils; or
2. Moderate Slopes (20–30% grades); or
3. High water table; or
4. Flood plains; or
5. Deer yards; or
6. Core forest; or
7. Wildlife corridor; or
8. Bear production habitat; or
9. High elevation (2,000–2,300 feet); or
10. Shoreland buffer areas (within 250 feet of the mean water level).

Development in these areas shall be avoided or minimized whenever possible, and if it cannot be avoided or minimized, then its impact shall be offset.

Protected areas are identified by their locally significant or irreplaceable qualities, such as

1. Ridgelines; or
2. Slopes greater than 30%; or
3. High elevation (over 2,300 feet); or
4. Surface waters and wetlands.

These protected areas are generally not suitable for development.

Land identified in this Plan (and included maps) as desirable for future conservation is a powerful tool for land owners to seek private and public (e.g., Vermont Housing & Conservation Board) funding for conservation efforts.

Landowners adjacent to publicly and privately conserved land shall be encouraged and supported by the town to conserve their land.

This Plan includes simultaneous goals to protect and preserve the natural and rural environment and to encourage certain forms of economic development. Any proposed development shall apply a [mitigation hierarchy](#) (avoid,

minimize, and offset impacts) to goals or resources identified in this Plan, the Regional Plan, or the State planning goals.

Impact offset may take the form of permanent conservation of equivalent land.

Temporary conservation of private land is available to property owners through the State's Use Value program (also known as the Current Use program), which provides tax reductions in exchange for restrictions on development. Under this program, land is appraised based on its value for wood and food production, instead of its value for development, and the tax deduction is used as an incentive instead of imposing restrictions.

Conservation of land can also be achieved through restrictions placed in deeds of conveyance. For example, Belmont Public Playground was conveyed to the town on the condition that it "shall forever be maintained, conserved and improved for use as a public playground."⁴

In 1922, Elma Bowen conveyed lands, once known as the Ray Farm and Townsend Lot, to the Yale University School of Forestry to "be kept as a forest in memory of Lieutenant Joseph Brown Bowen, class of 1917."⁵ The 435-acre **Bowen Forest** is managed by the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. While this deed restriction doesn't meet most standards for land conservation, the School does not have any plans to develop the land. It is the policy and desire of the town to collaborate with Yale so that this land may be permanently conserved and protected.

The town should consider establishing a program that requires developers to pay a fee toward the protection or restoration of town-owned open space lands, forests, parks, or recreation areas.

B. Community Facilities and Services

Both residential and commercial land use development places additional burdens on town resources and infrastructure.

The town shall require that proposals for development must address the impacts of growth on fire, emergency and other public safety services, and roads, and prohibit new development that exceeds the town's ability to provide community facilities and services.

Developments that impact public services should be permitted only if

⁴ Mount Holly Land Records Volume 54, pages 366-367.

⁵ Mount Holly Land Records Volume 23, pages 458-459.

it can be shown that such impacts will not subject taxpayers to any excessive economic hardships.

The town should continue to support and appropriate funds to defray the costs of the operation of Mount Holly Library and Mount Holly Historical Museum.

The town should consider establishing an impact fee program that requires developers to pay a fee toward the provisioning of community facilities and services.

C. Village and Municipal Centers

Mount Holly today has two primary focal points of population and services: the Village of Belmont and the Municipal Center.

The **Village of Belmont** is a historical settlement that was known as Mechanicsville before the year 1911. It is centered at the intersection of Belmont Road, Tarbellville Road, Maple Hill Road, and Church Street. The village consists of many historic buildings serving commercial, civil, social, and residential uses.

The Village is and shall continue to be a hub of social and economic activity. It hosts the town's only general store, library, community center, museum, church, Odd Fellows Hall, village green, park, and public swimming area.

The Village earned a Vermont Village Center Designation in 2003 that was renewed in 2016. It is due for renewal by April 2024. Benefits of the program include priority consideration for state grants, eligibility for Neighborhood Development Areas, and a variety of tax credits for revitalization and improvements. These incentives are an important factor in maintaining and enhancing the traditional Vermont development pattern of a compact village center surrounded by rural countryside, attracting new businesses and vitality to the community, and meeting the land use goals of this Plan.

The town shall renew and maintain the Belmont Village Center Designation.

The current boundary of the village center designation does not follow parcel boundary lines, nor does it encompass the entire public park, and it does not include much easily developable land.

The town should encourage the state to expand and realign the village center designation boundary.

One of the key advantages of a village center is having services and amenities within easy walking distance. Efforts should be made to enhance safe and accessible pedestrian travel within the village center with sidewalks.

The town should develop a Belmont village pedestrian travel plan.

Bicycle riding is an increasingly popular form of recreation in the town, as well as a good way to get exercise and reduce automobile use while doing errands.

The town should consider bicycle safety as part of its village travel plan.

Enhanced public parking that fits the character of the Village has been identified as necessary for the revitalization of the general store and the Village as a whole. Wherever possible, on-street parking should be encouraged over designated parking lots. Locating utility lines underground and re-locating storm drains, particularly in the approaches to the Belmont/Tarbellville/Maple Hill/Church intersection, should be pursued.

The town should develop a Belmont village parking plan.

Residential uses including, but not limited to, single-family and multi-family dwellings as well as small, low-impact commercial operations with appropriate buffering in keeping with the village character shall be encouraged. Development should be compact and should provide certain amenities, such as public spaces, to keep Belmont Village an attractive and comfortable place in which to live.

New development within Belmont Village must provide for landscaping and natural screening and maximize possibilities for pedestrian and bicycle travel. The intent of this is to encourage a mixture of residential and commercial development in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will contribute to the economic vitality of Mount Holly while preserving a sense of proportion in the Village Center. New development should also be designed to include shared green space, driveways, parking, and water and septic systems.

The desired development density and vitality may be difficult to achieve because the Village does not have a public water supply or wastewater disposal system. The land use pattern of the village, consisting of very small lots, makes it a challenge for owners to provide and maintain both on-site wells and wastewater disposal. This has proven to be a barrier to growth and has reduced the vitality of the community. See also [Water and Wastewater](#).

Whenever possible, public investments and state and federal funding/grants shall be utilized to make improvements to, create new, or expand existing

infrastructure within Belmont Village. These investments shall be made to support the existing character of the Village, as well as planned growth.

The town should investigate the impact of re-establishing historical hamlets or establishing new village areas. Possible areas include East Wallingford, Mount Holly, or Hortonville.

The Belmont Village Plan, produced through a FY2022 Municipal Planning Grant, is incorporated into this Plan by reference.

The **municipal center** is located along School Street near the intersection of Belmont Road and VT-103. It hosts the Town Office, Fire Department station, former Rescue Squad station, the Mount Holly School, the Town Garage, and a Post Office.

The proximity of the municipal center to VT-103 makes it well-suited to serve as a transportation hub for the town. Opportunities to create a park-and-ride lot, bus stop, electric vehicle charging station, and other commercial activities, should be explored.

Efforts should be made to ensure safe pedestrian travel throughout the center such as by providing sidewalks.

The emergency services facilities have reached an age and state of repair where maintenance has become a burden. The stations are not adequate for future anticipated needs and new equipment.

The town should work with the Fire Department to determine requirements and funding for replacement facilities.

We anticipate that the Town Office will need expansion or replacement, perhaps within the next 10 years, to provide adequate space to hold public meetings and increase vault space, among others. To reduce costs and overhead, opportunities to create a multipurpose government building, which may also host emergency services, should be explored.

The town should seek funding to complete a master plan for the redevelopment of the municipal center.

The Mount Holly School hosts a variety of outdoor learning and recreation opportunities on-site.

The town should work with the School board to look for ways to enhance access to outdoor education and recreation opportunities near or adjacent to the School.

Mount Holly does not currently have any childcare services or facilities other than the school pre-K program. Having the facility in proximity to both the School and Town Office would afford many benefits such as efficient drop-off for parents and the ability for parents to attend civic functions and government meetings. See also [Child Care](#).

The town should work with the School to identify a location for a future childcare facility.

The municipal center is a nexus of activity and travel through the town and is highly visible to travelers on VT-103. Improvements should be made to the aesthetic quality of the area to best reflect the character of the town.

D. Future Land Use

Town-wide surveys spanning decades have found overwhelming consensus among residents on the importance of preserving our rural character, working lands, and natural environment.

Traditionally, Mount Holly's land use pattern has consisted of small hamlet settlements, with mixed residential and commercial uses, surrounded by sparsely settled forest and agricultural lands and pristine natural areas. This pattern of development is what we define as our town's rural character. Over time we have lost most of these hamlets, and poorly planned rural sprawl development has proliferated along our roadways. A challenge for the future is how to measurably increase the amount and quality of housing and commerce while also maintaining or measurably increasing the acreage and quality of forests, fields, and other natural areas. With thoughtful land use, it is possible.

As the regional ski industry continues to expand and the town's natural and recreational resources continue to attract summer visitors, we need to carefully manage increased second-home development.

Concentrated development shall be focused on existing village areas. "Strip development" along roadsides outside the existing village and designed areas shall not be permitted. Home occupations and small businesses may fit in rural residential areas with conditions that limit their impact on the surrounding areas. Development on ridgelines shall not break the silhouette of the hill. The development of the largest, contiguous agricultural and forest areas is discouraged, while some small patches of current agricultural areas may be suitable for low-density development.

To ensure that Mount Holly's landscape and character are protected for future generations, a Future Land Use Map is included in this Plan to illustrate the desired future land uses.

1. Rural Countryside

The rural parts of the town have been the focus of significant residential development pressure in recent decades. Guiding future development in the rural areas of town will be of particular importance to efforts to preserve Mount Holly's sense of place and rural character and protect the town's scenic and working landscape.

The purpose of the **Rural Residential** (RR) use area is to maintain a clean, healthy environment, maintain the town's historic working landscape, encourage the productive use and protection of natural resources, and allow residential development at low densities in appropriate locations.

The **Forest and Conservation** (FC) use area is characterized by steep slopes, a preponderance of soils with poor septic suitability, highly visible hillsides and ridgelines that form the background for many of the town's scenic viewsheds, large tracts of forest land, fragile headwater areas, and extensive wildlife habitat (including some of the most productive black bear habitat in Vermont). While portions of the district were once used for agriculture, as evidenced by stone walls and patchwork forest patterns, it is almost entirely wooded today. The FC area is generally not available for future development and presently permits few land uses other than forest management, and very low-density single-family homes. Much of the property within the district is subject to ongoing forest management and large tracts are held by the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) and Okemo State Forest (OSF). The FC area is the source of most of the outdoor recreation areas in town, however, commercial recreation that uses motorized or mechanized vehicles, machinery or equipment, or which would cause fragmentation of forest blocks, is not allowed. To prevent further fragmentation in these areas, new road building is not allowed.

The purpose of the **Agricultural** (A) use area is to maintain viable farmland for agricultural uses and to locate development in a manner that, to the extent feasible, preserves the open fields and meadows. Structures within the designation including renewable energy structures, must be located along the perimeter of open fields and meadows and be naturally screened when possible.

The **Wetland and Riparian** (WR) use area includes existing wetlands, flood hazard areas, and river corridors. As the state adds to the Vermont State

Wetlands Inventory (VSWI), those additions shall be added to this designation by reference. These are areas not suitable for new construction or road-building.

2. Residential, Village, and Municipal Centers

Residential use areas are intended for residential housing. Seasonal housing and short-term rentals should not predominate.

Mixed-use areas may have housing and non-housing within the same area, but non-residential uses may be included only if they are well connected to adjacent residential uses.

The purpose of the **Village Center** area is to maintain the residential character and historic settlement pattern of Belmont Village while allowing for an appropriate mix of light commercial uses in a central location well served by community services and facilities and support the village's function as a community center.

Municipal use areas are intended to be used for the benefit of the municipality and the location of important town utilities, facilities, and services.

3. Special Use Areas

There is one **special use area** for use as a ski area and resort. The primary purpose of this area is for commercial outdoor recreation. Commercial retail sales, restaurant, and alcohol sales are only allowed in the existing summit lodge.

IV. Transportation

Effective transportation planning can increase a town's capacity to manage growth, foster community and economic development, improve health and safety, and assure accessibility, efficiency, and mobility.

The town should continue to prioritize transportation planning and the town should seek planning assistance from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

The town should seek grant funding for municipal planning or scoping studies for transportation-related projects.

A. Highways and Legal Trails

Highways are public roads and constitute the most significant component of Mount Holly's transportation network—consisting of high-speed arterial highways, medium-speed collector roads, and low-speed local roads, some of which are unpaved. According to the 2015 VTrans Town Highway Data, the Town of Mount Holly has a total of 73.7 road miles.

VTrans has jurisdiction over the State Highways (VT 103, VT 140, and VT 155). It is responsible for their management and maintenance and has the legal authority to define access to them.

The town is opposed to constructing any new state highway or the intentional increase in passenger, commercial, or freight traffic on existing state highways. Natural screening or low (to avoid visual impact) man-made noise abatement barriers shall be used along state highways where topology or lack of existing natural screening allows vehicle noise to carry or reverberate (e.g. between addresses 573 VT-103 – 1313 VT-103, overlooking so-called Winslow Flats, and 2434 VT-103 – 2672 VT-103, overlooking Summit) and/or where engine braking is common.

Mount Holly does not have any class 1 town highways. The town is responsible for the maintenance and management of all class 2 and 3 highways. The maintenance standards for class 4 highways may be established through a policy adopted by the Select Board.

The town employs a full-time Road Foreman and a crew of 2. Road maintenance, including road upgrades and snow removal, is a critical need for residents and visitors and is a significant item in the town budget.

The town should continue to develop 10-year paving plans and implement the current 10-year paving plan.

The town should coordinate with VTrans, the town's Planning Commission, and the regional planning commission to identify, and prioritize special projects, and allocate adequate funding.

Legal trails are public rights-of-way for which the town has no statutory maintenance or repair obligations, and which are not required to be open for use by a standard manufactured pleasure car.

Property owners who sell property on a class 4 highway or legal trail are required to disclose to the buyer that the town is not required to and must not be expected to maintain or upgrade the road or trail ([27 V.S.A. § 617](#) and [19 V.S.A. § 310](#)).

The town should fully develop and implement a policy for class 4 highways and legal trails that considers/conforms to other goals of this Plan. The policy should define the extent to which the town is willing to undertake the repair and maintenance of such highways and trails.

The town should evaluate unused or impassable roads with the goal of converting them to legal trail status, rather than discontinuing or extinguishing them, where their condition (e.g., slope, vegetation, drainage, stability, etc.) makes them suitable for use by hunters, dog walkers, horseback riders, and other non-motorized recreational users. These may include sections of Stewart Road (TH-37), Yale Road (TH-36), Cole Road (TH-10), Summit Road Extension (TH-49), Shunpike Road N (TH-11), and Mountainside Road (TH-39).

Highways, private roads, and driveways are among the primary drivers of forest fragmentation. Care is needed when planning changes to the transportation infrastructure to avoid fragmentation, enhance landscape connectivity, and reduce human-wildlife conflict. See also [Habitat Connectivity and Fragmentation](#).

The devastation caused by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer to roadside trees is expected to be a significant financial and labor burden to the town as the epidemic approaches the borders of our town.

The town should complete a roadside ash tree inventory to be used as a guide for the removal or treatment of these trees before heavy Emerald Ash Borer infestation.

Our roads offer aesthetic value and many recreational uses. Correspondingly, roadside management practices should put a high priority on maintaining the safety and health of roadside vegetation.

The town should adopt a mowing policy where roadsides with invasive species are mowed before they go to seed, and mowing equipment is cleaned to avoid spreading invasive seed or plant parts to other parts of the town. Areas of known invasive species should be mapped so that their control and removal can be prioritized, and so that mowing schedules can be adjusted based on the species' growing season.

The town should consider using the VTrans Best Management Practice for Roadside Terrestrial Invasive Plants.

See also [Management of Invasive Species](#).

Any work within the limits of a town highway right-of-way (for example, construction of a driveway, installation of a culvert, excavation of a ditch, or re-grading) requires a permit from the town ([19 V.S.A. § 1111](#)). It is the responsibility of the town to ensure that every highway access drains water properly, adequately protects the safety of the traveling public, maintains reasonable levels of service on the existing highway system, and protects public investment in the existing infrastructure.

The town should finalize and enact a Town Highway Access Policy to govern access to public roads and create objective criteria to determine when a new access point is needed.

B. Bridges and Culverts

Mount Holly has a total of 461 **culverts**, which were inventoried in 2017 and 2018. The full list of culverts (sorted by condition, material, size, and type) can be accessed on the online culvert inventory at [VTCulverts.org](#). The online inventory can help with planning for routine maintenance, prioritizing upgrade projects, and allocating adequate funds. Of the 461 total culverts, 132 culverts are listed as poor, critical, or urgent condition and should be scheduled for replacement and/or upgrade per the Town Road and Bridge Standards.

The town should utilize asset management tools such as VTCulverts.org to plan culvert upgrades and maintain an up-to-date culvert inventory.

The town should develop plans and apply for grants to fund high-priority culverts.

The town should develop an inventory and map of town highway structures within 'high' & 'normal' priority wildlife crossing zones as defined by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

The town should seek to implement VTrans culvert construction standards to the maximum extent possible and enhance wildlife connectivity when considering replacing a town highway structure within 'high' & 'normal' priority wildlife crossing zones.

The town should accommodate Aquatic Organism Passage to the extent possible in every town culvert project, with the eventual goal of reaching full AOP on all town highway structures.

Mount Holly has a total of 18 roadway **bridges**, 11 of which are state-owned on State Highways. The remaining 7 bridges are town-owned and eligible for state funding through the Town Highway Bridge Program. Bridges are categorized into long structures, with a span length greater than 20 feet, and short structures, with a span greater than 6 feet and up to 20 feet. VTrans provides periodic inspections for long structures, regardless of whether they are town-owned or not. However, inspections of town-owned short structures are the town's responsibility. The full list of the bridges, with location maps and inspection reports, can be accessed online through the [VTransparency Public Information Portal](#). The town also owns an additional 13 small bridges and large culvert structures which can be viewed at [VTCulverts.org](#). Routine bridge inspection and maintenance are critical to ensure effective connectivity, safe travel, and a resilient transportation network.

The town should develop an inspection schedule for town-owned short structures.

The town should look for opportunities to install new rural fire suppression water supplies when upgrading or replacing town highway structures.

A large steel and concrete highway scale bridge and a strip of the former Route 103, Buttermilk Falls Road, was formally "relinquished" by AOT in 1966 to the Town of Mount Holly⁶. The town discontinued the use of the strip as a

⁶ Mount Holly Land Records Volume 29, 213.

highway and changed it to a “trail” in 1972.⁷ As the bridge deteriorates and becomes unsafe, repair or removal will be required.

The town should work with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to determine the future of the “old 103” bridge.

The Station Road Bridge to Healdville was closed after Tropical Storm Irene due to concerns the superstructure moved off its bearing. The bridge is still being used for pedestrian traffic and the VAST trail.

The town should work with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and the Agency of Transportation to determine the future of the Station Road bridge.

A small bridge (state ID B25) near the end of the class 4 section of Greendale Road provides access to the National Forest and is used by the VAST trail, but is in poor condition.

The town should work with the US Forest Service to improve or replace the Greendale Road (B25) bridge to enhance recreation access.

C. Traffic Volume and Safety

The arterial Route 103 (VT-103) bisects the town. Since the town does not have a village or residential center directly along or astride the state highway, it carries predominantly non-local through traffic, while town highways carry primarily local traffic. VTrans collects routine traffic count data for VT-103, VT-155, Belmont Road, and Tarbellville Road.

The most recent data, collected in 2019, reported an average annual daily traffic (AADT) of up to 4,700 vehicles per day (VPD) on VT-103, 970 VPD on VT-155, 410 VPD on Belmont Road, and 260 VPD on Tarbellville Road. The highest AADT volumes (4,700 VPD) are reported on VT-103 east of Healdville Road, with AADT dropping to 1,100 VPD or less west of Healdville Road.

According to the VTrans Public Crash Data Report, from January 1, 2018–January 1, 2023, Mount Holly experienced 64 crashes with 10 resulting in injury, and 2 resulting in a fatality. This is down from the previous five-year period (2013–2018) which had a total of 90 crashes, with 14 resulting in injury and 3 resulting in a fatality. While the overall amount of crashes dropped in the last five-year period compared to the previous period, the share of crashes occurring on the State Highway system increased. From 2013–2018, 67% of all crashes in Mount Holly occurred on the State Highway system. Between 2018–

⁷ *Mount Holly Town Proceedings Volume 6, 254i.*

2023, the share of crashes on the State Highway system increased to 75% of all crashes.

The town should petition VTrans for greater scrutiny of safety on VT-103 where the highway intersects with Healdville Road and with Belmont/Hortonville Road. This should include consideration of a dedicated left-turn lane so that turning vehicles do not force traffic onto the shoulder as they attempt to pass in the intersection.

The town should advocate for the potential regrading of VT-103 east of Belmont Road to increase visibility leading up to the intersection.

Glare can be dangerous to pedestrians and drivers. It shines into our eyes, constricting our pupils, which diminishes our ability to adapt to low-light conditions. Emitted light shall not trespass into the town highway in a way that compromises public safety.

To maintain and preserve the rural character of the town, streetlights shall not be allowed. See also [Night Sky](#).

On March 8, 2020, the town adopted an updated Traffic Ordinance to regulate traffic on public roadways.

The town should continue to enforce traffic regulations.

The town should consider establishing traffic rules that ensure the safety of pedestrian, equine, bicycle, snowmobile, and wildlife road crossings where they are common.

The town should maintain existing road widths unless there is a strong public safety rationale for widening.

The town should ensure that new roads and driveways are constructed wide enough to allow emergency vehicles to safely access all properties while maintaining a road width that discourages speeding to the greatest extent possible.

The efficiency and safety of town roads are directly affected by the frequency and location of points of access (or curb cuts). Incorporating Vermont Access Management Best Practices can work to optimize the safety and efficiency of roadway access by reducing the number of conflict points where accidents typically occur. Consistent and comprehensive access management policies are necessary to balance the needs of roadway users with the needs for land development.

The town should finalize and enact a Highway Access Policy to govern access to public roads and create objective criteria to determine when a new access point is needed.

The town should consider access management in subdivision review to ensure that street systems and access connections are safe and properly designed.

D. Municipal Roads General Permit

The Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) is intended to achieve significant reductions in stormwater-related erosion from municipal roads, both paved and unpaved. To comply with the MRGP, towns implement a customized, multi-year plan to stabilize their road drainage system. Mount Holly, with the help of the RRPC, conducted a road erosion inventory in 2017 to identify problematic road segments, develop mitigation strategies, and target potential sources of funding.

The full road erosion inventory can be accessed online through the [MRGP Implementation Table Portal](#). The online portal is an important planning tool to ensure compliance with the MRGP. The online portal can help prioritize road segments and identify sources of funding. Of the approximately 60.45 miles of hydrologically connected roads, the town has 2 very high, 24 high, and 147 moderate and low priority road segments that need to be upgraded to MRGP standards.

The town shall continue to comply with the Municipal Roads General Permit.

The town should use the MRGP Implementation Table Portal and the Road Stormwater Management Plan to prioritize and plan upgrades to road segments that do not meet MRGP standards.

The town should apply for state and federal funding from the Better Roads Program, Grants in Aid, and other stormwater mitigation funding sources for roadway/stormwater improvements.

The town should track the progress of road segment upgrades and maintain an up-to-date road erosion inventory.

The town should prioritize stormwater infrastructure upgrade projects such as the repair and replacement of drainage systems within the Designated Village Center.

The town should develop plans for, and apply for grants to fund high-priority stormwater projects.

E. Multi-Modal Transportation

Bicycle and pedestrian travel are critical elements in creating a balanced and resilient transportation network. Bicycling and walking are efficient means of transportation that reduce congestion and demand for parking and have community health and energy conservation benefits. Though Mount Holly's population density and rural character make bicycle and pedestrian commuting less viable, biking and walking remain crucial means of getting daily physical activity as well as a popular recreational activity.

The town should develop a Belmont village pedestrian travel plan.

According to the VTrans On-Road Bicycle Plan, Mount Holly is listed as a "low priority" route along VT-103, VT-140 & VT-155. Moreover, the VTrans Bicycle Level of Comfort Map ranks part of VT-103, V- 140 & VT-155 as "comfortable for most adult bicyclists", with the section of VT-103 west of Sawyer Hill Road listed as "comfortable for experienced and confident bicyclists".

Multi-modal uses are often in conflict with automobile use on the road. Addressing this in a general way, in a rural community, may be prohibitively costly. However, there may be opportunities to create off-road transportation options.

The town should form a committee to study and develop a plan for off-road snowmobile, bicycle, horse, and pedestrian trails.

Mount Holly contains no public **electric vehicle** (EV) charging stations. The closest station is a Level 2 charger in neighboring Ludlow at the Jackson Gore parking lot. Public Level 3 fast charging stations require 3-phase power which is only available in the Municipal Center. Green Mountain Power recommends locating charging stations near "things to do".

The town should investigate if a public charging station is warranted and identify possible locations and funding opportunities.

Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD) or "The Bus" provides **public transportation** to Mount Holly. The "Ludlow Route" travels from the transit center in downtown Rutland and services the towns of Rutland, Clarendon, Shrewsbury, Mount Holly, and Ludlow. The Ludlow Route operates seasonally between Thanksgiving and Easter and offers four trips per day, seven days a week, with an average monthly ridership of approximately 2100 riders. The

Ludlow Route used to operate year-round but was made seasonal due to the ridership in the summer being too low to meet the ridership metrics VTrans requires. At the time of writing (March 2023), in FY23 4.3% of all the ridership on the Ludlow Route originated in Mount Holly, and 84% of Mount Holly's ridership originated at the Healdville Road stop. Around 90% of the Mount Holly riders travel eastbound towards Ludlow, with the remaining riders boarding westbound towards Rutland City. This suggests that the primary ridership is using the Ludlow Route to access employment or recreation opportunities at Okemo Mountain Resort. Unless ridership heading westbound drastically increases, the Ludlow Route will likely remain a seasonal route.

"The Bus" has six regular stop locations along VT-103 in Mount Holly, however, signage is substandard or nonexistent, and none of the stops are sheltered. Currently, at the Healdville Road stop, there is an unofficial state-owned parking area that may be currently used as an undesignated park-and-ride. MVRTD will also make "Flag Down" stops along the route if the driver determines it is safe to stop.

MVRTD also offers complementary para-transit service, service for Medicare patients and the elderly, and service for persons with disabilities.

Currently, there are no designated town-owned or state-owned **park-and-rides** in the Town of Mount Holly. Potential locations include the Belmont Road bus stop or the Healdville Road bus stop.

The town should investigate the possibility of the State constructing a combined bus stop and park & ride on the southwest corner of the intersection of Belmont/Hortonville Road and VT-103 or at the current state-owned parking facility at the corner of Sawyer Hill Road and VT-103.

The town should investigate bus stop improvements including adding signage and shelter.

F. Rail

The Green Mountain Railroad, part of the Vermont Rail system, runs through Mount Holly, primarily parallel to VT-103. It extends from Rutland through Bellows Falls. The route is currently used mostly for freight. However, a seasonal fall foliage train runs from Chester Depot to Summit.

The town encourages the use of passenger rail.

G. Regional Overview

Mount Holly participates in regional transportation planning through a member appointment to the Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), which consists of representatives from all Rutland Region towns. The TAC identifies and develops solutions to town and regional transportation issues and serves to promote and support an integrated, sustainable, and resilient transportation system. In addition, the TAC serves a valuable role in the project prioritization process with VTrans to add and rank projects on the State Capital List for state and federal funding.

The town should continue to actively participate in the TAC.

H. Scenic Byways and Rural Character

Mount Holly has a dispersed rural character formed through traditional settlement patterns and preserved through continued management by the town. Preservation of this historic character is dependent partially on continued protection and preservation of historic and scenic features within and adjacent to the road Right of Way. Special attention should be given to specific roadway segments identified by the community as particularly scenic and historic, such as Belmont & Maple Hill Road.

The town should develop an inventory of key assets identified by the community.

The town should apply for state and federal funding from Transportation Alternatives and other grant programs to fund preservation planning and implementation.

The town should investigate the feasibility of getting VT-103 added to the existing VT-100 Scenic Byway.

Stone walls are an essential part of the rural Vermont landscape and an important part of the cultural history of New England. In addition, they also serve a critical historical purpose as survey monuments.

Historic stone walls along roadways shall be maintained unless there is a strong evidence-based case that the benefits of removing the walls for safety/stormwater mitigation outweigh the costs of losing irreplicable historic assets and monuments.

To preserve the town’s rural and tranquil character, personal and/or recreational airplane landing strips or helipads will not be allowed.

V. Utilities and Facilities

A. Communications

Mount Holly boasts some of the best **wired broadband** connectivity in the state. According to the Vermont Department of Public Service, over 98% of buildings in town have fast broadband service. According to Vermont Telephone, they provide fiber optic internet capable of speeds of 1000 Mbps to 100% of their customers in Mount Holly and have fiber optic lines passing by nearly 100% of homes. These utilities are subject to frequent interruption due to power loss during storms and weather events.

The town should encourage residents and businesses to use battery backup and/or backup generators to limit disruption.

Wireless broadband access is available 24/7 via a Wi-Fi hotspot located at the Mount Holly Town Library. This hotspot offers free internet access within the building and extends several hundred feet through the Belmont Village center.

In 2022, the town's first-ever **cellular phone** tower went live. The tower is situated upon a large hill off of Stewart Road South and was designed to provide AT&T / FirstNet coverage to a majority of the VT-103 corridor through town. Whenever possible, additional network providers shall co-locate antennas on this tower to provide additional phone and data service to residents in town without the need for additional infrastructure and access roads. At the time of approval, emergency services in Mount Holly were granted permission to locate municipal communication devices or antennas on this tower. The town maintains the right to locate such equipment, should the need arise.

There is still an unmet need for additional cellular phone and data coverage in many areas of town. Any proposal for additional towers shall first address this unmet need—particularly along the VT-155 corridor. Any new cell towers in town shall make efforts to minimize their visual impact, including but not limited to using a tree-like (monopine) camouflage with at least 2.5 branches per foot extending from the top of the pole down to the level of the surrounding tree canopy. New towers or communication infrastructure shall not cause an undue disturbance, disruption, or fragmentation of defined scenic areas and viewsheds, significant natural areas, wildlife habitat, and forest blocks and connectors.

The town should support efforts to upgrade and expand telecommunications systems.

The Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) owns and operates a **radio communication** tower (site 29) located near the summit of Okemo Mountain. This provides emergency radio communications for VELCO employees as well as emergency services dispatch for neighboring towns.

The Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department has a repeater antenna located on private land off Old Turnpike Road which it uses to communicate with **regional dispatch**. The department has permission to use the new cellular tower, near Stewart Road, as an alternate repeater site should the need arise.

The town may investigate the viability of using the VELCO communication tower (site 29) located near the summit of Okemo Mountain for emergency services dispatch.

All towers and associated equipment, buildings, and infrastructure shall be designed to minimize the visual impact. Materials shall be of a type, style, color, and location to blend into the site, minimize glare, and not result in undue adverse impacts to the natural landscape or built environment. Perimeter screening and tower camouflage shall be required. Towers with lighting shall not be permitted.

Digital communications have proven to be an important factor in maintaining community vitality in our rural landscape. This is particularly important as our population grows older and mobility becomes an issue for some and changes in residential land use result in many residents and landowners being part-time occupants. The town pays for and operates a website (mounthollyvt.org) and employees of the town regularly use it to disseminate information, organize meetings, and communicate our values to the world.

The town should consider removing the “unofficial” label from the website of the town since it already qualifies as the official site for the town by state law.

Regular Select Board and Planning Commission meetings have been hybrid in-person and Zoom for several years. The town installed a video conferencing system in the Town Office in 2023 using ARPA funds. This change has boosted public engagement by allowing many who would not ordinarily be able to attend meetings to participate. Many of these meetings are also broadcast by Okemo Valley TV.

The town should continue to hold “hybrid” in-person and online meetings for all public meetings.

The **Chit Chat**, published by the non-profit Mount Holly Chit Chat, Inc., is the town's monthly newsletter and has been in continuous circulation since March 1974. In addition to general town news and events, each month's issue of the Chit Chat contains copies of minutes from town boards and commissions, including the Select Board, Planning Commission, and Conservation Commission. Copies are mailed to residents and landowners and digital copies are available on the [town website](#).

The town should encourage and support the continued operation of the Chit Chat newsletter.

The Mount Holly Newsflash email list, operated under the umbrella of Mount Holly Chit Chat, Inc., has proven to be an extremely effective tool to broadcast news.

The town should encourage and support the continued operation of the Newsflash email list service.

B. Government

The Mount Holly Town Office was built in 1971 and remodeled in 1996 and 2006. In 2023, a video conferencing system was installed for increased remote participation and transparency in town government activities. The Town Office is the center of town government activities and the location of all town records.

The town shall continue to preserve and when necessary restore essential town records.

The town is a member of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with the mission of serving and strengthening Vermont's local governments.

The town should maintain its membership in VLCT.

The town should encourage all town officials (elected and appointed) and staff to take advantage of the resources and training available through VLCT.

Running a town has become much more complex than in the past. Maintaining roads and facilities, supervising staff, applying for grants, handling emergencies, approving payments, staying abreast of activities within the town, and staying up to date with state regulations are only some of the responsibilities that are increasing in complexity and depth. Historically, the town has relied on a small number of volunteers to shoulder the burden.

Due to economic and land use changes this no longer seems to be a sustainable approach. As a result, many communities like ours are looking for ways to get more help, such as: hiring a grant writer/administrator, increasing the Select Board size, hiring a town administrator, and pooling resources with surrounding towns.

The town should consider ways to increase the town's administrative capacity such as possibly retaining, as needed, a grant writer/administrator; increasing the Select Board size; hiring a town administrator; and pooling resources with surrounding towns.

The Mount Holly Town Garage was built in 2014.

The town should seek grant funding to improve the energy efficiency and operating costs of town-owned facilities.

C. Emergency Services

Emergency services (fire and EMS) in Vermont and across this country are facing serious challenges related to recruitment and retention, increased training requirements, higher costs, and the complexity of funding.

Fire services are provided by the **Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.** (MHVFD), a private organization staffed by a volunteer force of 25 individuals. Assistance is provided by mutual aid through the Rutland County Fire Mutual Aid Association.

The town is thankful for the dedicated volunteer firefighters and local employers who allow their employees to respond to emergencies. The current volunteer system has been effective in meeting community needs and is extremely cost-effective compared to the resources needed to maintain a career fire department.

The town should do what it can to support the current volunteer system and consider alternatives, as needed, to maintain the level of service.

Both fire stations are owned by the town: Mount Holly Station (built in 1950), and Belmont Station (built over 100 years ago and renovated in 1988). The Mount Holly Station on School Street needs replacement. The Belmont Station needs heating and cooling system upgrades.

The town should apply for grants for efficient municipal buildings to replace the Belmont Station heating and cooling system.

The town should plan for a replacement for the Mount Holly Station facilities and seek grants, if and when available, to mitigate the expense.

MHVFD is expecting to replace the Engine 2 pumper truck in the next several years.

The MHVFD should adopt a truck replacement rotation schedule to facilitate capital planning and applying for grants.

MHVFD is currently funded through tax appropriation, donations, and fundraising efforts. To be eligible for federal grant funding, a fire service must be a municipal department or a non-profit corporation with a formal service agreement with the town. Unfortunately, the MHVFD does not meet these requirements.

The town should restructure MHVFD to become eligible for federal grant funding.

MHVFD maintains 10 dry hydrant water supplies for fire suppression. The two hydrants on Star Lake are increasingly choked with weeds.

The town should develop a vegetation management strategy for Star Lake and consider the use of bottom barriers or mats around each dry hydrant intake.

As other construction occurs within town rights-of-way there may be opportunities for adding additional (pressurized) hydrants throughout Belmont Village and down Tarbellville to VT-155.

The town should continue to add dry hydrants and fire ponds as needed to provide adequate service.

The town should require a grant of easement for all new public water supplies.

The town shall continue to seek Vermont Rural Fire Protection Grants to fund new water supplies and upgrades.

Fire dispatching is currently provided by the Vermont State Police.

Ambulance and EMS service is provided by the Ludlow Ambulance Service since November 2023 after staffing shortages resulted in the dissolution of the Mount Holly Rescue Squad after 49 years of service to the town.

Statewide, there is growing acceptance of the numerous benefits a regional transporting ambulance service can provide, such as improved service oversight, administration, membership, quality of care, consistency in response times, liability, fleet maintenance costs, and availability of additional services. The key to relying on a regional transporting service is to have a local First Responder Service. These are volunteers who can respond quickly and provide assessment and treatment before the ambulance arrives. They may have equipment in their vehicles or may have a non-transporting vehicle (often an old ambulance) that can carry more items.

The town should work with MHVFD and members of the community to provide a local first responder service to augment the regional transporting ambulance service.

Subdivisions, multi-unit developments, and any developments with locked gates shall provide a means of access for emergency response.

The town shall ensure that adequate emergency services remain available to the community and that the town continues to support these critical service organizations through annual appropriations.

In 2023, the town voted to eliminate the position of Constable. **Law enforcement** is provided by Vermont State Police, based in Rutland, and traffic enforcement is provided through a contract with the Rutland County Sheriff's Department.

The town should continue to contract the services of the Rutland County Sheriff's Department, or other appropriate law enforcement organizations, for police protection in the town.

D. Emergency Management

Emergency management protects communities by coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to (1) mitigate against, (2) prepare for, (3) respond to, and (4) recover from threatened or actual natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters. These phases often overlap as there is often no clearly defined boundary where one phase ends and another begins. To ensure success, Mount Holly coordinates activities in all four phases of emergency management.

Mitigation consists of those activities designed to prevent or reduce losses from disaster. The town has a FEMA-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), dated February 12, 2021. This plan, included here by reference,

contains proactive actions, projects, activities and processes to be taken before an emergency to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their impacts. The FEMA-approved LHMP will expire after five years.

The town shall update its approved LHMP before the deadline.

The town plans to complete an inventory of its bridges and culverts in 2023 and will adopt a series of codes and standards for road maintenance that ensure sustainable practices.

In May of 2023, the town adopted a new Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw. The new bylaw prohibits or limits new development and requires floodproofing standards for allowable development within FEMA-defined and mapped flood hazard areas and ANR-mapped river corridors with the intention of greatly minimizing or eliminating downstream hazards.

Having these mitigation programs in place reduces the town’s match against state and federal funds for federally declared disasters and certain public works maintenance projects.

All town roads, especially those that are unpaved, are vulnerable to washouts caused by undersized or improperly designed culverts on private land, which are unable to handle heavy rainfall.

The town should work with private landowners to identify undersized or improperly designed driveway culverts and help find funding for their replacement.

The town should adopt a Highway Access Policy with improved standards for stormwater management.

Preparedness is focused on the development of plans and capabilities for effective disaster response. The town has an appointed Emergency Management Director (EMD) who is responsible for coordinating the various components of the town’s emergency management program, including working with town officials and first responders to maintain an up-to-date Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP).

The LEMP is an all-hazards plan that establishes lines of responsibility during a disaster and includes staffing and location information for the local emergency operations center (EOC); municipal purchasing agents for emergencies and emergency spending limits; a listing of municipal resources, mutual aid agreements, and local resource suppliers; selected methods for public information and warning; locations that are to be used as shelters; and

a complete listing of contacts. The LEMP identifies the Mount Holly Town Office as the primary local EOC. The Mount Holly School is listed as the primary local shelter and the Belmont Fire Station and Odd Fellows Hall as alternate local shelters. Serious deficiencies exist in each of the shelter locations. The Mount Holly School does not currently have a permanent water supply, lacks backup power, and does not have a cooling system. The Belmont Fire Station does not have Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access, has inadequate heating and cooling, has a wastewater system that may not support large groups, and doesn't have parking.

The town shall annually update and re-adopt the LEMP by the May 1 deadline to ensure all content remains current and accurate.

The town should consider exercising its LEMP periodically and develop written procedures for specific emergencies. Exercises enhance knowledge of plans; allow members of the local emergency team to improve their performance; and identify opportunities to improve capabilities to respond to real events. Different types of exercises can be used to evaluate plans – tabletop exercises, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises.

The town should regularly evaluate emergency shelters for capacity, backup power, heating/cooling, and safety.

The town has adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The town should encourage Select Board, Fire, Highway, and other emergency personnel to enroll in Incident Command System (ICS) training, available through FEMA ([training.fema.gov](https://www.fema.gov/training)).

As hot weather increases due to climate change, heat stroke, and other health-related issues are anticipated to increase.

The town should develop hot weather emergency preparedness plans, modify buildings and shelters to provide emergency cooling, and equip shelters with backup generators.

In 2011 and again in 2023, the town experienced substantial damage to roads and private property due to flooding caused by prolonged and heavy rainfall. Climate change is increasing the risk that these destructive events will recur.

The town should create and maintain a list of properties, structures, and residents who live within flood-prone areas such as the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas and the State defined River Corridors.

A statewide Enhanced 911 system has been implemented locally. Most structures now have unique road addresses in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ [2291\(16\)](#) and [4421](#). These addresses correlate to the site's distance from the beginning of the road in increments of 5.28 feet (based upon a fraction of a mile) so that they may be easily located in the case of an emergency. The E911 Address Coordinator, a town-appointed official, is responsible for the update and maintenance of the municipal 911 database. Applications for a new 911 address are available in the Town Office.

The town should ensure the E911 address system is kept current, including all fire suppression hydrants.

Response is the immediate reaction to a disaster—it may occur as the disaster is anticipated, as well as soon after it begins. See also [Emergency Services](#). In the event of a natural disaster, like a flood event, Highway Department personnel perform a critical role in emergency management efforts. They are a key partner in the community's response and recovery from disasters and participate in the Rutland Region Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement.

Recovery includes those activities that continue beyond the emergency period to restore critical community functions and manage repair efforts.

The town should maintain records of costs incurred in the recovery from disasters, including road and culvert repairs. This information is reported to Vermont Emergency Management and aids the state in applying for federal declarations of disaster in larger events. It is also critical to ensure the town then receives the fullest amount of government financial assistance legally allowed during a federally declared disaster.

Vermont's Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides state funding to supplement federal Public Assistance after federally-declared disasters. Eligible public costs are reimbursed by federal taxpayers at 75%. Since Mount Holly takes specific steps to improve flood resilience, the state contributes a percentage of the remaining total cost. Currently, this ERAF funding is at the 12.5% level because Mount Holly has adopted four mitigation measures:

1. National Flood Insurance Program (participate or have applied);
2. Town Road and Bridge Standards – (annually certify adopted standards that meet or exceed current VTrans Standards;
3. Local Emergency Management Plan (adopted annually after town meeting);

4. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan - Adopt a FEMA-approved local plan (valid for five years).

In 2023, the town adopted a new Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw which includes provisions that allow the town to receive a 40% increase in ERAF funding from the State (from 12.5% to 17.5% of the town's costs).

E. Child Care

The State of Vermont has two classifications of childcare that are regulated, they are:

- Registered Family Child Care Home: A child care program approved only in the provider's residence, which is limited to a small number of children based on specific criteria.
- Licensed Program: A childcare program providing care to children in any approved location. The number and ages of children served are based on available approved space and staffing qualifications, as well as play and learning equipment. A Licensed program must be inspected by the Department of Labor and Industry's Fire Safety Inspectors and must obtain a Water and Wastewater Disposal Permit from the Agency of Environmental Conservation. A Licensed program is considered a public building under Vermont Law. Types of licensed programs include early childhood programs, school-age care, family homes, and non-recurring care programs.

The Mount Holly Elementary School Preschool and Mount Holly After School Program are the only licensed providers in town. The school recalibrates its preschool offerings annually, depending on resources, staffing availability, and parent demand. In the past, Mount Holly School sometimes offered a full-time (5-days / week, 8 AM – 4 PM) preschool option for four-year-olds and a part-time option for three-year-olds. However, in the current 2023–2024 school year, full-time preschool is not offered. The uncertainty from year to year as to the childcare options that will be available means that parents must wait until late spring or early summer to confirm plans for the fall.

The afterschool program for children enrolled in the school provides after-school care from 3–5 PM each school day. The Mount Holly After School Program is part of the Two Rivers Supervisory Union (TRSU) After School Program. The TRSU After School Program is for children in grades K–6 at Mount Holly School during the school year and for 9 weeks during the summer. See *also* [Educational Facilities](#).

As of 2023, there are no registered daycare homes in Mount Holly, though there are two facilities in nearby Ludlow, and one in Wallingford, according to state data. Some residents may currently arrange for care with relatives, or take their children to childcare facilities outside of town.

The availability of full-time childcare and early education options is necessary to attract full-time residents to the town and allow those who are already here to participate in civic functions and contribute more fully to the town's economic vitality. Households with two working parents, or with single parents, need convenient, reliable, consistent, and full-time childcare.

The town should collaborate with the local school supervisory union and school to complete a comprehensive survey of the needs of local parents.

The town should, when appropriate, support the private development of childcare facilities in town and assist providers in seeking funding to develop these facilities.

F. Elder Care

Vermont is one of the oldest states in the nation with over 170,000 Vermonters (27%) currently over the age of 60. Mount Holly is no exception. Our aging demographics impact every area of life, and all sectors must be planning for how to best engage and serve our residents as we grow older, especially after enduring over two years of increased isolation due to Covid 19.

Vermont passed the Older Vermonters Act ([Act 156](#)) in October 2020. Section 3 of the Act, called on Vermont to develop an Action Plan for Aging Well, and states that the purpose of the plan is to “provide strategies and cultivate partnerships for implementation across sectors to promote aging with health, choice, and dignity in order to establish and maintain an age-friendly State for all Vermonters.” Our residents who are now past their sixties have been some of our most diligent voters, taxpayers, school supporters, and community volunteers. They wish to continue to live in Mount Holly.

Currently, there is no transportation available to those who are unable to drive. Some transportation may be available through State programs, such as “Go Vermont!”, but volunteer drivers are required to have liability insurance which may be a deterrent.

We have a free Bone Builders Program but need other health and wellness programs.

The 2022 Community Vision Survey identified the desire to expand senior housing options, plan for senior transportation, and provide opportunities for senior walking trails and recreation. See also [Housing](#) and [Transportation](#).

The town should work with landowners, developers, and the community to look for opportunities to expand senior transportation, housing, walking, and recreation options in the Village of Belmont and elsewhere in the town.

Green Mountain Neighbors is a recently formed volunteer organization whose mission is to help seniors successfully “live in place” in Mount Holly, Shrewsbury, and Wallingford. A recently completed needs assessment survey found unmet needs related to housing, transportation, health and wellness opportunities, home maintenance, and recreation.

The town should work with Green Mountain Neighbors to continue to identify and address unmet needs related to senior transportation, housing, wellness, and recreation.

G. Community and Public Facilities

The Mount Holly **Community Center** is a town-owned building located in the Village of Belmont and houses the Library upstairs, and a Community Room downstairs. The building was originally a Methodist Church and later used as the Town Hall with the town library downstairs.

The **Mount Holly Town Library** has been in continuous operation since 1914.

The library needs a new weatherproof book drop. Newer, faster, and more portable computers are needed for public use within the building. A new printer is needed for public use.

The town shall ensure that library and digital services remain available to the community and that the town continues to support these critical services through annual appropriations.

The Mount Holly Community Association’s (MHCA) **Community Room** is located below the Library. It has been the center for many events, activities, and parties. There is a bathroom and a small kitchenette, making the room suitable for small parties of up to fifty people. Some organizations, like the Bone Builders, use the space regularly, and others when they need an attractive meeting room. Nonprofits are welcome to use the room free of charge. Individuals and organizations which are not non-profit may use the room for a nominal fee.

The Library and Community Room building has a waste holding tank that must be pumped out regularly. This requires the use of low-flow fixtures and may limit some uses of the building—such as for an all-season emergency shelter location.

Mount Holly Community Historical Museum (MHCHM) was organized in 1968, with the Will White Blacksmith Shop Museum opening in 1969. The MHCHM Board operates the Blacksmith Shop Museum and the Perkins House Museum, and provides annual visits to elementary school students.

The **Odd Fellows Hall**, the site of the historic Chase Toy Factory from 1863–1889, is now owned and operated by the Colfax Lodge No. 21 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. It is not insulated and therefore not used during the winter months but at other times of the year, it hosts community suppers and functions. It is also a community shelter location during local emergencies. The building needs renovations to address deferred maintenance.

The **Village Baptist Church** is the only currently operating house of worship in Mount Holly and is located in Belmont Village. Currently, the building needs Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access and slate roof repair. Since no other village green exists, the church often grants permission for the grounds to be used by the community as a village green.

Established in 2008, **Reinbow Riding Center** is a therapeutic riding facility located near the Village of Belmont on the Stone Wall Farm. Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) certified instructors, along with the assistance of many volunteers, provide therapeutic horseback riding lessons for children and adults with cognitive, physical, and behavioral challenges.

Mount Holly has two US **Post Offices**. One located in the Village of Belmont serves Belmont (05730) addresses, and one located in the municipal center serves Mount Holly (05758) addresses. Rural delivery routes are also serving Mount Holly residents from the East Wallingford (05742) and Cuttingsville (05738) offices.

There are ten recorded **cemeteries** in Mount Holly. There are also many family plots from early times found on private property throughout town. Town cemeteries: Carlton, Hortonville, Mount Holly, Old Mechanicsville, Packer, and Tarbellville. Organized cemeteries: Mechanicsville. Private cemeteries: Green, Martin, and Crowley.

H. Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities offer benefits beyond health and wellness. They foster economic development opportunities by bolstering the recreation economy and enhancing property values.

The **Star Lake Recreation Area** (also known as the Belmont Public Playground) offers swimming access to Star Lake. Three or four times a season, an overgrowth of vegetation including invasive Eurasian Milfoil is harvested by hand and cleared from the swimming area. Bottom barriers, loaned from Farm and Wilderness Conservation, have also been used to limit vegetation. To help keep the swimming area clean and safe for use, once a year, the town applies for and typically receives a Migratory Bird Depredation Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discourage resident Canada Geese. Historically, sand was added to the shoreline to create a beach. The State will allow an existing beach or cleared area to be maintained, on land, but will not permit sand or sediment to be added to the water or in a way that will enter the water. For that reason, it may be beneficial to create a small dock or other swimming platform to enter the water. Renaturalizing the shoreline, following the State's Shoreland Best Management Practices, will improve water quality, limit erosion, deter geese, and enhance the natural beauty of the site.

The town should continue regular water quality monitoring during the swimming season.

The town should conduct an ecological assessment and develop an aquatic vegetation management plan for Star Lake.

The town should follow the state's Shoreland Best Management Practices to create a naturalized shoreline buffer and small dock to enhance the recreation value of the lake. See also [Scenic Areas \(Lake Wise Program\)](#).

The town should continue to collaborate with private landowners and organizations to manage, and seek out ecologically sound ways to combat the growth of invasive Eurasian Milfoil and to prevent the introduction of other invasive species.

See also [Management of Invasive Species](#).

Moving utility poles out of the Recreation Area, to be co-located with roads, will enable many more opportunities for improvement in the park.

The town should work with Green Mountain Power to relocate utility poles out of the Recreation Area.

The town should consider adding safe and reliable playground equipment and an events pavilion.

Access to the park was degraded in various ways following the dam replacement in 2016. Pedestrian access was impeded by the berm atop the dam and parking availability was limited by the two fire hydrants. These issues contribute to the perception that the park is not well linked to the rest of the Village.

The town should improve the access to Star Lake Recreation Area to comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADA Standards) and link the park with a pedestrian path through the Village.

The Mount Holly School has playground equipment on school grounds but they are not available for public use during school operations or extended programs, including after-care. This effectively limits their use to the summer months.

The town should look for opportunities to host recreational equipment outside of school grounds so that both students and the public can use it.

Winter-use trails for snowmobiling and backcountry skiing are an important recreational asset to the town. Many of these are made possible through the generosity of private landowners. There are virtually no four-season trails or multi-use trails available for recreation. The town would benefit from a multi-use trail linking the Village of Belmont to the Municipal Center.

The town should create a Recreation and Trails Committee to plan, create, and maintain outdoor recreational facilities and trails in the town (as authorized by [31 V.S.A. § 203](#) and [24 V.S.A. § 1971](#)).

The town should develop a plan for snowmobile, bicycle, horse, and pedestrian trails.

See also [Recreation](#).

I. Water and Wastewater

For many years, a public water supply known as the Mechanicsville Aqueduct served the village of Belmont. The primary source is a set of springs located on the northwest slope of Hedgehog Hill. The public use of this water supply shall

be maintained. Development or land clearing within this source's mapped water source protection area shall not be allowed.

The town owns property near the municipal center with a well that supplies water to two adjacent properties.

The Mount Holly School shares a well with the Town Garage.

The town does not currently have a municipal wastewater system and this has been identified as a barrier to both economic growth and housing in the village of Belmont since the early 1970s. The land use pattern of the village, consisting of very small lots, and the prevalence of unsuitable soils, makes it a challenge for owners to provide and maintain both on-site wells and wastewater disposal.

The town should encourage and assist affected property owners in the village to establish a fire district to address the wastewater concerns. A fire district is a municipal corporation whose purpose is to manage certain functions of town government that either are not available throughout the entire town, or are better administered by a distinct, special-purpose entity. The goal should be to identify suitable soils and possible locations for a wastewater distribution system for the village. Even if these locations are not used immediately the town should move to protect and secure them for the future.

The town should assist the fire district to secure grant funding for planning a wastewater distribution system for the village.

J. Solid Waste

Mount Holly's transfer station is located on Sharon Lane off Gates Road. The site is open two days a week and accepts recycling, electronic devices, food scraps, household garbage, and some construction refuse. Mount Holly uses unit-based pricing for solid waste disposal. Many recyclables are accepted free of charge. Each bag of trash must be paid for with solid waste stickers, purchasable at the Town Office or by mail for \$3 each.

The town should continue to maintain a certified solid waste transfer and recycling facility.

High-quality, undamaged, and reusable items may be exchanged in the Transfer Station Swap Shed.

Secure storage of outdoor trash is essential due to our abundant wildlife. Black bears getting into trash cans or dumpsters, and spreading garbage far

and wide, is more than a nuisance. Bears that become habituated to humans are a danger to us and themselves. Public buildings and commercial properties, including short-term rentals, shall use bear-resistant outdoor trash receptacles.

The town should encourage homeowners to use bear-resistant trash receptacles, perhaps through subsidized purchasing.

Mount Holly is a member of the [Rutland County Solid Waste District \(RCSWD\)](#). The RCSWD provides waste disposal services to the town, in addition to 16 other towns. They also operate the Gleason Road Transfer Station. Residents and taxpayers can use the District's Gleason Road transfer site during operating hours to dispose of solid waste, hazardous waste, construction and demolition (C&D) debris, and clean wood. Fees apply to the disposal of solid waste, C&D, and wood.

The town should continue to participate in the regional solid waste program and the regional planning commission.

Open burning of trash, including paper and cardboard, is foul and harmful and is never allowed in Vermont. Roadside dumping of trash threatens waterways, wildlife, and public health.

The town, through its health officer, should ensure that town residents comply with the state's illegal dumping, open burning, recycling, and composting laws.

Green Up Day, observed annually on the first Saturday of May, is a statewide effort where volunteers clean up roadside trash.

The town should continue to participate in Green Up Day activities.

K. Energy

See [Energy Facilities](#).

VI. Preservation

Mount Holly seeks to preserve rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features, and resources including but not limited to areas listed in Appendix A.

A. Natural Environment

1. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

Rare species (those with only a few populations in the state) face threats to their continued existence in Vermont from the development of their habitat, harassment, collection, and suppression of natural processes, such as fire. Endangered and threatened species are defined by both state and federal law. State law defines an endangered species as “a species listed as endangered under [\[10 V.S.A. Chapter 123\]](#) or determined to be an ‘endangered species’ under the federal Endangered Species Act.”

The town recognizes the significant contribution that rare, threatened, and endangered species make to our natural heritage and the health of Vermont’s environment. Because of the precarious nature and status of their populations, the community believes that the conservation and protection of the habitats that support these elements of our fish, wildlife, and natural heritage requires great vigilance. We therefore will support all efforts, under the state of Vermont’s Endangered Species Statute, or through other regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms, to conserve or otherwise protect those species and the habitats necessary for their continued survival.

2. Mast Stands

“Mast” is a term commonly used by foresters and wildlife biologists to describe the seeds of shrubs and trees that are eaten by wildlife. “Hard mast” refers to nuts (especially those of beech and oaks), whereas “soft mast” refers to berries of a variety of species. Hard mast is generally acknowledged as an important wildlife food source.

Mast stands that are important to black bears and other wildlife should be protected from development and other uses and activities that threaten the ability of this habitat to support wildlife. Commercial, residential, and industrial development, as well as certain types of timber harvest activities (large patch cuts or clear cuts), shall not occur within the mapped mast stands. Development within 300 feet of a mapped mast stand will be

permitted only if, after consultation with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, it is shown that the integrity of the mast stand will be conserved.

The town will maintain and protect the functional integrity of all mast stands and increase the number of acres of mast stand habitat that is under long-term stewardship or conserved in the town.

3. Deer Wintering Areas

To cope with Vermont's severe climatic conditions, deer have developed a survival mechanism that relies upon the use, access, and availability of winter habitat. These areas are known as deer wintering areas, or more commonly "deer yards." Deer winter habitat is defined as areas of mature or maturing softwood cover, with aspects tending towards the south, southeast, southwest, or even westerly and easterly facing slopes.

Commercial, residential, and industrial development, as well as certain types of timber harvest activities (large patch cuts or clear cuts), should not occur within the mapped deer wintering areas. Development within 300 feet of a deer wintering area will be permitted only if, after consultation with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, it is shown that the integrity of the deer wintering area will be conserved. Note: 300 feet is the minimum distance required to avoid disturbance to wintering deer.

The town will maintain and protect the functional integrity of all deer wintering areas and increase the number of acres of deer wintering habitat that is under long-term stewardship or conserved in the town.

4. Geologic and Mineral Resources

Bedrock in the town consists of rocks of the Mount Holly Complex, which form the core of the Green Mountain massif. Most of the Mount Holly region has a cover of surficial deposits less than 20 feet thick over bedrock or exposed bedrock. The area is dominated by Late Pleistocene (~129,000 – 11,700 years ago) glacial till. Till is generally thicker in valleys and thinner in the uplands. The second most abundant surficial units are ice-contact deposits (kame terraces, and kame moraines).

The primary known mineral resources in town are sands, gravels, and some clays left by the retreat of the glaciers. The sands and gravels are especially obvious along parts of VT-103, adjacent to VT-155, and in a few other isolated locations where they have generally been removed for construction purposes in the past. A large rock quarry exists on the north slope of Okemo Mountain just south of VT-103 at the Mount Holly–Ludlow town line. Material was removed from this site for construction of the relocated VT-103 in the 1960s.

Reportedly uranium exists on Okemo Mountain, and there are some small outcrops of asbestos also occurring in town. Quantities of clay and asbestos are probably not present in quantities economically worth removal. Previous attempts to extract uranium from Okemo State Forest resulted in State legislation⁸ requiring legislative approval and an Act 250 permit for future uranium mining in the state.

The extraction of earth resources, including sand, gravel, and stone, shall not interfere with or have negative impacts on groundwater, fragile areas, wildlife habitat, air quality (dust and noise), community resources including recreation and special sites and areas, or neighboring property owners. Extraction sites must handle truck traffic without creating congestion or unsafe travel conditions on town roads and bridges. Those responsible for extracting earth and mineral resources shall prepare a site rehabilitation plan that provides for the restoration of the natural and aesthetic character of the land and that ensures a safe, attractive, and useful condition of the land. Extraction of fission source materials, including uranium, shall not be allowed.

Remains of a woolly mammoth were discovered in a bog in the summer of 1848 during the construction of the railway near Summit. On May 5, 2014, Governor Peter Shumlin signed House Bill No. 589 and established that “the state terrestrial fossil shall be the Mount Holly mammoth tooth and tusk at the Mount Holly Community Historical Museum.”

5. Fragile Areas

Steeper slopes and areas of higher elevation are most vulnerable to environmental degradation. Accordingly, disturbance of earth, grading, or clearing of vegetation on slopes between 15% and 25% should be avoided or minimized. Construction of roads and structures in areas predominated by slopes exceeding 25% shall be prohibited.

Elevations above 2,000 feet shall be protected from intensive uses and commercial recreation. Development at elevations between 2,000 and 2,300 feet shall not adversely affect the fragile ecosystems and scenic quality of the terrain. No new development of any kind shall be allowed over 2,300 feet.

Bedrock outcroppings, shallow soils, or probable areas of shallow and wet soils, are also fragile areas where disturbance of earth, grading, or clearing of vegetation should be avoided or minimized.

⁸ 1979, No. 123 (Adj. Sess.).

6. Climate Resilience

Climate change imperils the natural environment of our town. While the scope of the change is global, our small town is not powerless and along with our neighboring communities may play an outsized role in addressing the challenge.

The town shall take action to promote and conserve forested areas and curb forest fragmentation which will aid in sequestering carbon in our forests and soils.

7. Management of Invasive Species

Invasive species are plants and animals that are not native to Vermont and that have negative effects on our economy, our environment, or our health.

The devastation caused by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer to roadside trees is expected to be a significant financial and labor burden to the town as the epidemic approaches the borders of our town.

The town should complete a roadside ash tree inventory to be used as a guide for the removal or treatment of these trees before heavy Emerald Ash Borer infestation.

Our roads offer aesthetic value and many recreational uses. Correspondingly, roadside management practices should put a high priority on maintaining the safety and health of roadside vegetation. See also [Transportation](#).

The town should adopt a mowing policy where roadsides with invasive species are mowed before they go to seed, and mowing equipment is cleaned to avoid spreading invasive seed or plant parts to other parts of the town. Areas of known invasive species should be mapped so that their control and removal can be prioritized, and so that mowing schedules can be adjusted based on the species' growing season.

The town should consider using the VTrans Best Management Practice for Roadside Terrestrial Invasive Plants.

Invasive plants such as Phragmites, Japanese knotweed, Garlic Mustard, Purple Loosestrife, Goutweed, Wild Parsnip, Wild Chervil, and Giant Hogweed, are already confirmed to be present throughout the town.

The town encourages the management and removal of invasive and noxious insect and plant species.

The town should collaborate with local conservation groups to identify and map invasive plant species, especially but not limited to those along roads and highways, and identify methods to eradicate them and/or control their spread.

The town should prioritize control and removal of invasive plants based on their specific characteristics (e.g., toxicity, prevalence, propensity to spread), locations, and density.

8. Night Sky

A dark night sky is an important part of the rural character for which our community is so proud. In the past, Mount Holly's distance and topographic isolation from large population centers provided a unique resource in the darkness of its night sky. This resource has been diminished by increased amounts of outdoor lighting within Mount Holly and by development in the nearby towns of Ludlow and Rutland. Numerous studies have shown that such outdoor artificial light has numerous negative and deadly effects on many types of wildlife including birds, amphibians, insects, and mammals. To protect our dark night sky:

- Where existing fixtures are replaced, the project shall demonstrate how they will reduce light pollution, or at a minimum not increase it.
- Where new installation or lighting retrofit projects are proposed, they shall be demonstrated to be necessary and designed to have minimal impact.
- To reduce skyglow, glare, spill light, and over-lighting, indoor and outdoor lighting shall be minimized and shall contain and minimize the emission of light beyond the intended target. Wherever possible, outdoor lighting fixtures shall be pointed downward and shielded against horizontal and upward projection. Light emitted towards or above the horizon can have extraordinarily high environmental impacts.
- To prevent overlighting, actual illumination levels shall be as close as reasonably practical to the minimum values recommended by accredited professional bodies (such as IES and CIE) and appropriate for the task and environmental setting.
- New installations shall have active controls to reduce illumination levels or extinguish lighting completely based on the time of day or occupancy. Such controls are currently underutilized in outdoor lighting and can substantially reduce light pollution and save energy. Energy conservation codes are increasingly calling for active controls.

- The spectral content, or color, of light shall be limited to only what is necessary for the task. Because of the disproportionate impact on the nighttime environment, particular attention should be paid to reducing the total emissions of short-wavelength or “blue” light (defined for this plan between the wavelengths of 380 nm and 520 nm) through light source spectrum management.
 - To minimize negative environmental impacts, lamps rated at 2,200K CCT, Phosphor-Converted Amber LED, or some filtered LED are recommended.
 - When higher than 2,200K CCT is necessary to meet lighting objectives, the total emission of blue light into the environment shall be kept as low as reasonably possible through low intensities, careful targeting, and reduced operating times. In no event should more than 2,700K CCT ever be considered.
 - Near sensitive sites, such as conservation areas, sensitive wildlife habitats, ecological reserves, parks, astronomical observatories, or stargazing sites, lighting installations shall use 0% blue light and a narrower spectrum of emission.
 - Critically sensitive environments shall be kept naturally dark.

The town should work with neighboring municipalities to reduce the amount of excess illumination emitted.

B. Habitat Connectivity and Fragmentation

Mount Holly’s forests are being fragmented by rural, largely residential, sprawl. This phenomenon occurs incrementally. Over time, non-forest pockets, roads, and highways multiply and expand. Eventually, the forest is fragmented and reduced to scattered and disconnected forest islands. These remnants are surrounded by land uses that threaten the health, function, and value of the forest island for animal and plant habitat, and for human use. As forest fragments become ever smaller, practicing forestry becomes operationally impractical and economically nonviable.

Physical conditions (including but not limited to soils, slopes, elevation, critical habitats, wetlands, drainage channels, flood hazard areas, and riparian areas) may limit the nature or extent of development that is appropriate for a particular site. Protection of forests, wetlands, agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and other important natural resources should also influence subdivision design.

Plans for subdivisions or residential developments shall consider natural resource opportunities and constraints first, and then design appropriate

plans with these opportunities and constraints in mind. The intent is to conserve or protect natural resources while allowing reasonable land development that is sensitive to the landscape, ecologically appropriate, and which allows efficient provision of services. Consequently, subdivisions within the town, particularly in the more rural areas outside the Village and Municipal Center should: (1) identify all potential conservation or open space areas first; (2) locate appropriate house sites; (3) design road alignments and trails, respecting and protecting existing trail alignments and corridors; and (4) draw in lot lines. Appropriate safeguards should be created for the long-term protection of the resulting conserved or reserved land so that further subdivision of this land does not take place in the future.

The town shall consider the effects of habitat connectivity and fragmentation in subdivision design and other development plans.

The town will ensure that animals and plants can move freely between conserved lands and land under long-term stewardship, contiguous forest habitat, and other important habitats, land features, and natural communities to meet all their requirements for survival by

- *Increasing the acreage of connecting lands; and*
 - *Protecting or conserving important wildlife corridors from encroaching development and incompatible activities, such as road expansion or development of new roads, by restricting development in and around corridors. These resources will be given high priority in considering lands for acquisition or other long-term conservation efforts; and*
- Establishing a network of connecting habitats that connect all conserved lands, lands under long-term stewardship, or other habitats identified as important. These resources will be given high priority in considering lands for acquisition or other long-term conservation efforts.*

Opportunities for varied forms of outdoor recreation are also adversely impacted by forest fragmentation. Hunting remains a major form of recreation for Vermonters, and for some, it is a key source of fresh and nutritious food. Just as wildlife requires large expanses of uninterrupted habitat, so do hunters. Other favorite recreational pastimes, such as birdwatching, hiking, camping, and cross-country skiing, also require large blocks of undeveloped land.

C. Scenic Areas

Natural features such as forests, meadows, rivers, streams, ponds, and ridgelines should be conserved, and development should generally be clustered in more appropriate areas. Roads should follow natural contours, and not carve straight lines across the landscape. Buildings should be sited below ridgelines; ideally, below the crest line, so they do not intrude upon the skyline. Shared driveways are encouraged, as they minimize the number of curb-cuts along public roads, and are economically and ecologically more efficient.

Structures built on highly visible slopes, ridgelines, or summits shall be screened or softened so that they present minimal intrusion into the natural slopes and landscape, and shall have fully shielded outdoor lighting. This does not mean that all new development must be invisible; rather, that new development should be sited sensitively and carefully, consistent with the values described here. This may require unique ways of siting buildings, maintaining a certain percentage of tree stems or tree canopy, or other creative techniques that place buildings on the land in ways that allow new structures to fit harmoniously into the landscape.

Structures built on lots with frontage on lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams shall be constructed consistent with the town's Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw and Vermont's Shoreland Protection Act, including the latter's shoreline best management practices. Further, to the maximum extent possible, structures on lakes and ponds shall be screened from view with trees and shrubbery to protect the scenic character of these areas.

Private property owners with lakeshore frontage should be encouraged to participate in the [Lake Wise Program](#), an initiative of the Agency of Natural Resources that encourages lakeshore landscaping and maintenance that protects the health of lakes. The State offers technical assistance and assessments, and awards certificates that a property is well-managed and maintained to care for the lake.

Critical scenic areas and viewsheds include:

- View from VT-103 at any point between addresses 573 VT-103 – 1313 VT-103 across Winslow Flats, so-called, between the landmarks of Mount Holly hill and Sawyer Rocks.
- View across Lake Ninevah from Lake Ninevah Road and the vantage point of the State boat launch.
- View across Star Lake to the northeast from the vantage point of the Star Lake Recreation Area.

- View of the prominence of Okemo Mountain and South Mountain from public roadways (or for example, 1206 Shunpike Road).
- View of Sawyer Rocks from the vantage point of the VT-103 bridge over Branch Brook.
- View across conserved agricultural fields toward the National Forest from vantage points on VT-155 between Scampsville Road and 4841 VT-155.

Scenic roads include:

- Maple Hill Road (from Straight Road to VT-155)
- Okemo Mountain Road (from the town line to the terminus)

The town should consider scenic values in development and land use decisions.

See also [Night Sky](#).

D. Historic Sites

Preservation of the town's historic heritage is essential in providing important, tangible connections to our past, and thus, to who we are as a community. Historic structures described in the National Register of Historic Places, the Vermont State Register of Historic Places, the Historic Architecture of Rutland County, and the Vermont Architectural Resource Inventory (VARI) should be preserved, and all efforts should be made to ensure the continued use and upkeep of these buildings. Exterior renovations and new construction within the town's designated historic village should consider compatibility with and enhancement of the district. However, the town recognizes that individual buildings, historic districts, and the core as a whole are not museums. Seeking to preserve history, without also considering present and future needs, may ultimately doom older buildings to neglect or lack of economic viability.

With the Mill River, Branch Brook, and other important tributaries flowing throughout, and a natural travel corridor through the Green Mountains corresponding to present-day VT-103, Mount Holly was certainly once an important landscape for Native American peoples. No Native American archaeological sites have yet been documented in Mount Holly. This is likely due to a lack of large-scale surveys and to modern development along some valley corridors. Nevertheless, where areas near water or wetlands remain undisturbed, many sites likely remain undiscovered. Historic archaeological sites related to early settlement, agriculture, and industry are also located within Mount Holly's borders.

Cumulatively and individually, these known and yet-to-be-discovered sites constitute tangible links to the rich cultural, religious, social, economic, and technological traditions of past generations of Vermonters. These resources can help us understand little-known chapters of Vermont's history. Precontact archaeological sites, in particular, are often the only sources of information about the thousands of years of human history before European contact. Historic-era archaeological resources are educational and recreational assets to communities and certain sites can be important attractions to residents and potentially even to tourists.

Historic archaeological sites shall be preserved and protected whenever possible to ensure these vital cultural resources will be available to enjoy, appreciate, and study in the future.

Burial sites have special protections. Vermont state law prohibits the disturbance of burial sites of any kind, even on private land. This includes unmarked burials as well as those marked with memorial stones.

Stone walls are an essential part of the rural Vermont landscape and an important part of the cultural history of New England. They also serve a critical and often irreplaceable historical purpose as survey monuments. A particularly noteworthy stone wall marks the historical boundary between Ludlow and Jackson's Gore and between Jackson's Gore and Wallingford . Historic stone walls shall be maintained and preserved unless there is a strong evidence-based case that the benefits of removing the walls outweigh the costs of losing irreplaceable historic assets.

The following sites are identified as particularly noteworthy and shall be prioritized for preservation.

Belmont Village was listed in the State Register of Historic Places in 1980. The village was originally called Mechanicsville on account of the large number of mills and manufacturing concerns that developed in the 19th century around the waterpower of Star Lake, then known as Jackson's Pond. The name of the village was changed to Belmont in 1911 when its attraction as a summer resort community replaced manufacturing as a source of prosperity. Its historic buildings, of which about 40 are architecturally and historically important, date from the late 1700s to the early 1900s and range from simple to stylish in their architectural details.

The **Green Mountain Cottage** was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2021. During the second half of the nineteenth century, this property consisted of a circa 1850 house and associated agricultural outbuildings. In the mid-1880s, the Chadburn family converted it into a tourist home/inn known as

the Green Mountain Cottage. Notwithstanding improvements and the demolition of some of the outbuildings since then, Green Mountain Cottage retains a high degree of integrity in location, setting, design, materials, feeling, workmanship, and association.

The Anthony Scoville House (a.k.a., "**Corbu**") is of exceptional importance at the local and state level as being one of only a small number of known examples of International Style residential buildings in the State of Vermont. The house was designed by architect Anthony Scoville, a graduate of Yale University, based on the architectural ideals espoused by Le Corbusier. It was built between 1964 and 1968 by his fellow Yale students and friends on his 350-acre estate. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

The **Okemo Mountain Fire Tower** is a well-preserved example of a USDA Forest Service "7' x 7' Lookout Tower with Inside Stairs", built by the Civilian Conservation Corps between 1934 and 1937. It stands on the summit of Okemo Mountain (also known as Ludlow Mountain) at an elevation of 3,343', in Okemo State Forest. In 2023, it was added to the National Historic Lookout Register and nominated to the State Register of Historic Places.

The **Crowley Cheese Factory**, at 14 Crowley Lane in Healdville, is believed to be the oldest continuously operating cheese factory in the United States and is listed on the National Historic Register.

In 1849, the Rutland and Burlington Railroad completed excavation of the **Summit Cut**, a deep rock cut about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long, where the rail line crosses the Green Mountains. The location is significant as the site of the discovery of the mammoth remains and the place where trains from Burlington and Boston first met at the highest elevation between the two cities to drive the last spike.

The **Crown Point Road** was an early British military road that connected Fort Crown Point to Fort Number 4 which later became Charlestown, New Hampshire. The earliest route, circa 1759, most likely followed that of an earlier road known as the Indian Road and entered Mount Holly in an area now known as Buttermilk Falls and continued northwest, following close to the present Shunpike Road through Hortonville Four Corners, and into Shrewsbury. Along this route are two points of significance. The first point, across the Branch Brook from where Station Road meets VT-103, was the historical 28-mile Encampment. The second, along the side of Shunpike Road, is the "34C" Crown Point Road monument. Before 1776, the road was relocated farther north. It entered town near the intersection of Lake Ninevah

Road and Old County Road in Plymouth and continued south of Proctor Hill westerly toward what is now called Perry Road. Today, marker “34A” memorializes the location of the historical “Halfway Encampment.” From there the road headed west and rejoined the original 1759 road near the Shrewsbury town line.

VII. Educational Facilities

In December 1956, the Mount Holly Elementary School began educating 76 students (grades 1-8). Kindergarten was added to the school in 1971, and at the same time grades 7 & 8, along with the upperclassmen, started going to Black River Union High School in Ludlow.

Today, Mount Holly Elementary can house a population of 140 students, according to the school's principal. The current school population (pre-kindergarten to grade 6), is 108 students. In 2018 Mount Holly and Ludlow unified to create their own district (Ludlow–Mount Holly Union Unified School District) within the Two Rivers Supervisory Union (TRSU).

Since Mount Holly and TRSU do not offer enrollment for grades 7–12, families may choose to use public funds for tuition in any other school that does.

The school offers many amenities for learning and recreation. The grounds host a small nature trail and nearby outdoor classrooms. In 2023, a bicycle “pump track” was installed. The students and faculty have expressed a desire for increased access to nearby trails, woods, and fields for more opportunities to explore, recreate, and learn in a natural environment.

The town should look for opportunities to create a Community Park and Forest to enhance access to outdoor educational and recreational facilities for students and residents alike.

While substantial changes to the existing structure are difficult due to requirements for upgraded fire suppression, an annex may be added to, for example, enhance the school music curriculum or offer occupational and physical therapy. The location of this addition would likely displace part of the current playground equipment, some of which is located on a neighboring privately owned parcel of land. There may be an opportunity for some of the new modern and safe playground equipment to be located on a neighboring parcel outside of the school grounds so that the public may benefit from their use as well.

The town should work with the school and the landowner to permanently resolve the issue of the use of private land for public facilities.

Some improvements are needed for better energy efficiency and comfort such as enhancing the building's insulation and replacing the old oil boiler and in-ground fuel tank with a more cost-effective and sustainable alternative.

The school building is the primary emergency shelter location for the town and some improvements are needed for that purpose, such as air conditioning and standby generator backup power. See *also* [Emergency Management](#).

Mount Holly Elementary offers an afterschool program for children 4-years and older to assist working parents with after-school childcare from 3–5 PM each school day. The Mount Holly After School Program is a part of the TRSU After School Program. The TRSU After School program is for children in grades K–6 at Mount Holly School during the school year and for 9 weeks during the summer. See *also* [Child Care](#).

The Mount Holly Parent Teacher Group is committed to employing the talent and energy of our community to further enrich students' and families' experiences at the school. The association is a positive step toward building a sense of community and involvement.

The Farm and Wilderness Foundation (F&W) operates outdoor experiential education programs in the area of Lake Ninevah during the summer. These programs focus on hiking, camping, and other skills of outdoor living. F&W's conservation arm, Farm and Wilderness Conservation, offers after-school programming for the Elementary School.

The town should continue to work with local organizations to offer after-school programs providing educational enrichment activities.

VIII. Energy

Act 174 of 2016 established a new set of municipal energy planning standards. Meeting the standards is entirely voluntary; if municipalities do not wish to update their plans, they will continue to receive due consideration in the Section 248 process. However, plans that meet the requirements of a state statute ([24 V.S.A. § 4352](#)), known as enhanced energy plans, carry greater weight—substantial deference—in Section 248 siting processes for energy generation. At this time, Mount Holly does not have an enhanced energy plan.

A. Siting

This plan may not specifically prohibit solar, wind, and other energy generation from a site but shall identify areas that are protected from development. In siting energy facilities, protected wetlands, river corridors, critical wildlife corridors, scenic areas and viewsheds, elevations above 2,000 feet, high-priority core forests, uninterrupted forest blocks, and rare natural communities, all should be excluded from areas of suitability.

Any site housing a ground-mounted solar energy generation facility must be screened along any road frontage by a buffer that is landscaped and naturally vegetated with an adequate mix of trees and shrubs, taking into account terrain, maintained and planted in a manner that naturally screens the proposed facility.

The town should consider adopting an ordinance to establish screening requirements that shall apply to a ground-mounted plant that generates electricity from solar energy (as authorized by [24 V.S.A. § 2291\(28\)](#)).

A facility that has been out of service for more than 180 days will be considered abandoned and the owner must remove it unless she/he can demonstrate to the town that energy generation will resume at a specified future date.

B. Efficiency

The Mount Holly heating season is approximately seven months long and heating costs are a substantial burden on property owners. Substantial economic savings can be realized through energy conservation.

The state has recently extended the energy savings and resilience concept of the State Energy Management Program to Vermont municipalities. The Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) provides staff support,

application and technical assistance, and funding to increase energy resilience, reduce energy use and operating costs, and curb greenhouse gas emissions by promoting weatherization, thermal improvements, fuel switching, renewable energy, battery storage, electric vehicle charging, and enhanced comfort in municipal buildings.

The town should pursue MERP grants for energy assessments and improvements to all municipal buildings.

C. Facilities

Green Mountain Power (GMP) provides electrical power to the majority of the town through a network of overhead and some underground (known as “cable and conduit”) lines. There is an ongoing effort to move “cross country” wire and poles to run along roads.

The town should consider granting permission to bury select utilities in the road right of way.

GMP owns and operates a substation located at 756 Old Turnpike Road. It serves all of the town with the exception of the Okemo Mountain Resort facilities served by Ludlow Electric.

GMP maintains a cross-country 46 kV transmission line within an easement mostly across private land.

3-Phase power is located along VT-103 between East Wallingford and the GMP substation.

The Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) owns and operates two high-voltage AC power transmission lines (300 kV, 115 kV) within easements across mostly private land. They maintain a road under the lines for maintenance access.

The planned New England Clean Power Link (NECPL) Transmission Line is a 1,000 MW High Voltage direct current (HVdc) that would extend south from the U.S./Canada international border approximately 154 miles, and through Mount Holly, to a new converter station in Ludlow and the existing Coolidge Substation in the towns of Ludlow and Cavendish. In Mount Holly, the line would be buried within the VT-103 right-of-way.

Any new transmission lines shall be run along or within existing road and State highway rights-of-way, and buried wherever possible, to avoid or minimize fragmentation of forest blocks and natural communities, or

disruption of wildlife habitat, and to preserve scenic viewsheds and the aesthetic character of the town.

IX. Housing

A. Trends

The most recent updates to the Census estimates showed the full-time population of Mount Holly was 1,385 people in 2020. This represents a 10% increase from 2010 when the population was 1,237.

Mount Holly stands out among the Rutland Region in terms of housing demand. The 2023 Rutland Region Housing Needs Assessment states, “In 2020, nearly 700 more households than in 2010 reported living in the Rutland region most of the time. Half of these additional year-round households were located in Killington, Mount Holly and Poultney.”

The 2021 American Community Survey estimates reveal that the median age is 54.1 years, which is higher than the median age of Rutland County (47.2 years). Approximately 38% of residents are aged 60 or older, while approximately 16.5% are aged 18 and under. The most-represented age class, consisting of 12.9% of the population, is ages 65-69.

The 2020 Census estimates there are 1,043 total housing units present. The 2021 American Community Survey estimates that 565 of these are occupied year-round (54% of the total). Of these, 508 are owner-occupied units and 57 are renter-occupied units. The remaining 478 units are either seasonal or short-term rental units, are used seasonally by the owner, or remain vacant.

There are an estimated 90–100 short-term rental units as of 2023.

B. Needs

According to surveys, many older Vermonters would rather stay in their homes as they age (known as “**aging in place**”), and only move to a nursing home or assisted living facility when it will increase their social connections and improve their lifestyle.

Our aging demographics and housing affordability issues pose challenges to the vitality of our community. We rely on young resident families to fill our school, staff volunteer services, and care for our elders.

Staffing of vital town services, such as fire and first response, depends on the availability of affordable housing within a 5-minute drive of the Municipal Center.

The town should work with property owners to identify areas within a 5-minute drive to the Municipal Center and Belmont Village that can be developed to increase the housing stock.

The town should work with local property owners and private organizations, and seek grants if and when available, to find affordable housing solutions to aid in recruitment and retention of personnel necessary for the delivery of town services.

With a village center designation from the Vermont Downtown Board, the town has the option to pursue a **Neighborhood Development Area (NDA)** designation. This designation allows developers of residential projects exemption from Act 250 permitting and other incentives to develop walkable residential neighborhoods near the village center.

The town should work with landowners and developers to identify areas within walking distance of the Village Center that can be developed for new or infill housing that doesn't contribute to sprawl.

An **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)** is a smaller, independent dwelling unit that is located on the same lot as an existing single-family home. ADUs can increase the supply of housing without using up more land.

The town should consider policies that encourage the use of ADUs for permanent or long-term housing.

C. Affordability

Land and housing in Mount Holly remain more desirable, and therefore more expensive, than in many other Vermont communities. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines unaffordable housing as households that spend 30% or more of their monthly income towards housing expenses. In 2021, one-third of Mount Holly's households live in unaffordable housing.

The reasons for this are often attributed to several factors including the town's natural environment, resilience to the effects of climate change, the high-quality school, excellent broadband, and proximity to ski areas. While the town values the high quality of the natural and built environments, this creates continuing problems related to affordability. Indeed, many residents wonder whether their children will be able to stay (or return to) and raise families in their hometown.

In January 2024, the town accepted an award of a municipal planning grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development and plans to create a housing needs assessment and action plan.

The town should consider adopting policies consistent with the resulting housing needs assessment and action plan that keep housing affordable for residents of diverse ages and income levels.

The town faces several challenges in providing affordable housing. Taking action to address the following challenges will help accommodate the housing needs of low and moderate-income families.

D. Challenges

Since at least 1973, **sewage disposal** has been identified as one of the primary constraints to providing additional housing capacity in town. Most of the soils in the town are not suitable for in-ground septic systems and engineered or alternative disposal systems are more costly to construct and maintain. The space requirements of these systems preclude their use in the very small lot size that typifies much of the village, and so contributes to undesirable growth patterns. A village-based wastewater disposal system would serve the needs of existing residents and provide more opportunities for much-needed additional in-fill housing. In-fill housing refers to building within unused and underutilized lands within existing development patterns. In a 2023 mailed survey of Belmont area property owners, over two-thirds of respondents agreed that the town should seek grant funding for a village wastewater feasibility study.

The town should pursue capacity planning and feasibility studies for a village wastewater disposal solution to maintain the vitality of the historic village center and increase in-fill housing capacity.

In Vermont, a **short-term rental** (STR) is defined as a furnished house, condominium, or other dwelling room or self-contained dwelling unit rented to the transient, traveling, or vacationing public for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year. STRs contribute positively to the Vermont tourism industry and may help make owning property in Mount Holly more affordable by offsetting mortgages, and property taxes.

The direct effects of the STR market on the availability of long-term rental (LTR) housing in Mount Holly are not yet precisely known. However, there has been a proliferation of STR (90–100 hosts as of 2023) and an insufficient

number of LTRs available. Unregulated STR may also contribute to problems with the affordability of housing.

The town, after conducting a housing study, should consider adopting an ordinance to regulate short-term rentals (as authorized by [24 V.S.A. § 2291\(29\)](#)) to ensure the safety of occupants, limit the negative effects on town services, limit nuisance and conflict, and mitigate the effect on residential housing.

STRs are subject to the Vermont Meals and Rooms tax. In addition, a town may choose to charge a local option tax ([24 V.S.A. § 138](#)) on any one or all of the following: 1) meals and alcohol, 2) rooms, or 3) any items subject to sales tax. See also [Future Growth](#).

The town should consider whether to adopt a local option tax on meals, alcohol, rooms, and sales.

X. Economic Development

A. Trends

The 2021 American Community Survey estimates that Mount Holly's median household income is \$59,395 and that 14% of residents are living in poverty. The poverty line threshold is a set of values that vary by family size and family composition; it is used by the Census Bureau to determine who is living in poverty.

The employment rate is estimated to be 56.8%. Approximately 40% are retired persons, students, those taking care of children or other family members, and others who are neither working nor seeking work. 12.8% are self-employed.

The average travel time to work is approximately 25 minutes and an estimated 8.8% of people work from home.

B. Challenges

Housing affordability must be a key component of any economic development strategy. If affordable housing stock is not available, then the pool of potential employees will be a limiting factor no matter how successful any other economic development strategies may be. Housing issues are discussed in detail in the previous section along with housing policies and goals.

Economic development means more than just attracting new industries, or creating new jobs. It also means protecting a high quality of life, providing high-quality educational opportunities, and providing high-quality infrastructure. Protecting Mount Holly's quality of life has been, and will continue to be, a paramount factor in the town's long-range vitality and success. No matter what strategies are pursued for economic development, the town must guard carefully its attractiveness as a place to live and visit. Accordingly, Mount Holly's natural beauty and uniqueness are two of its greatest assets. Its long-term success as a livable community depends in large part on how well we maintain and enhance those assets. The goals and policies in this plan are intended to help maintain Mount Holly's high quality of life for its residents, and its uniqueness and attractiveness to visitors.

Vermont, as in many other rural states, has a long tradition of people who work from their homes, either as a primary or supplemental source of income. The advent of telecommuting, home offices, and flexible job scheduling has made working from home even more common. For regulatory purposes, a home occupation is generally defined as any activity carried on within a

dwelling by a resident of that dwelling to earn income. State law protects the existence of home occupations and also authorizes municipalities to regulate home occupations to ensure that they do not have an “undue adverse effect” on the surrounding area.

C. Future Growth

The town has seen modest economic growth and development for the past 20 years, primarily in the construction and service sectors.

Mount Holly’s grand list includes 1201 properties with total assessed values of \$287.8 million. A recent Equalization Study from the State Department of Taxes determined that the town’s grand list accounts for only 88.8% of a property’s true market value. Consequently, the town is subject to a statutory order to reappraise. The last reappraisal was in 2010. This correction is likely to add at least \$36 million to property valuations. The General Fund receives just under 20% of the total taxes raised. The remainder goes to the state education fund and the local school district.

The 2023–2024 approved town budget required \$1.1M to be raised by property tax. The budget includes approximately \$732,600 for highway expenses (or 67% of the total), but approximately \$130,000 of that expense is defrayed from other sources, such as state grants.

This Plan encourages small businesses to locate in Mount Holly, especially home occupation, home industry and other businesses that could be expected to employ local residents. High bandwidth internet service sufficient to support even the most demanding enterprises is now available throughout town. With this critical infrastructure now in place, the town should exploit its availability to support the siting of non-traditional digital and remote workers and enterprises in the town.

Continued economic development offers an opportunity to address deferred maintenance of town facilities and services through revenue that doesn’t come directly from property taxes. A town may choose to charge a local option tax ([24 V.S.A. § 138](#)) on any one or all of the following: 1) meals and alcohol, 2) rooms, or 3) any items subject to sales tax.

The town should consider whether to adopt a local option tax on meals, alcohol, rooms, and sales.

New commercial and industrial development shall be of a nature that fits with the character of the community; have no adverse effect on traffic, aesthetics, and town services; and not emit noise, odor, or light that disturbs neighbors’

peaceful enjoyment of their property. Any development shall have a small footprint on the landscape and limit impervious surfaces. For information on where economic development should be promoted, see [Land Use](#) and [Future Land Use](#) and associated maps. Small-scale manufacturing and retail are allowed in the *Mixed Use* land use areas. Small-scale home occupations are encouraged. Large-scale commercial and industrial development shall not be allowed.

Industrial and commercial activity shall not be allowed in *Wetland and Riparian* or *Forest and Conservation* areas.

Economic development is hampered by the lack of a municipal wastewater disposal system. See also [Housing Challenges](#).

The town should pursue capacity planning and feasibility studies for a village wastewater disposal solution to maintain the vitality of the historic village center and increase opportunities for economic development.

See also [Commerce and Industry](#).

XI. Flood Resilience

Following the devastation of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, the Vermont Legislature added a requirement that all communities address flood resilience as part of their municipal plans. Flood resilience is planning for a municipality's capacity to absorb a flood-related shock and recover quickly as well as be prepared for future events. As such, this planning is now required by [24 V.S.A. § 4382](#)(12)(B) as well as by the town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP).

[Scientific evidence](#) confirms that climate change is causing even more frequent and severe storms and floods. Hence, we must take action to protect our natural resources, personal property, and quality of life.

Mount Holly participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which provides flood hazard insurance at subsidized rates for property owners in affected areas. To qualify for federal insurance, towns must adopt and retain a bylaw to control land development within these areas. Minimum standards must be included and approved by FEMA. The Town of Mount Holly has adopted and administers flood hazard area regulations.

In 2023, the town adopted a new Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw. The new regulations enhance flood resilience by regulating new development within FEMA-mapped flood hazard areas and ANR-mapped river corridors. These new regulations entitle the town to the maximum reimbursement allowed for disaster recovery.

The town will administer and enforce its Flood Hazard and River Corridor Bylaw and encourage the implementation of other mitigation measures to realize the goal of being a flood-resilient community.

The areas identified as "Wetland and Riparian" in the Future Land Use Map are unsuitable for development and shall be protected.

The town recognizes that resilience extends beyond the mitigation of flood and fluvial erosion hazards. As articulated in *Vermont's Roadmap to Resilience: Preparing for Natural Disasters and the Effects of Climate Change in the Green Mountain State*,⁹ Vermont communities need to recognize the potential impacts of climate change beyond flooding and build resilience to other potential disasters, including drought, wildfires, and winter storms.

⁹ Institute for Sustainable Communities, 2013

Hazard mitigation planning is one way to become more resilient and better protect lives, property, and natural systems. The purpose of mitigation planning is to identify policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP) form the foundation for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

The Mount Holly Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, as most recently adopted, is incorporated into this Plan by reference and provides more information about flood and erosion hazards in town.

The town shall update and re-adopt the LHMP at least every 5 years to ensure all content remains current and accurate.

The town should use the LHMP for capital planning and implement all mitigation actions.

The evidence from past flooding suggests that a significant portion of the damage to public roads was related to the impact of access from private property. Poorly situated driveways, improperly designed driveway culverts, and incomplete stormwater management have a significant cost and risk to the town.

The town should work with private landowners to identify undersized or improperly designed driveway culverts and help find funding for their replacement.

The town should adopt a Highway Access Policy with improved standards for stormwater management.

The Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF) awards grants to mitigate flood hazards and reduce future flooding in Vermont, including buyouts of flood-vulnerable properties; conservation of vacant, at-risk parcels; and natural resource projects to restore floodplain access and flood storage. The program aims to reduce future public safety and water quality impacts of climate-related flood hazards. This is a voluntary program that will prioritize projects in communities and/or for homeowners with the greatest economic need and projects that mitigate repetitive loss among low-income and marginalized portions of the population. This project is jointly managed by Vermont Emergency Management and the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is administered by Vermont Emergency Management on behalf of the state. Typically, federal funds are available to cover up to 75% of approved project costs; and there is a 25% local match requirement that is the responsibility of the applicant town.

Typical hazard mitigation projects include mitigation of local roads and bridges, home acquisition (buyout), structural elevations or relocations, replacement of undersized culverts, mitigation outreach and education, etc. Project proposals do not need to be directly connected to damages incurred from the most recent declared disaster.

The town should look for opportunities to use the Flood Resilient Communities Fund and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to reduce future impacts from floods and other natural disasters through flood-vulnerable property buyouts, floodplain restoration, buffer plantings, and infrastructure projects, such as upsizing culverts and bridges.

See also [Emergency Management](#).

XII. Implementation

Implementation of this Plan is a local responsibility. There are many ways to implement the goals and policies of this Plan that fall under two general categories: regulatory and non-regulatory.

Regulatory options consist of land use bylaws and other town ordinances, which can include numerous specific regulations that further the goals and policies in this Plan. The Act enables bylaws that can implement a municipal plan:

- Subdivision Regulations
- Official Map
- Zoning Regulations
- Shoreland Bylaws
- Flood Hazard Area Bylaws

Other Regulations that can be used to implement the plan include, but are not limited to:

- Highway Access / Curb Cut Ordinances
- Sign Ordinances
- Health Regulations
- Building Codes

Mount Holly has adopted subdivision regulations to implement this plan and guide the development of land.

The town should maintain and update these regulations as needed.

The current subdivision regulations, adopted in 1998, require an update. After June 30, 2007, state law has preempted or superseded parts of the current regulations ([10 V.S.A. § 1976](#)).

The town should update the regulations to bring them into full compliance with state law ([24 V.S.A. § 4481](#) and others), ensure conformance to this Plan, and improve the efficiency and ease of use for the applicant.

The town has had Flood Hazard Area Regulations since 2008. In 2023, a new Flood Hazard and River Corridors Bylaw was adopted.

The best process in which this Plan has a regulatory effect is during the Act 250 review process. The town is automatically a party to Act 250 proceedings which are triggered by certain kinds of development on any parcel in the

community greater than one acre in size. Participation in the Act 250 development review process is a significant opportunity to shape large-scale development projects. Clear community standards presented in the Plan are the most effective way for a town to shape growth to reflect community values.

Non-regulatory tools focus on what the community can do to mobilize community efforts and secure funding to achieve its goals. Such tools include, but are not limited to:

- **Capital Planning** – The capital budget and program provides an approach for municipalities to select, schedule, and finance their capital projects. The program sets forth the capital projects to be funded each year and identifies the source of funding for each project.
- **Public Engagement** - Successful implementation of this Plan depends on the voluntary actions of residents and landowners. Therefore, it is vital to help the community understand the need to plan for the future and how this Plan helps to convey the importance of local resources, facilities, and services.
- **Public Investment** – In conjunction with capital planning, public investment can include spending for water, transportation, education, solid waste, recreation, open space, housing, and more. Funds to pay for public investment can come from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, taxation, user fees, and governmental transfers (state aid) and grants.
- **Creation and/or nomination of historic districts or structures** to the National Register of Historic Places to increase interest in historic preservation and attract funding for projects.
- **Land Preservation Programs** – Such programs identify and prioritize land for preservation to be protected through a variety of techniques. These techniques, which are typically voluntary, involve direct work with property owners.
- **Village Center Designation** – Part of Belmont is currently designated as a Village Center by the State of Vermont. The designation shall be renewed every eight years to carry out goals and action items of this plan and to support land use goals of the State of Vermont, encouraging compact centers surrounded by rural working lands. It is a goal of this Plan to maintain this designation.
- **Acceptance or Purchase of Development Rights**
- **Supporting Plans** - such as:
 - Village Center Plan
 - Access Management Plan

- Open Space Plan

Many of the goals of this Plan are highly dependent on funding. Grants are an essential source of funding that doesn't overburden taxpayers in a small rural community. Knowing what grants are available is highly specialized knowledge and grant writing is a highly specialized skill. A key to writing effective grant applications is including the technical, and engineering details needed to make them "shovel-ready". Once a grant is awarded, it is vital that the grant be administered correctly and the project be managed effectively. Relying on volunteer labor for these important and specialized skills can be risky and overburden the volunteer labor pool.

The town should investigate hiring or retaining a grant specialist and administrator.

XIII. Regional Coordination

This Plan is an integral part of the regional and statewide planning process. This Plan was prepared in conformance with the requirements in the Vermont Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act ([24 V.S.A. § 4382](#)). As well, the Plan is compatible with approved plans from the surrounding communities of Shrewsbury, Plymouth, Ludlow, Andover, Weston, Mount Tabor, and Wallingford. Under the authority of the Select Board, the Mount Holly Planning Commission prepared this Plan.

This Plan promotes residential, agricultural, conservation, and small-scale commercial activities at levels consistent with the community's place at the rural, mountainous edge of the Rutland Region and the town's rich endowment of natural resources.

This Plan recognizes the need to accommodate some population and housing growth within the town. A review of the land use plans of surrounding communities suggests that the future land use pattern promoted by this Plan is generally compatible with those of neighboring municipalities in addition to the greater Rutland Region.

A review of new and existing development in nearby towns shall consider the effect it has on the rural quality of Mount Holly. The development shall cause no undue increase in air and water pollution, light pollution and trespass, skyglow, noise, and traffic in the Town of Mount Holly.

XIV. Appendix A: Inventory of Significant Natural Features

The **Green Mountain Wildlife Corridor** is a series of interconnected and conserved lands that create a critical link between the southern and northern blocks of the Green Mountain National Forest. In Mount Holly, this extends from the National Forest at the Weston line between Coleman Cliff and South Mountain, along the western flank of Okemo Mountain, over and around Sawyer Rocks, and broadly between Tiny Pond and Proctor Hill at the Plymouth town line.

The south-facing, calcium-enriched cliff-talus slope complex (named here **Coleman Cliff**), with toe slope seepage wetlands at the base, is a significant ecological feature. The slope is a Northern Hardwood Talus Woodland and is a state-significant example of this natural community.

South Mountain, at 3215 feet high, provides habitat for Bicknell's Thrush and other high-elevation songbirds, and its large unbroken forests are considered critical habitat for black bears. The western slopes of South Mountain form the headwaters of the West River and Branch Brook.

Okemo Mountain (aka Ludlow Mountain), at 3343 feet, is the centerpiece of the largest unbroken forested landscape in Mount Holly. The western slopes are considered a critical habitat for black bears.

Sawyer Rocks, at 2349 feet, is a point of significant prominence within the Green Mountain Bear Corridor that hosts an Alpine Spruce-Fir natural community and south-facing ledge habitat. In recent years, a seasonal home has been constructed near the summit.

The 29-acre **Tiny Pond**, at just under 1800 feet elevation, is classified by the state as "wilderness-like" due to its remoteness, limited access, undeveloped shoreline, and pristine waters.

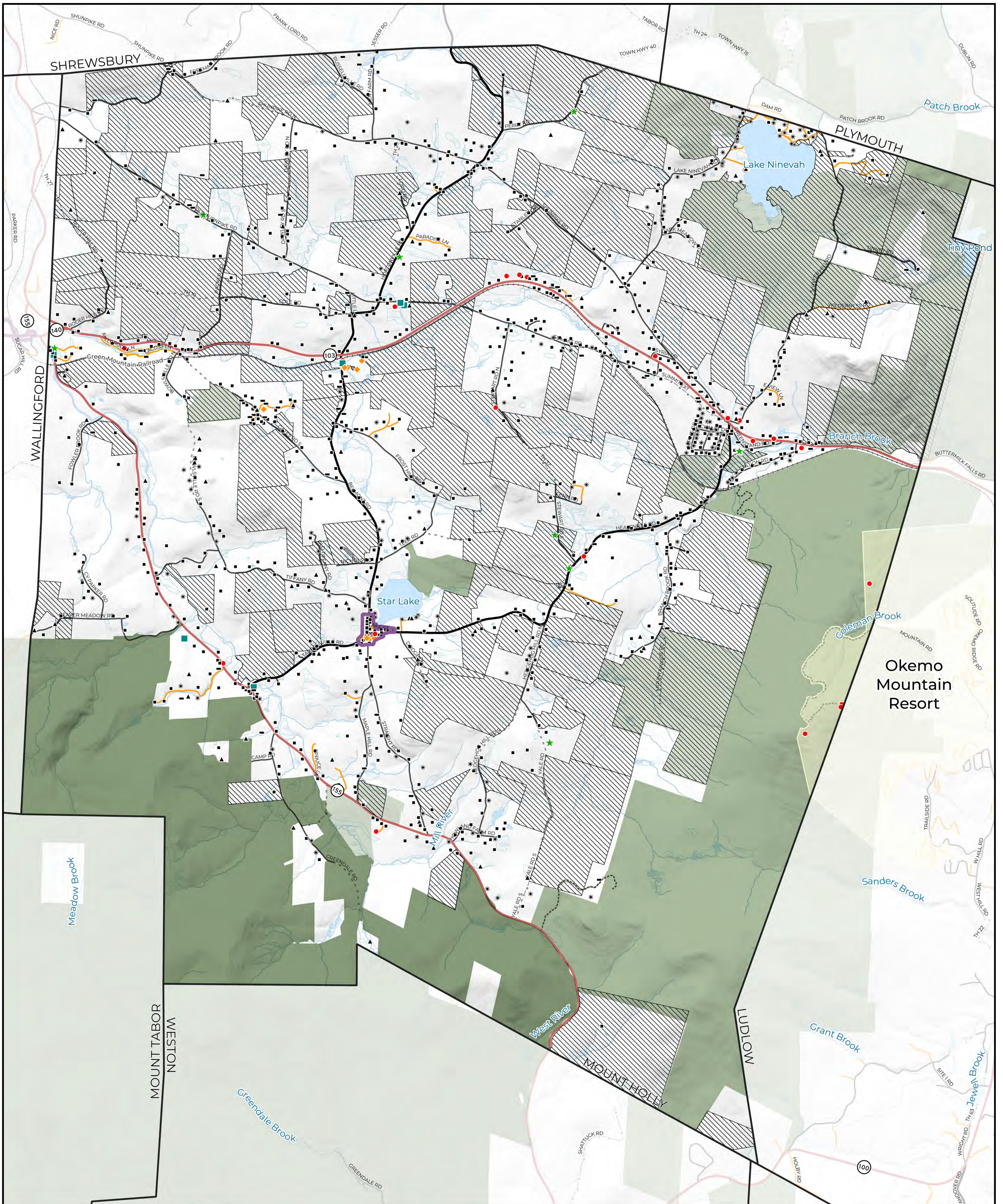
Lake Ninevah, at 176 acres and 1760 feet in elevation, is one of the largest high-elevation ponds in the state. Most of the lakeshore and surrounding 3,000 acres of forestland are conserved through the Forest Legacy program. The pond has an unusual marsh with rare plant species and is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including bald eagles, herons, beavers, and a pair of Common Loons that return each summer to nest and raise their chicks. With the speed of motorboats limited to 5 MPH, kayakers and canoeists can quietly enjoy Vermont's natural beauty and unspoiled views of Okemo Mountain and other surrounding mountains.

Winslow Flats is a large, diverse, locally and state-significant wetland complex prominently located south of Route 103 and the Rutland-Burlington railroad corridor. The swampy area is identified as the location of the discovery of the mammoth tusk and bones. State-significant Shallow Emergent Marsh and Sedge Meadow are interspersed with Alder Swamp, Alluvial Shrub Swamp, and beaver-flooded areas. The Winslow Flat Wetlands encompass six different mapped wetlands comprising 84 acres. It is significant for its ecological, recreational, and scenic values.

An approximately 2,000-acre, contiguous block of habitat, here known as **Summit Woods and Wetlands**, is bounded, roughly, by Star Lake WMA, Frost Hill Road, Winslow Flats, VT-103, Summit Road, the Green Mountain Railroad, and Healdville Road. The area has significance historically as the site of the Summit Cut and railroad history as well as the location of the Mount Holly Mammoth remains. The area has significance ecologically and recreationally for the extensive and remote bear wetland complex, plentiful early succession forest, multiple vernal pools, ledge habitat, interior forest conditions, and its relationship and connections to the Green Mountain Bear Corridor. This area has significant aesthetic value due to its location in the viewshed from VT-103.

XV. Appendix B: Maps

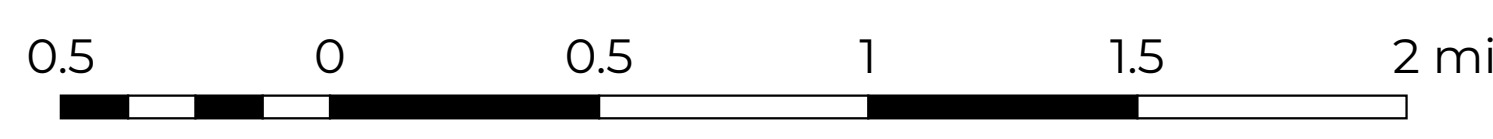
- A. Current Land Use
- B. Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity
- C. Landforms and Elevation
- D. Future Land Use
- E. Recreation
- F. Transportation
- G. Utilities and Facilities
- H. Significant Natural Features
- I. Village Center



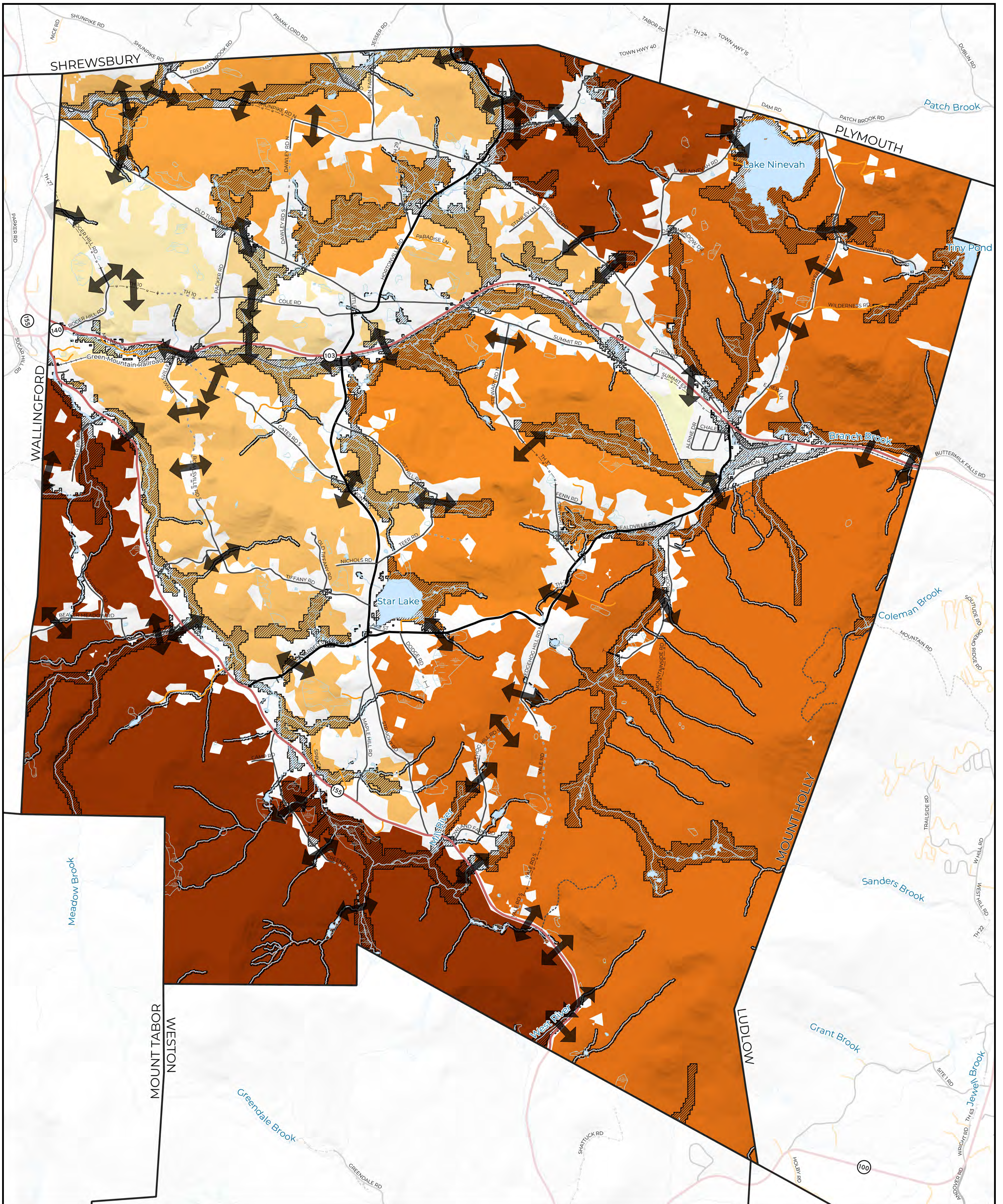
Current Land Use

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



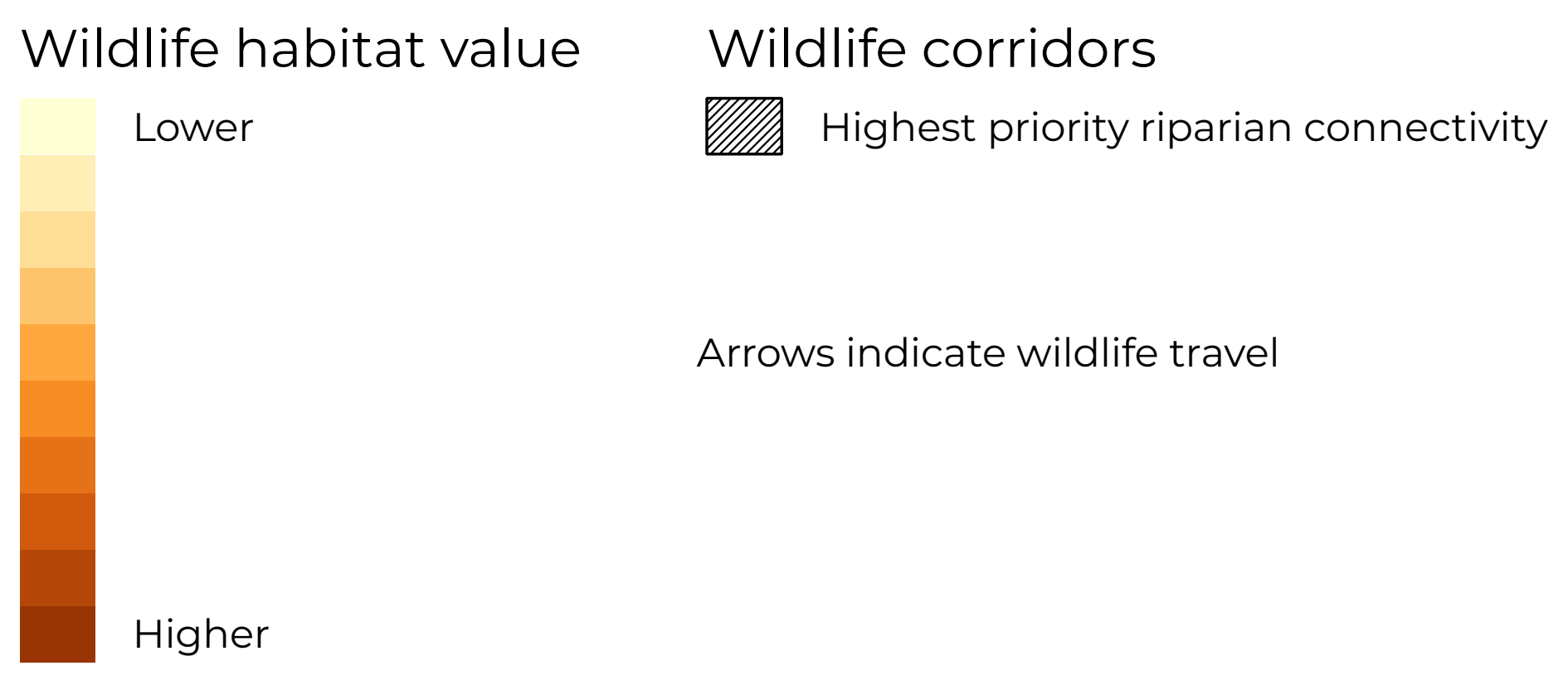
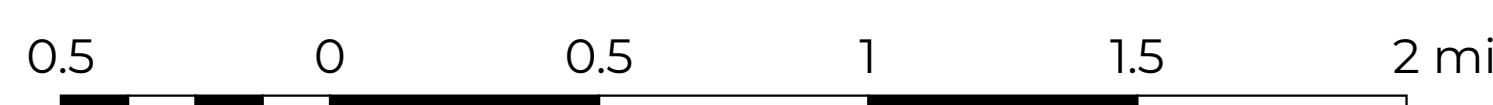
- | Structures | | Conserved Lands | |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| ● | Commercial | ■ | Federal |
| ★ | Agricultural | ■ | State |
| ◆ | Municipal | ■ | Private |
| ▲ | Camp | ▨ | Parcels in State Use Value Program |
| - | Mobile home | □ | Village Center boundary |
| ■ | Multi-family dwelling | | |
| * | Seasonal home | | |
| ▪ | Single family dwelling | | |

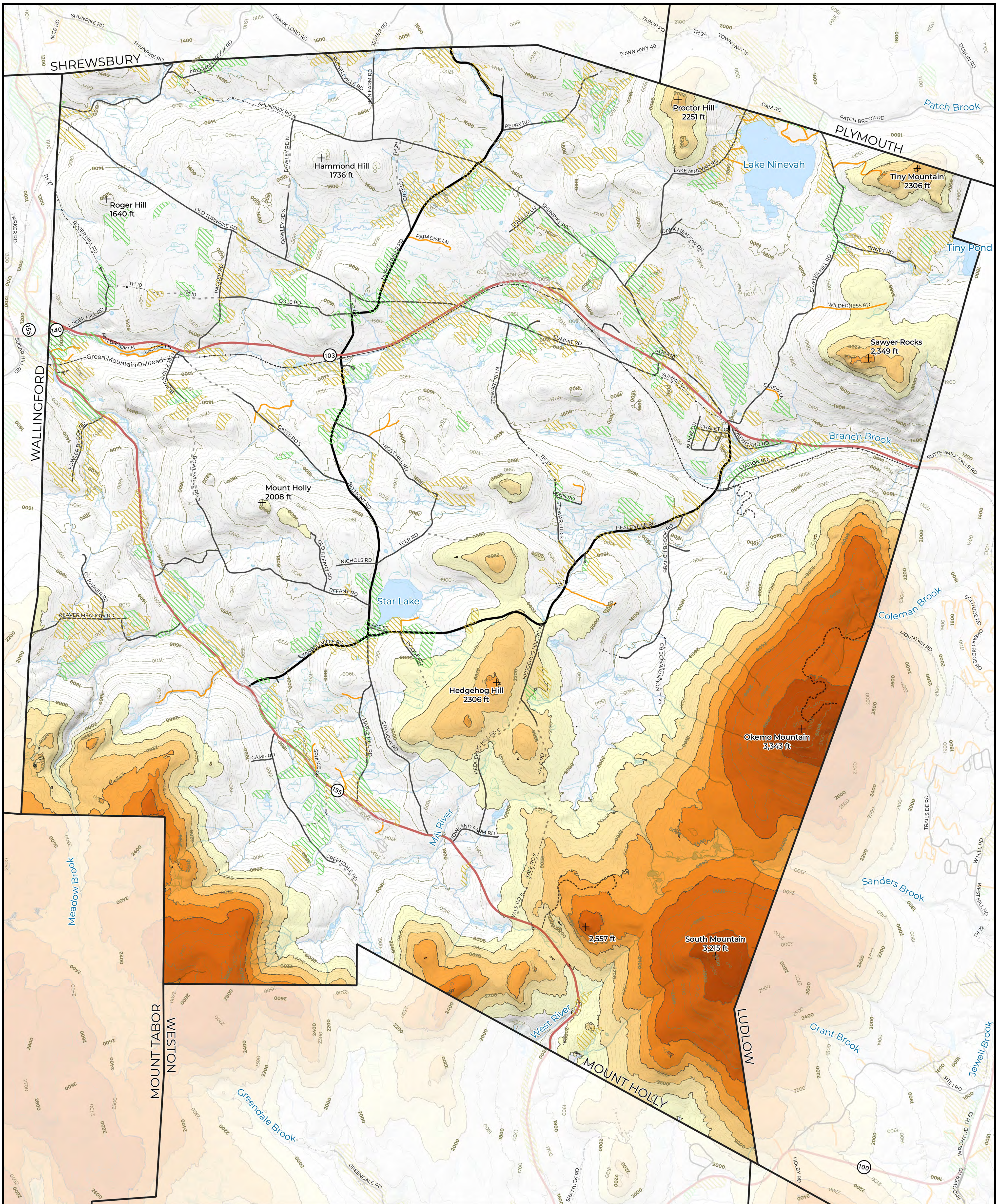


Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600

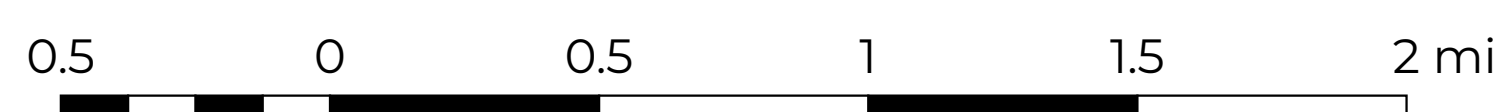




Landforms and Elevation

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600

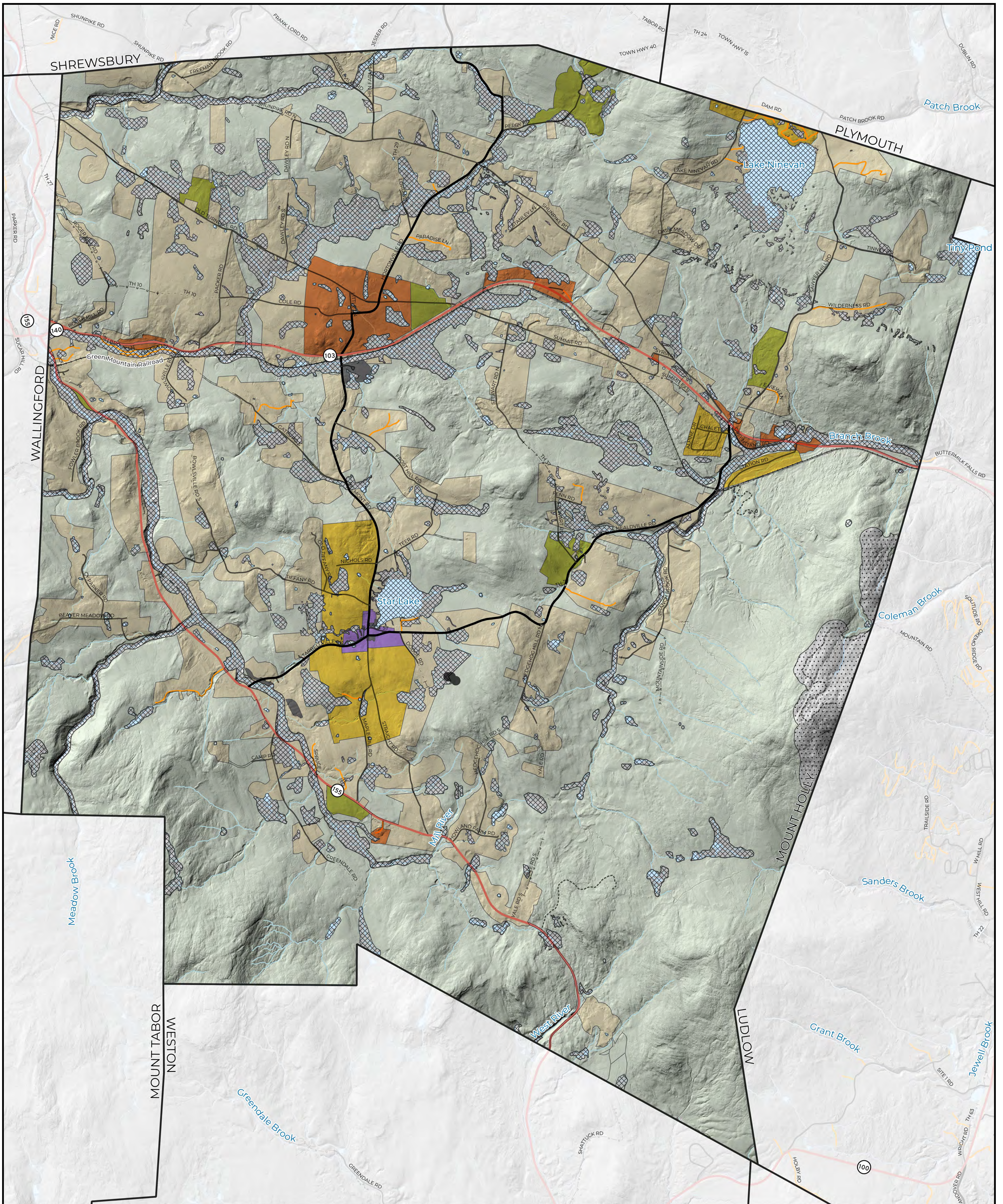


Important Soil

- Local
- Prime
- Statewide

Elevation (feet)

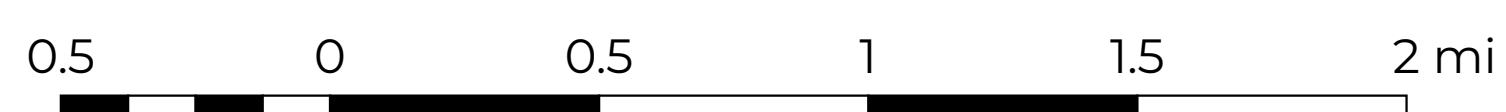
- 2000
- 2100
- 2200
- 2300
- 2400
- 2500
- 3000













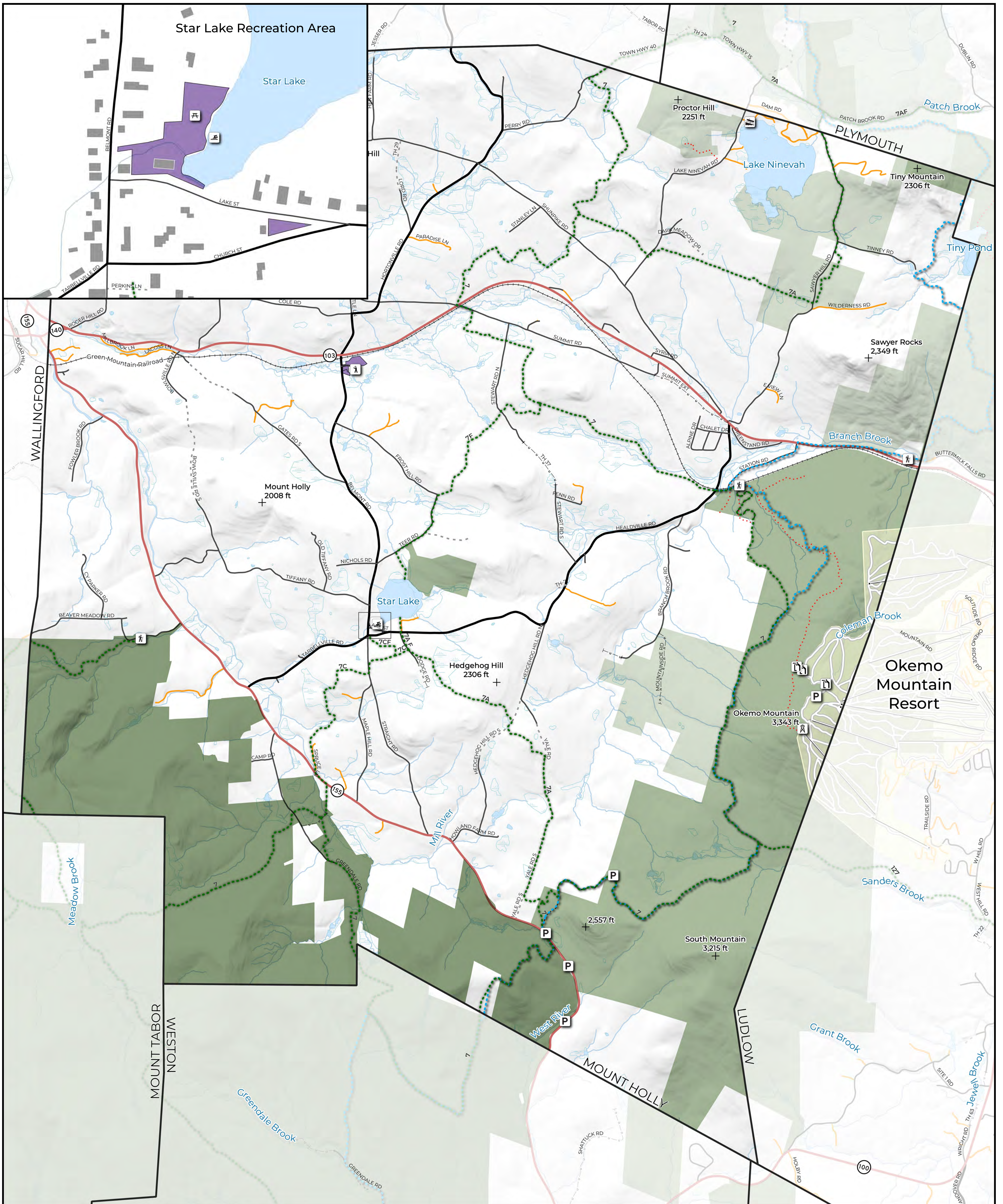
Future Land Use

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



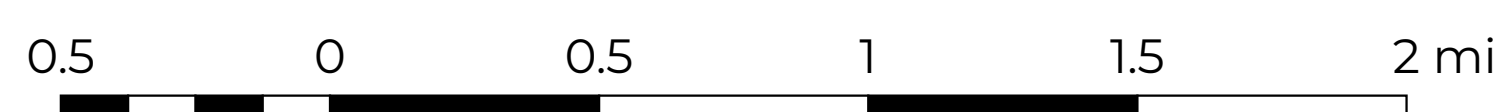
- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------|
|  | Forest and conservation |  | Village Center |
|  | Agriculture |  | Municipal |
|  | Rural residential |  | Special use area |
|  | Residential |  | Wetland and riparian |
|  | Mixed use |  | Stream |



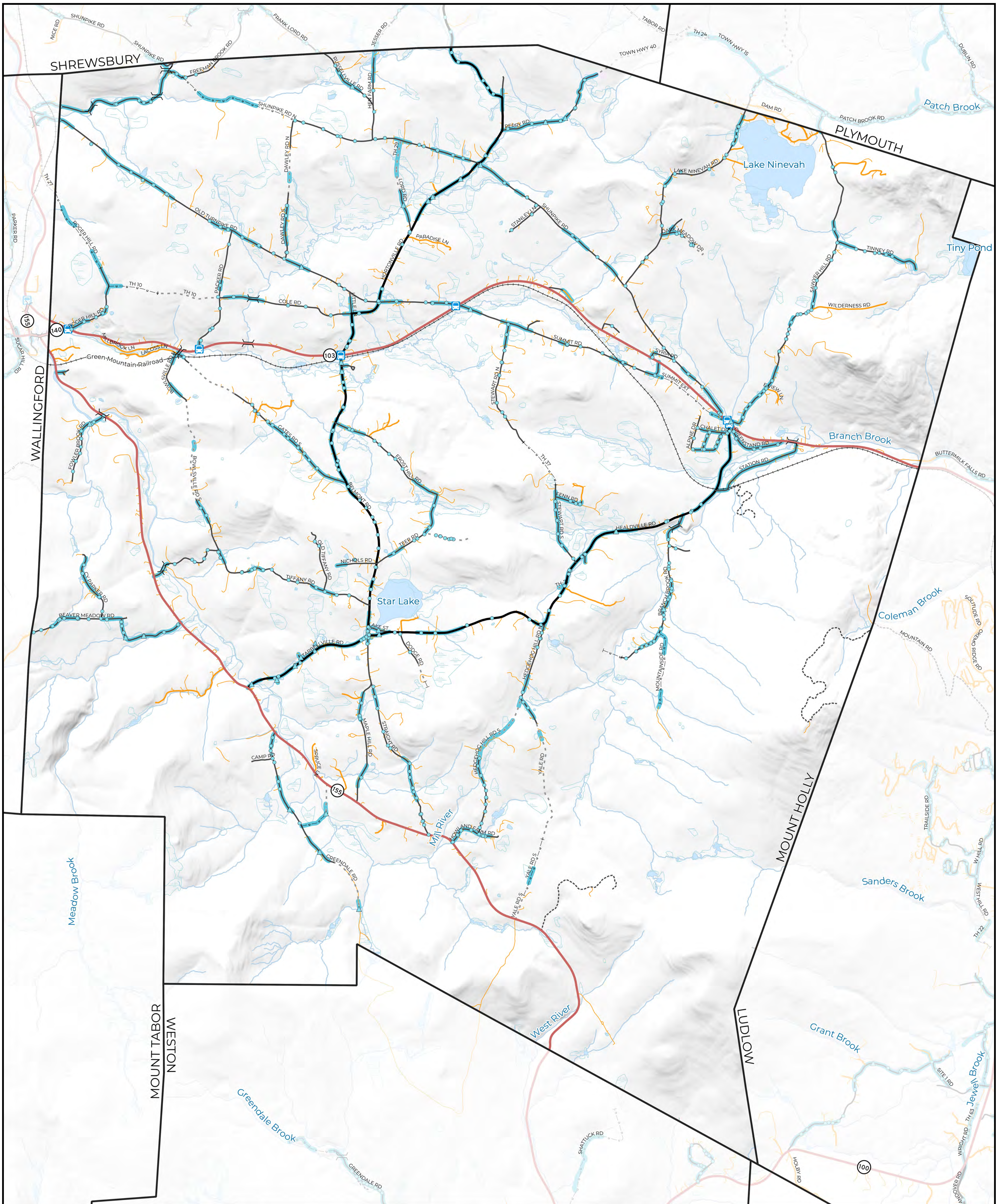
Recreation

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



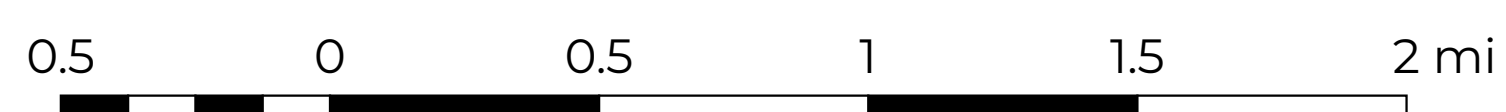
- - - VAST Trail
- - - Catamount Trail
- - - Hiking Trail
- Federal
- State
- Private
- Town
- Boat Launch
- Lookout Tower
- Parking
- Sports
- Trailhead
- Vista
- Swimming
- Park


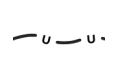















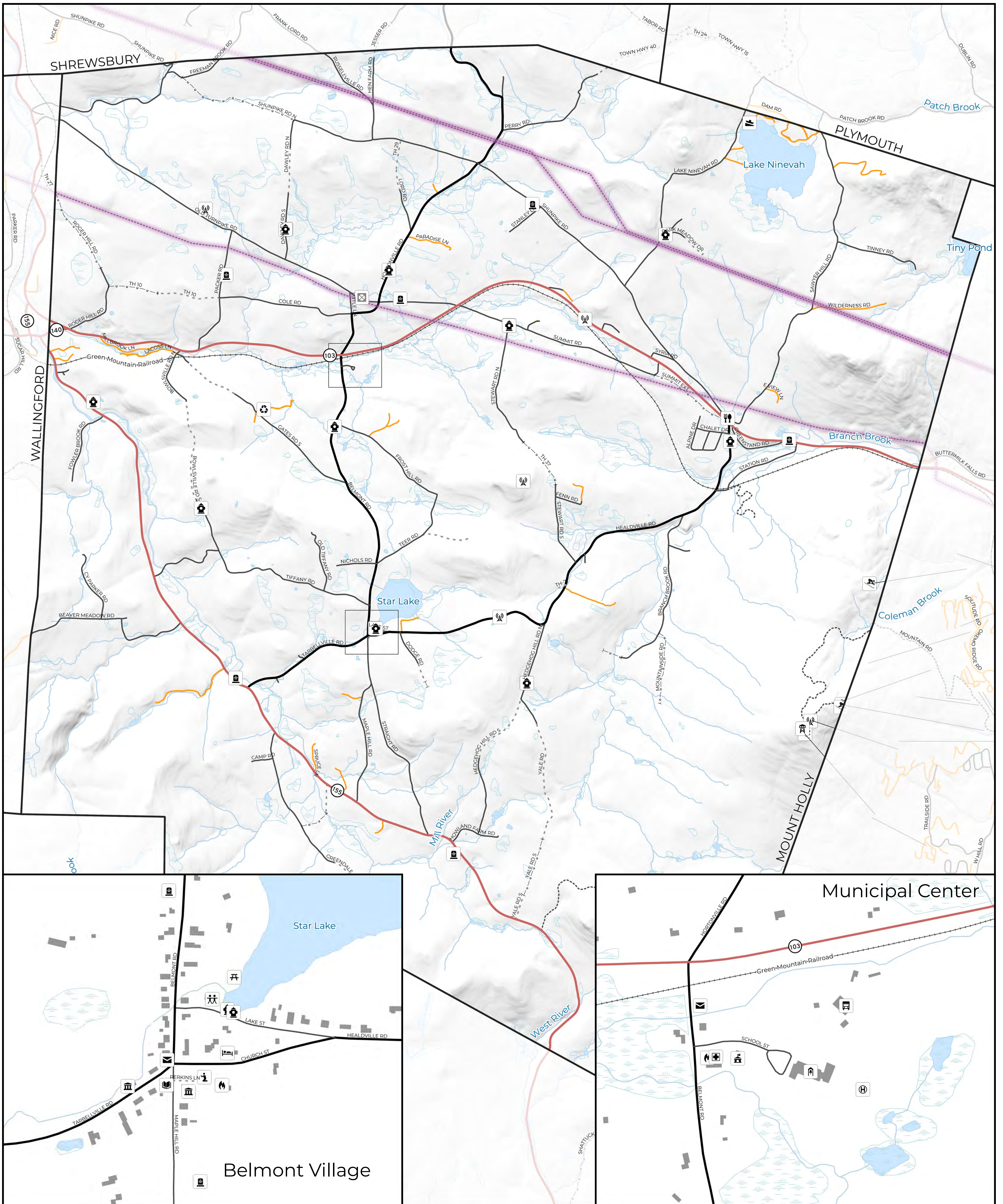
Transportation

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



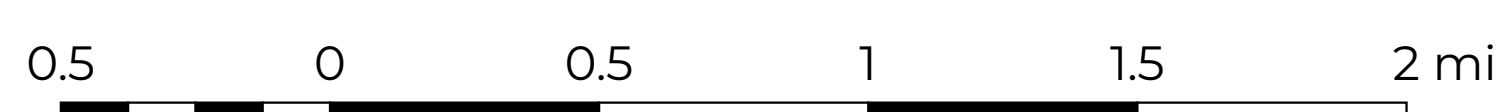
- | | |
|--|---|
|  Bus Stop |  Impassible road |
|  State Highway |  VOBCIT Bridge |
|  Town Highway Class 2 |  VOBCIT Culvert |
|  Town Highway Class 3 |  Bridge or Culvert > 20' |
|  Town Highway Class 4 |  Hydrologically connected (erosion risk) |
|  Legal trail |  Driveway |
|  Private road |  Stream |
|  State Forest Highway | |



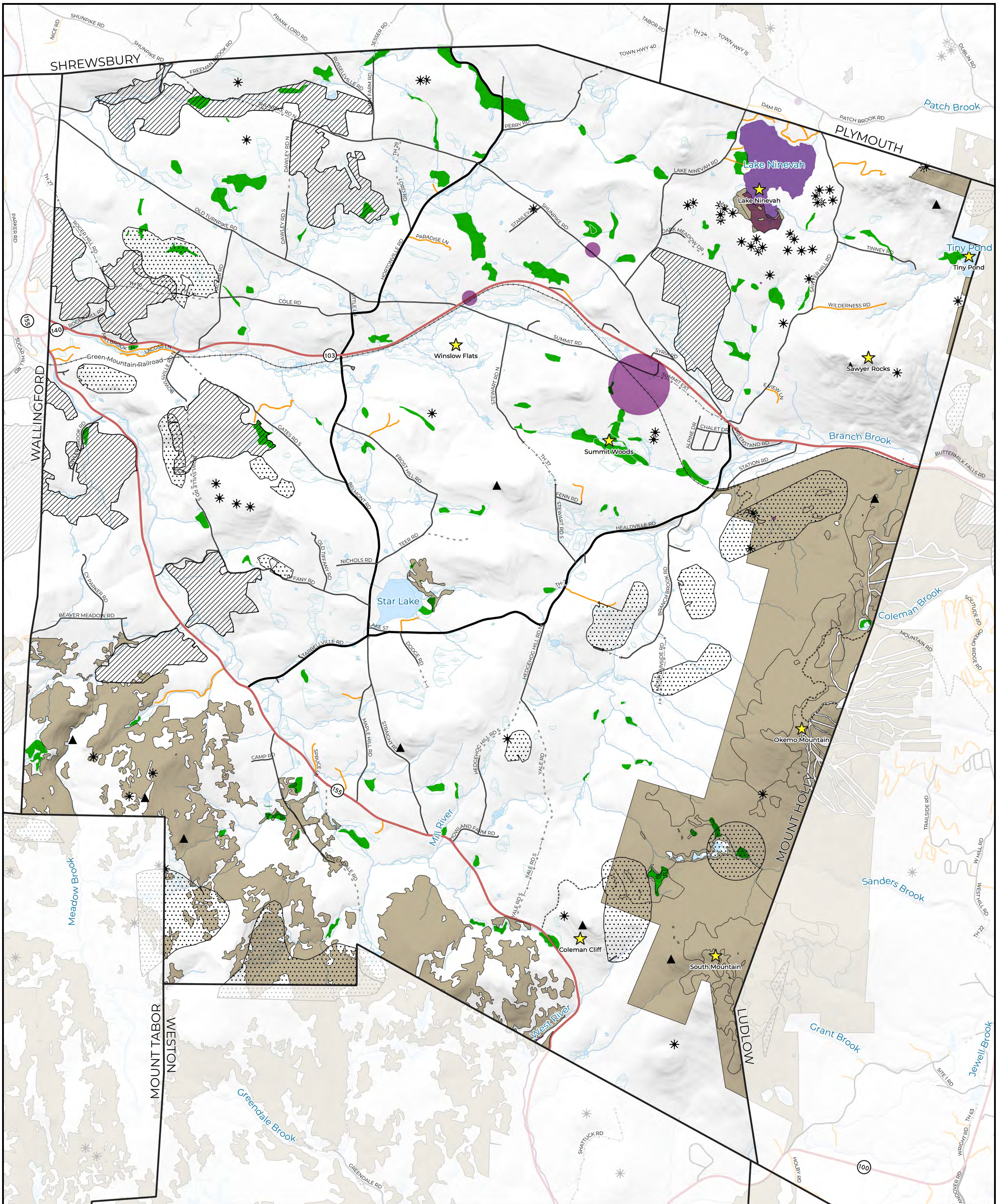
Utilities and Facilities

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



- | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Ambulance service | | Post office |
| | Boat ramp | | Public beach |
| | Cemetery | | Public gathering |
| | Communications tower | | Restaurant |
| | Community facility | | School |
| | Fire station | | Ski area |
| | Helipad | | Electrical substation |
| | House of worship | | Town garage |
| | Library | | Town office |
| | Lodging | | Transfer station |
| | Lookout tower | | Hydrant |
| | Museum | | Transmission line |
| | Picnic area | | |



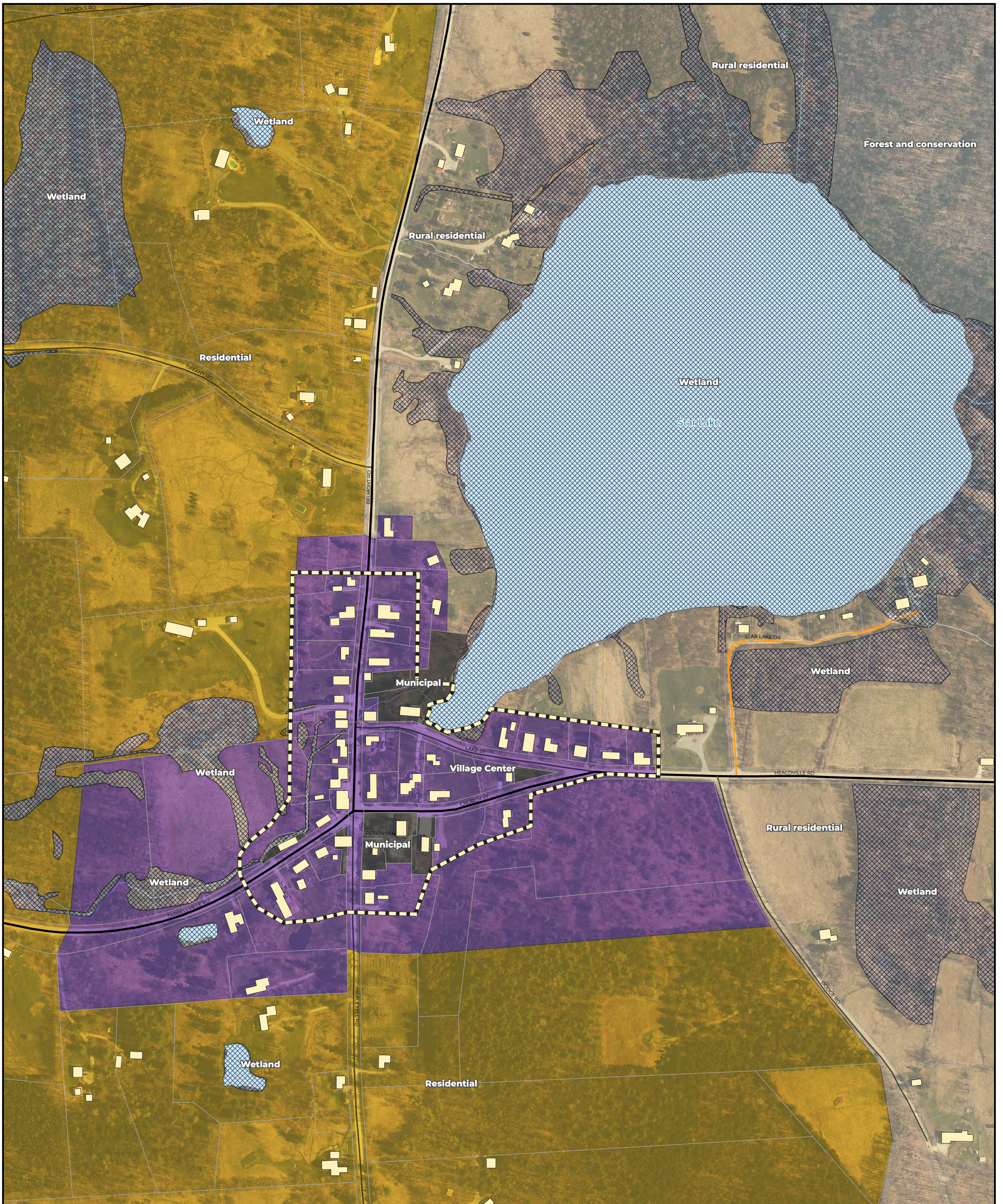
Significant Natural Features

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:22,600



- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Significant natural community | Bear wetland |
| Rare, threatened, and endangered species | Ledge habitat |
| Mast stand | Vernal pool |
| Deer wintering area | Significant natural feature |



Village Center

Mount Holly, Vermont – 2023

Scale 1:2,000



Future Land use

- Forest and conservation
- Rural residential
- Residential
- Village Center
- Municipal
- Wetland and riparian

Village Center Designation boundary

Parcel boundary

Structure