

FY 2010 Town of Holland Community Development Strategy

Citizens Advisory Committee

Two groups are particularly important to the present CD strategy. This year's *citizen's advisory committee* is composed of the chairman of the council on aging; members of the planning and zoning board of appeals; the town's treasurer; a member of the senior housing development committee; and two of the three selectmen. Each has served in other capacities and bring their experience of many years in general, and in particular familiarity with the well known community development activities, including housing rehabilitation and septic repair; the domestic violence prevention task force; construction of the senior center and present efforts to develop 20 rental units of subsidized housing for seniors and handicapped persons.

Tri Town Selectmen

Selectmen from the tri towns of Brimfield, Holland and Wales have been meeting monthly for over four years. An initiative of Holland's selectmen, meetings rotate among the towns. Discussion topics and on-going efforts have included: joint development of an elementary school to serve Holland and Wales, a study funded with a grant from a local trust; cooperative solid waste disposal which now enables residents of all three towns to obtain access to the Wales transfer station; plans for immediate improvements to an existing kennel so that animal control officers from the three towns will have access by winter to an adequate facility; on-going discussions have included sharing highway equipment, converting tax maps to a consistent GIS format, engagement of a certified, professional chief assessor, review of the regional non-profit ambulance services, and exploration of municipally-sponsored electric power generation facilities.

In September, 2009 the tri town selectmen executed a *Memorandum of Understanding* which is included in these CD Strategy attachments. This document lists the subjects and issues they have been addressing, sometimes involving all three towns; while other matters engage a pair of them. At these meetings the selectmen typically take up several issues to assess progress and the degree of continuing interest and felt importance. In this way the selectmen are defining for themselves and their communities the breadth and depth of regional cooperation and engaging in a kind of mutual in-service training where each has much to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the others.

Introduction to the CD Strategy Statement

This Community Development Strategy summarizes the Town of Holland's recent strategic planning efforts, provides highlights of the town's relevant planning documents and identifies the town's most significant goals, both those accomplished since its Community Action Statement was last revised and those newly identified. These goals will shape the town's community development efforts, including the investment of local and other public funds.

A discussion of relevant planning documents and current planning processes is followed by the statement of specific goals for each area of community development activity. In each case, the town's various departments, boards, commissions and standing committees were involved in the planning process. Many private citizens also participated by serving on steering, study or development committees, by responding to the town's invitation to participate in the community development planning process, and by participating in general public meetings, scoping and visioning sessions, formal hearings and regular and special town meeting votes. Holland makes extensive use of local cable television broadcasts, including a period during which the selectmen take telephone calls at each of their meetings.

Town of Holland Community Action Statement, 1993, Reviewed and amended, 1996 and 2001

Holland has reviewed its Community Action Statement annually since its inception in 1993. While some issues have been addressed in limited ways, the Priority Community Needs first identified in 1993 continue in large part to be the priority needs of today. Those needs include Planning and Action to Protect Hamilton Reservoir; Facility Improvement/Accessibility including exploration with the Town of Wales for a new, shared elementary school, and the towns of Wales and Brimfield for shared animal control facilities, and use by all of the Wales solid waste transfer station. Infrastructure, in the form of private ways continues to be a vexing problem both of costs and legal limitations the town faces in raising revenue necessary to implement drainage and paving plans. Housing goals are regularly sought to be met through the CDBG housing rehabilitation and septic repair program. These are not always funded; a current waiting list of some 15 applicants is equaled by the waiting lists of the other two tri towns. Those other two towns have subsidized senior housing communities and now Holland is making progress toward realizing its own, a resource needed by town residents and an element in housing choice for the region. Human Services are provided by the town's outreach coordinator. The goal of improved Parks and Recreation facilities has been largely realized in recent actions, and Public Safety has improved with progress being made as a result of the domestic violence task force as well as the provision of certain needed equipment for fire and rescue purposes. Planning continues in several areas: pre-disaster mitigation planning; water quality needs identification and implementation of project measures. Needs identified by the Town of Holland and stated in the CAS included computerization of the town's tax assessment and collection systems. Some of this has been met with the MA DOE revenue management system study most of which the town has implemented.

Eastern Sub-regional Housing Plan (2002; amended 2003)

The Eastern Sub-regional Housing Plan was created to guide the implementation of regional measures to increase the affordable housing supply. Nine towns in the region joined together to use the most recent census data, information from the build-out presentations, and a needs assessment questionnaire, to identify affordable housing needs and inventory the resources presently available to meet them. The towns agreed to

support a regional approach to efforts to develop affordable housing at the local level. The plan recommends specific actions for each town. For Holland these include funding for housing rehabilitation to correct major code violations and to provide septic system repairs and upgrades, and the creation of affordable housing units within the community. Funding for housing rehabilitation and septic repair has been frequently received through state approval of Federal community development block grant funds. Both demand and progress have been great and Holland will support an application for further funding. In addition Holland received a grant from Mass Housing's Priority Development Fund to conduct a number of analyses to determine the need and site suitability for a small subsidized rental housing development. The selectmen designated HAP a successful area non-profit housing sponsor develop the project. Some funding has already been committed.

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Build-out Analysis (2000)

Under the direction of the EOE, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) completed a Build-out Analysis for the town. The build-out analysis gave the town its first in-depth look at available land, building constraints, and potential residential growth. It laid a foundation for the Community Development planning effort that was funded under E.O. 418.

E.O. 418 Comprehensive Plan (2003-2004)

The Holland Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2004 under the direction of The Environmental Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In response to heightened development pressure from both the Springfield metro area and eastern Massachusetts, residents identified three priority areas for planning: resource and environmental protection, conservation of rural town character and some economic development to increase the commercial enterprises available to residents without travel to distant, larger communities. The strategies were discussed in a public planning process within the context of sustainable development principles. A recent zoning by-law amendment established a commercial zone at the Connecticut/Holland town line which is adjacent and accessible to I-84. Additional outdoor recreation fields and a skate park facility have been developed on the site of existing outdoor recreation facilities which are adjacent to the Holland elementary school and to town hall. Holland is a joint applicant with the other member towns in the Quaboag Chamber of Commerce for a US Environmental Protection Agency planning grant to identify, assess and rank sites in need of remediation in order to make them available for development.

Holland Americans with Disabilities Act Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, (2003)

Using a Community Development Fund grant the town completed its ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan in 2003. The Plan provides the town with an instrument to review and prioritize recommended actions related to the removal of barriers to persons with disabilities, develops a timeline for actions, includes ways to fund activities, and develops a method to evaluate the progress of the plan. Holland has been fortunate to have constructed several public buildings and facilities with due regard to access by persons with disabilities. These include, especially, the town hall and the senior center which is under construction.

Last Green Valley

Holland is one of 10 Massachusetts communities in the 35 member Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor established by Congress in 1994 with the mission of preserving significant natural and cultural resources of the region while encouraging compatible economic development.

Priority Development Fund Housing Planning Grant

Holland was a successful applicant for a planning grant from MassHousing/DHCD in mid 2006 to investigate development of affordable housing on town-owned property. Land adjacent to the senior center was identified and a need and demand (market) study was conducted and revealed a market for subsidized rental units for seniors. Subsequent tests and investigations found that the site was developable for approximately 20 such apartments. HAP, Inc of Springfield, the region's largest non-profit housing development and management agency was selected developer following a widely advertised search for developers. The project continues to make progress, having secured a commitment of funds from the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development agency; a site approval letter from the DHCD; and a determination of eligibility for an allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, (LIHTC). At this time HAP is preparing an application for comprehensive permit pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 40-B.

Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force

This body comprised of representatives of some 15 area municipalities was established by the selectmen of the Town of Monson and is now hosted and resourced by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. It has developed a precise mission statement—protection of the region from all of the impacts that would result from gambling and gaming facilities. Its active body of elected and appointed officials and citizens takes precise, detailed positions on the range of issues presently identified as well as those that experience elsewhere strongly suggest will be confronted by these communities in the event gambling and gaming is permitted by the state legislature.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009

Holland's senior housing project was submitted for 'stimulus' funding by HAP, the town-designated developer, no funding was received as of the date of signing.

Community Development Priorities

In the next 3-5 years the town will address the goals defined in these community-planning efforts through a variety of community development activities funded by state and federal funds wherever possible, including those of the US EPA; Mass Highway/Chapter 90 funds; the Executive Office of Elder Affairs; the US Dept of Agriculture, Rural Development and by area foundations, including the Norcross Foundation, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and local efforts such as the 501c(3) entity Friends of the Holland Senior Center recently established to support the Holland Senior Center.

We believe that it is appropriate that the entire community continue to serve as the target area for the FY 2010 CDFI program in order to gain the greatest benefit from the activities proposed: housing rehabilitation and septic repair loans; support for the activities of the Tri Town Domestic Violence Task Force and support for the design of improvements to make the Hitchcock Academy Community Center accessible to the handicapped.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure .

- Expand recreational facilities.
- Insure that public facilities, services and programs are made accessible to those with disabilities.
- Continue to implement the priorities of the results and recommendations of the Federal Water Quality Management Planning grant work program and coordinate these actions with efforts to identify private roads for which funding for improvements in drainage and paving can be secured.
- Continue to pursue state Small Town Road Assistance Program, STRAP, funds for improvements to Sturbridge Road for which the town has paid all engineering costs to date.

Housing

- Continue to seek funding opportunities for the rehabilitation of individual homes and septic systems, and water supply while also seeking funding to study community solutions to the widespread need for safe drinking water and properly functioning septic systems, especially in the Hamilton Reservoir area.
- Continue to support the town's designated developer, HAP, as it seeks both local approval pursuant to a Chapter 40-B application and complete project funding from state and Federal agencies.

Economic Development

- Participate with the Quaboag Valley CDC and other sources of business development and finance in supporting business development training programs, technical assistance to individual enterprises, revolving loan funds, regional loan funds for enterprise development, site development and remediation.
- Continue to examine the opportunities for new enterprises and continue to examine the provisions of the zoning ordinance to encourage locations that are convenient and in accordance with the town's desired character as was done in the recently enacted business zone adjacent to I-84 and the Connecticut state line.

Social Services

- Develop an operating program for the new senior center to include outreach services, health, nutrition and recreation programs.
- Increase leisure and recreational opportunities and facilities for children and youth, and families with young children.
- Continue to implement Holland's and the Tri-Town's locally based social services delivery system especially to serve frail seniors, disabled adults and those subject to or at risk of domestic abuse and violence. Seek additional CDBG funds to continue to implement the domestic violence services project.
- Assist and strengthen agency and institutional responses to these needs.

Consistency with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles:

The Town of Holland's Community Development Strategy is clearly consistent with the following Sustainable Development Principles.

Redevelop First - Most of Holland's planning efforts are directed to redeveloping existing infrastructure, utilities, and buildings, in the town center and the highly developed lakeshore and environs of Hamilton Reservoir.

Concentrate Development - The town continues to recognize the importance of its more densely populated reservoir area and is concentrating resources to encourage protection and sustainable development of this area, especially housing rehabilitation and septic system repair loans.

Be Fair - Many of the town's strategic planning efforts have involved extensive volunteer community support. This was especially evidenced in the recent E.O. 418 community development planning project.

Expand Housing Opportunities - The town has addressed the potential for expanding its housing opportunities through various proposed zoning bylaw changes which will allow cluster development, and promote in-fill housing and accessory units. Holland continues to pursue funding for housing rehabilitation to preserve its existing housing stock.

Conserve Natural Resources - The town supports an active and aggressive recycling program.

Plan Regionally - The town has been an active participant in regional planning efforts such as the Eastern Sub-regional Housing Plan, the Tri-town Recycling Initiative, and Tri-town Board of Selectmen meetings.

Reviewed, discussed and accepted by the Holland Board of Selectmen following an advertised public forum held on its public meeting of November 17, 2009.

James Wettlaufer, Chairman

Earl Johnson, Member

Christian Petersen, Clerk