

SECTION 3 - COMMUNITY SETTING

3.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of South Hadley occupies approximately 11,712 acres (18.41 square miles) and is bounded by the southern slopes of the Mount Holyoke Range to the north and the Connecticut River to the west. It is situated at the southern edge of Hampshire County and within the land of the Pioneer Valley. For any given community, certain regional characteristics often serve to influence open space and recreation planning to the greater extent than others. This is particularly true for the Town of South Hadley with respect to both the Mount Holyoke Range and the Connecticut River.

Although much of the land within the Pioneer Valley is primarily Connecticut River floodplain, the boundary which South Hadley shares with Hadley straddles a large portion of one of the few mountain ranges in Eastern North American which runs from east to west. This orientation provides a sharp contrast between the types of vegetation found on the north and south facing slopes of the range.

Mount Holyoke Range. The Mount Holyoke Range in South Hadley is a chain of mountains stretching from Mount Holyoke at the eastern bank of the Connecticut River in an easterly direction to Bare Mountain. The gaps, or so-called “notches” which occur between the individual peaks in the chain, are a result of the cracking of underlying volcanic basalt by geologic faults, followed by erosion of the cracks over time. The Range’s distinctive profile dominates South Hadley’s skyline. The significance of the Mount Holyoke Range to the community and the region cannot be overstated.

The cultural, recreational and economic aspects of South Hadley have been historically influenced by a dramatic variation in landforms: from the nearly level Connecticut River floodplain of the south and west, through gently sloping, fertile eastern terraces, to the steep intrusive outcroppings of the Mount Holyoke Range which rise to elevations of over 800 feet above the valley floor to the north. Together, these two aspects of South Hadley’s physical environment, the range and the river, serve to create a strong base for recreation and open space planning, not only within the Town of South Hadley but also within a regional context both to the north and south as well as to the east.

The bony spine of the Mount Holyoke Range defines the entire northern boundary of South Hadley. Included in this area is a large portion of the Joseph Allen Skinner State Park, approximately 86 acres of which are located within South Hadley. A six (6) mile segment of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail (familiar to many of the more adventurous of the region’s inhabitants) traverses the ridgeline of the Mount Holyoke Range along the northern border of South Hadley through the Skinner State Park. Another 5.5 miles of the Trail continues easterly through the Mount Holyoke Range State Park along the Granby-Amherst-Belchertown borders. Recent efforts have been

made to make the entire Metacomet-Monadnock Trail from Long Island Sound to New Hampshire into a National Scenic Trail. Also, included in the state park is the Summit House, which housed a very popular and prestigious resort and restaurant during the nineteenth century.

Built in 1851 as a hotel, complete with a steam-powered tramway and 70 guest rooms, the “Prospect House” drew distinguished guests and internationally known celebrities such as Charles Dickens, William Wordsworth and Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte. Those who retreated here were, typically, the wealthy who could afford the time and money to get away. The resort managed to survive its harsh mountain environment until 1938 when the tramway and most of the buildings on site were destroyed in the powerful hurricane of that year. The Mount Holyoke Summit is nationally important for its historical and cultural attributes. The view of the Oxbow from Mount Holyoke after a thunderstorm was the setting for Thomas Cole’s 1836 painting which led to the Hudson River Romantic painting period which culturally dominated early American art.

The overgrown remains of the cable car track that served to transport visitors to the top are still present upon the slopes below the former hotel. The so-called Summit House is currently owned and operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as part of the Mount Holyoke Range State Park. In 1988, the DCR completed renovations of the remaining hotel structure and the building now serves as a historic site, information center and scenic viewing area offering panoramic views of the Connecticut River Valley and the Town of South Hadley.

The history of the Mount Holyoke Range State Park actually began in the year of 1940 with the donation by Joseph Allen Skinner to the DCR (formerly DEM) of the remains of the “Prospect House” and 375 adjoining acres of mountainous land. Until the mid-1950’s, the Park was operated as a passive recreation area with the emphasis on trail use. In 1953, the first long-range acquisition and development planning was proposed for the area. It was not until the formation of the Mount Holyoke Range Citizen’s Advisory Committee (HRCAC) in 1969, however, that planning was actually taken seriously, resulting in “A Plan for the Protection of the Mount Holyoke Range” in 1973. With this proposal, the DCR established its primary objective for the Mount Holyoke Range State Park: to preserve the scenic and recreational values of the range. This was to be accomplished through the acquisition of all unprotected lands above an elevation of 450 feet, as well as other lands located below this baseline, which meet the above scenic and recreational objectives.

The resulting “ultimate acquisition boundary” map, endorsed by the HRCAC in 1982, outlined approximately 5,000 acres targeted for protection, 2,000 of which were, at the time, already under public ownership of some type. In 1975, acquisition began in earnest with the purchase of 320 acres in Amherst. To date, over 2,500 acres have been added to the total Mount Holyoke Range State Park system. Currently, public use of the park centers around relatively “passive” recreation only, including year-round hiking, cross-country skiing, limited snowmobiling, horseback riding, and limited

picnicking. Motorized recreational vehicles are prohibited due to the potential for erosion impacts, and hang-gliding, though tolerated, is not actively promoted on the mountain.

The Mount Holyoke Range was designated by Scenic America in 2000 as one of ten “Last Chance Landscapes” due to the threat of development and relative lack of controls.

In 2001, the Kestrel Trust, a local land trust serving the Pioneer Valley area, working in partnership with other organizations and municipalities throughout the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom region held a “Summit on the Range” and launched an initiative to encourage more regional consideration of the Mount Holyoke Range and the Mount Tom Range on the west side of the Connecticut River. This initiative began with the day-long community planning session where people from throughout the region met to consider issues and concerns confronting the Mount Holyoke Range. Subsequently, the Kestrel Trust and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission cooperated with regional municipalities and nonprofit organizations in an effort to create a regional framework for protection of the Mount Holyoke Range. This effort included a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the various communities committing to take actions to protect the resources of the range. Other related steps included work on a model Zoning Bylaw amendment to regulate development on the Mount Holyoke Range.

Connecticut River. Over six and one half miles of the Connecticut River form the western boundary of the Town of South Hadley. South Hadley joins the cities of Holyoke, Chicopee and Springfield, and the towns of Agawam, West Springfield and Longmeadow to comprise the so-called “urban riverfront”. This important section of the river (also known as the “urban reach”) is described in a September 1987 study by the Connecticut River Action Program as one of four distinctive “reaches” of the river’s 68-mile course through Massachusetts. The Connecticut River Action Program was established in the Summer of 1984 by the DCR to work with riverside communities on long-term planning initiatives for the cleanup and protection of the Connecticut River corridor.

As part of the relicensing of the Holyoke Dam, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2000 required measures to protect a portion of the property along the Connecticut River, Bachelor Brook, and Stony Brook. Northeast Utilities established a Conservation Restriction with Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E) for a depth of 300 feet along the Connecticut River on properties then-owned by Northeast Utilities along the Connecticut River, Bachelor Brook, and Stony Brook. After acquiring the Holyoke Dam and some related properties from Northeast Utilities in 2001, to fulfill its requirements under the FERC license, HG&E began planning development of a riverfront park in the South Hadley Falls area, developed a Conservation Restriction on Cove Island, established new licenses for occupants of Cove Island, and began developing a dock and water withdrawal permitting system to regulate activities along the Connecticut River.

With a collective population of over 350,000, according to the 2000 U.S. Federal Census Decennial, the urban reach of the river offers opportunities unavailable in many urban environments, including water-based recreational activities, such as canoeing, fishing and riverside strolls. The strong presence of this major water resource in South Hadley serves to provide not only aesthetic beauty, but also opportunities for the psychologically soothing effects that such a water oasis can offer people living in an urban setting. Development of the historic riverfront park encompassing the Gatehouses above the dam and the passive recreation area below the Texon Building, as required by FERC and the Corps of Engineers, will significantly enhance community use.

Situated less than twenty miles from prominent industrial, commercial, and educational centers, South Hadley is a bedroom community to surrounding municipalities including Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, Westfield, Northampton and Amherst (which houses the largest employer in the region, the University of Massachusetts). However, South Hadley also enjoys an industrial, commercial and educational base of its own. Intellicoat (formerly Rexam Graphics) is located in South Hadley Falls and the Industrial Drive/New Ludlow Road Industrial district has continued to develop and attract new tenants. However, the Town is running out of land available for industrial use.

Commercial development has been largely characterized by a few large centers (The Village Commons, the Big Y Center on Newton Street, and the Big Y Center on Willimansett Street). Other commercial developments have generally consisted of small shops/office developments or restaurants on Newton Street or Granby Road.

Further adding to the Town's frame and character is Mount Holyoke College, a prestigious educational institution founded in 1837 as the first women's college in the United States. The College also owns considerable amounts of open space including a tract on the Mount Holyoke Range and an historical golf course. Presently, the Town's inhabitants enjoy a predominantly residential environment in close proximity to major employment and service centers and within a forty-five minute drive from Bradley International Airport in Enfield, Connecticut.

3.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1. BECOMING A MUNICIPALITY

According to the Historical Review – Town of South Hadley 1753-1953 compiled by H.L. Goodwin, F.A. Brainerd, R. Barrett and P. Adams, Hadley, the so-called “Mother town” of what is now known as South Hadley, was originally settled in 1661 by colonists from Hartford and Wethersfield, Connecticut. These settlers traveled north to find a land well endowed with very rich soils. This condition would form the basis for a very successful agricultural community, a success which persists to the present day. As was most of the Pioneer Valley during the

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Town of Hadley soon became a predominantly agricultural community with a strong affiliation to churches of different denominations. In 1727, the settlers south of the Mount Holyoke Range petitioned the General Court to grant them permission to be established as a separate precinct. The advantages to this proposal centered around the issue of local worship as an alternative to observing the Sabbath at the parent church in Hadley eight miles north.

The journey to church involved the laborious task of traversing the Mount Holyoke Range through gaps between the mountain peaks, commonly known at the time as “the cracks”. In light of this hardship, the General Court finally agreed to grant the parishioners their precinct, but not without a number of attached conditions. This list included construction of a meeting house, selection of a minimum number of settlers, and the settlement of a minister within a given period of time. Having met all but one of the requisites by 1732, South Hadley was granted a second opportunity for a precinct with the stipulation that they settle an orthodox congregation, and proceeded to erect a parsonage for the Harvard graduate.

Pursuant to an order by the British Government to the Governor of Massachusetts prohibiting the establishment of any town requiring representation in the legislature, the precinct was precluded from becoming its own political entity. Precinct status, however, would soon yield to “district” establishment, complete with powers of authority similar to those of a town, but without the rights of representation in the General Court. District representation soon followed the war for independence, and in 1786, a declaration granted that all Districts established prior to 1777 were to become officially incorporated towns.

2. THE IMPACT OF RIVER TRANSPORTATION

Some of the Town’s early engineering and construction projects were to earn national recognition. The canal, which began in 1795, was the first commercially-operating navigational canal. It was completed during a two-year period ending in 1795 as a way of overcoming the obstacle formed by the natural falls of the Connecticut River at the southern portion of the Town of South Hadley. The canal covered a distance of approximately two and one half miles through swamp and bedrock, beginning just north of what is now called Cove Island and continuing to a point just below the South Hadley and Chicopee line.

This wondrous engineering solution transported vessels over a 53-foot drop at the “Great Falls” at South Hadley and removed a serious obstacle to the free shipment of goods between upriver towns and larger regional centers in Springfield, Hartford, and New York. The first version of the canal included a 275-foot long “included plane” which was used to raise and lower the riverboats from above and below the falls. In 1805, this canal was altered to include a series of locks for the purpose of creating greater draft for larger riverboats. This technology was the first

of its kind to be employed and served as a model for the construction of canal systems throughout the country.

With the transformation of the formerly agricultural South Hadley Falls into a community known throughout as “Canal Village”, the area soon began to prosper. Travelers and riverboat workers found the growing need for eating and drinking establishments, entertainment and overnight lodging in the area. Taverns began to pop up everywhere to serve an expanding number of people moving an increasing volume of freight through the canal. Local merchants were beginning to take full advantage of an economy which was flourishing as a result of both the canal and the several mills which were highly active throughout the area. The mills of the era included such varied types as saw, grist, shingle and plaster, to name a few.

In addition, the canal served to attract the first tourists to South Hadley. “Man-made” features such as this were rare at the time and tended to draw sightseers from miles around, often to stay the night at The Tavern, a common meeting place of the Proprietors of Locks and Canals. The Proprietors were the legal entity empowered by the State Legislature as the authorizing entity charged with making the Connecticut River navigable to boats from the confluence of the “Chicopee River” northward to the furthestmost limits of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the more familiar present-day regional attractions of South Hadley, the natural geologic amenities of river networks, mountains, foliage and open spaces, it was the canal, a “man-made” structure, which drew the first sightseers to South Hadley from all over the surrounding countryside during the colonial period.

The popularity of river transportation systems, primarily involving the flat bottom boat, continued into the 19th century. Though many of the flat bottom boats which traveled the river were propelled by sail, most often they were pushed by planting “setting-poles” into the river bottom and walking the length of the deck from bow to stern, and then carrying the pole back to the bow to repeat the process. This was the routine executed as the boats carried loads of stone, shingles, hides and lumber as far north as White River Junction, Vermont, and returned with heavier cargo such as iron, sugar, grindstones, salt and occasionally rum. The trip from Hartford to Wells River, Vermont took approximately sixteen days to complete, and the return trip took about half as long.

The most prosperous period in operation of the Proprietors of Locks and Canals proved to be between the years 1808 and 1847. With the development of the steam engine in the 1820’s, the flat bottom boat owners began to adopt this technology in the operation of their own vessels. In 1826, “The Barnet”, owned and operated by the Connecticut River Navigation Company of Hartford, became the first steam boat to pass through the South Hadley Canal locks. The canal peaked in operation in the year 1833 when it reached a total of \$20,016 in tolls collected.

Ironically, however, steam technology would ultimately spell disaster for the use of the river as a principle navigational system, as development of the railroad and the steam locomotive began to intensify. Finally, on Thanksgiving Day 1847, the last steamboat passed through the canal.

During the mid-19th century, use of the canal for navigation began to decline seriously with the construction of the 1848–1849 water power dam and the move of transportation facilities from water to rail systems. Eventually the canal system was employed by the paper mills to harness the hydrologic power for consumption by their facilities.

According to some historians, it was the country's first commercially-operating navigational canal which brought prosperity to the communities of South Hadley and Holyoke; a prosperity which persists to a great extent today. In December, 1992, the National Park Service placed the South Hadley Canal District on the National Register of Historic Places commemorating the rich history of this engineering and cultural wonder. Only canal remnants may be seen today due to the filling of segments of the canal and submergence by the rising river level. Most of the canal has been covered over by the development of the human environment and other parts have been grown over by maturing vegetation as it experiences the process of ecological succession. Located along eastern portion of the peninsula commonly referred to as Cove Island are the skeletal remains of what was once the northern section of the famous South Hadley Canal. Despite its overgrown condition, select portions of the old canal are still navigable by canoe.

3. CROSSING THE RANGE

At the western end of the Mount Holyoke Range, at the base of Mount Holyoke, lies the site of a narrow gorge called The Pass of Thermopylae. As history recalls, this is the location at which early settlers began construction of a route through the range. Clearing of the Pass was accomplished through the curious method of pouring water over exposed rock within the intended passageway, allowing the rock to freeze, and raking away the resulting debris.

A second passageway to the North used by the early settlers was the natural migratory path through the Mount Holyoke Range at "Round Hills Pass", now known as "The Notch". The construction of a road connecting Amherst and Granby through this pass, later to become Route 116, was recognized as a major regional accomplishment of the late 18th century era. This access continues to be the primary passageway across the range.

4. THE COLLEGE

Mount Holyoke Seminary located in the eastern section of South Hadley was founded in 1837 by Mary Lyon as the country's first institution dedicated to the

higher education of women. This occurred 200 years after the first men's college was established.

With the establishment of the Seminary, which finally became Mount Holyoke College in 1893, came acquisition and protection of the many expanses of open spaces which today forms the campus. In subsequent years, the college would acquire more land for its expansion to include a golf course, wooded areas with nature trails, and athletic fields.

5. EARLY DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Beginning in 1892, South Hadley embarked upon a development technique which spread through the Town as more and more land was developed. The first standard subdivisions were planned at the location of Canal, North Main and Abbey Streets. Despite being used in the Town since 1892, the typical subdivision was not a land consumptive pattern until after the Second World War.

The post-war era marked the point at which that the rectilinear "cookie cutter lot" subdivisions became standard practice for most residential developers capitalizing on the pledge to provide a "decent home for every working American". This pattern is clearly represented by subdivisions off of Newton Street, just north of the Falls Village area at Lincoln, Roosevelt, Washington, and McKinley Avenues. This type of housing development forms the structure of development that exists today in South Hadley. Together, the aforementioned occurrences created the patterns which were instrumental in the evolution of the Town as its character shifted from an agricultural to an industrial and commercial economy, and finally to the predominantly bedroom community that it is today. Maps 1 and 2 indicate the growth in the roadway development pattern between 1865 and 2007.

3.3 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

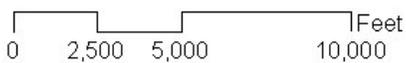
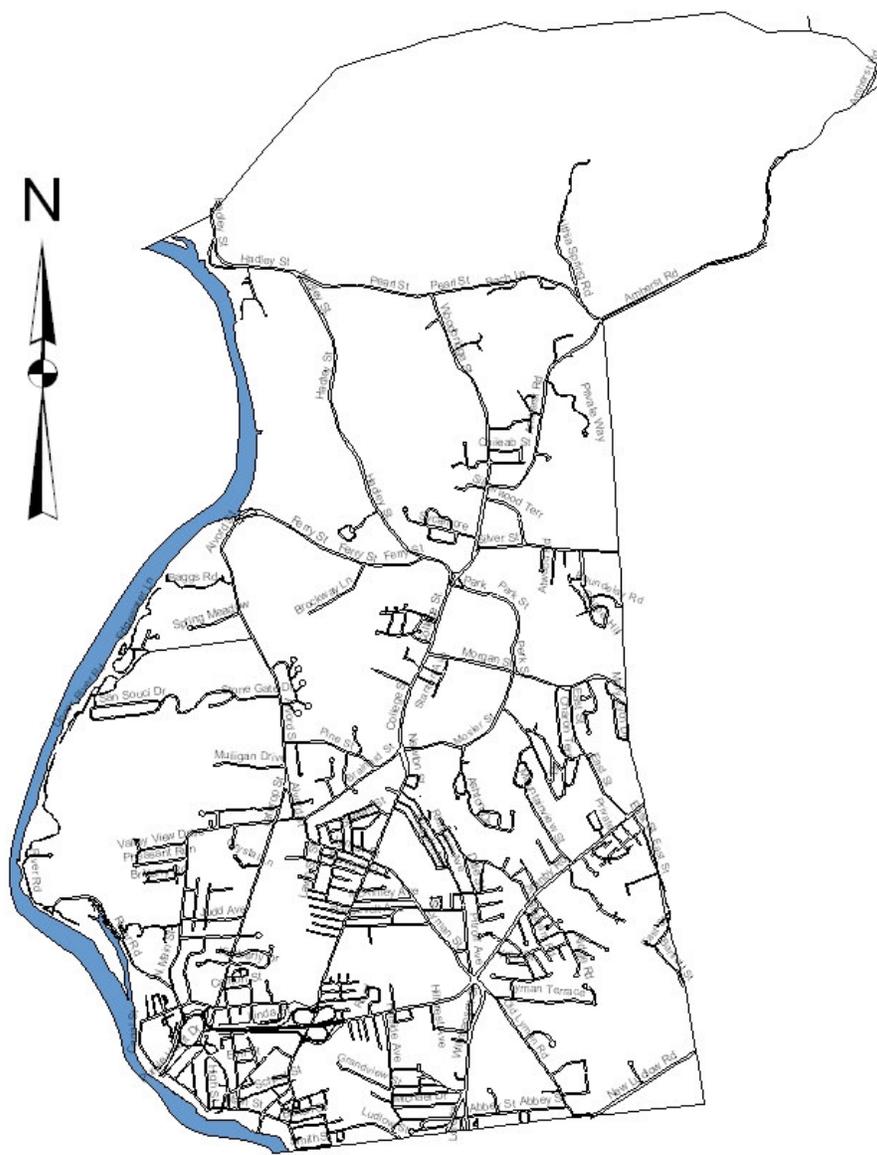
The 2000 U.S. Federal Decennial Census showed South Hadley had a population of 17,196 persons which represented a 3% increase over the 1990 population. This rate of increase reflected a nearly doubling of the growth rate as the Town only grew by 1.7% during the 1980's. Recent projections by Mass. Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) indicate a continuation of this steady growth through 2020 with a modest increase of approximately 5.3% (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Even this modest growth, when reflective of a lower-density pattern of development, could have dramatic impacts on the town's landscape and public services. This growth has had, and will continue to have, significant impacts as to the availability of open space and recreational amenities. Such growth will result in increased housing needs which will, in turn, induce increased building and development which will continue to draw families in town. These impacts are reflected in the increased level of condominium and subdivision development over the past 10 years.

Map 1

Map of South Hadley in 1865

(Available at Planning Board Office for Review)

MAP 2 Map of South Hadley - 2007



Source: South Hadley Planning Board, 2007

Phase out of the Westover Air Force Base as a Strategic Air Command (SAC) Air Base resulted in significant decline in population in the early 1970's (See Table 1 and Figure 1). With the exception of that "event", the Town has and continues to show steady positive growth through the year 2000. Projections through 2020 show a continuation of this increase in the rate of growth for the next 2 decades.

Three census periods of data on age distribution of the population provides a good picture of the changing face of South Hadley. In 1980, 35% of the population was in the 20-45 year age group, this level increased to 40% in 1990, but fell again to 35% in 2000 (see Table 2). The pre-teen segment (0-9 years of age) mirrored this pattern. During the same 20 year period, the 65 years and over population steadily increased in numbers and share of the population from 11.9% in 1980, 15.5% in 1990 to 17.4% in 2000. Significant as well is the steady decline in the relative size of the teenage population from 21.2% in 1980 to 16.7% in 1990 to its most recent low point of 15.3% in 2000.

Recent housing developments have focused on the 55 years and over population. Few developments are focusing on serving the housing needs of families and youth. Most of the developers in recent years have indicated they are marketing their housing to this aging segment of the population. Therefore, the shift over the last 2 decades towards a more mature age segment is likely to intensify.

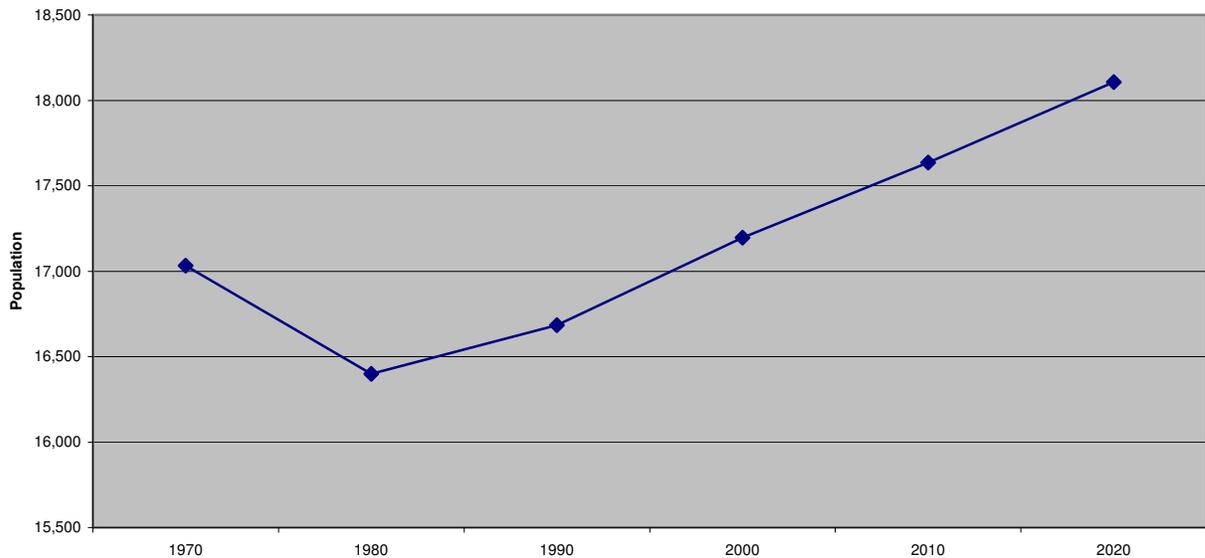
The relative decline in the younger population segments and growth in the mature age segments has significant implications for a variety of planning issues. The type of recreation programs and public facilities that the residents will desire can be expected to shift. Recreation and social service planning will need to accommodate these changes.

TABLE 1
TOWN OF SOUTH HADLEY
POPULATION 1970 - 2000 AND PROJECTIONS 2010 & 2020

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>
1970	17,033
1980	16,399
1990	16,685
2000	17,196
2010	17,636 (Projection)
2020	18,108 (Projection)

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Federal Decennial Census.
MISER Population Projections for 2010 and 2020, University of Massachusetts.

Figure 1
South Hadley Population: 1970-2020



Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Federal Decennial Census.
MISER Population Projections for 2010 and 2020, University of Massachusetts.

TABLE 2
TOWN OF SOUTH HADLEY
POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS 1980 - 1990

Age Group	1980		1990		2000	
	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Percent
0-4	692	4.2	895	5.4	783	4.6
5-9	805	4.9	857	5.1	945	5.5
10-14	1,108	6.8	827	5.0	1,015	5.9
15-19	2,364	14.4	1,625	9.7	1,616	9.4
20-24	2,121	12.9	1,935	11.6	1,588	9.2
25-44	3,646	22.2	4,776	28.6	4,406	25.6
45-54	1,786	10.9	1,573	9.4	2,300	13.4
55-64	1,932	11.8	1,615	9.7	1,552	9.0
65-74	1,210	7.4	1,571	9.4	1,447	8.4
75+	<u>735</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<u>1,011</u>	<u>6.1</u>	<u>1,544</u>	<u>9.0</u>
TOTAL	16,399	100.0	16,685	100.0	17,196	100.0

Source: 1980 U.S. Census STF-1A
1990 U.S. Census STF-1
2000 U.S. Census STF-1

According to the 2000 U.S. Census (CPH-L-83-1990), the median household income in 1999 for the Town was \$46,678. Of those employed over 16 years of age (9,085 people), slightly over half were employed in the various service sector businesses while manufacturing, wholesale trade, and transportation and related industrial sectors accounted for only 20% of the employment. Retail trade employed 13% of the workforce. Various levels of government accounted for 14% of the employment.

Commuting patterns for those employed according to the Census figures, show that 84% of those employed drove to work with two-thirds of them commuting to locations outside of the town. This is consistent with the “bedroom community” nature of the town where people reside and return at the end of the working day. Reflecting the advent of home computers, 4% of the workers work at home. Both concepts have resulted in the steady growth of the residential community which will require enlarged and/or new recreational opportunities, both active and passive, to meet the needs and correspond to the characteristics of this growing population.

The five (5) largest private employers (excluding the Town itself) include Mount Holyoke College, Intellicoat (formerly Rexam Graphics), Big Y food stores, Wingate at South Hadley (formerly Meadowood Nursing Home), and Canson-Talens, Inc. While these businesses are located throughout Town, there are numerous additional business and industrial plants located at the industrial park in the southeastern part of Town. Lots available at the park, which is zoned for industrial use, with complete infrastructure available, provide the opportunity for new industries to locate there.

3.4 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

1. PATTERNS AND TRENDS

South Hadley was established by the General Court as a district with its own local self government separate from Hadley in 1753. It was then incorporated as a town with its own representation in General Court in 1775. The centers of growth and development came as a result of the canal and incline plane in 1794 in the southern part of town and in the central area of town with the establishment of Mount Holyoke Seminary in 1837. Transportation routes, in particular, County ways, provided a framework for development up to the present time.

In the early 1900's, there were several subdivisions of land for development, but it was not until 1946 that the Town approved its first Zoning By-Law and 1954 when the Subdivision Regulations were adopted. While these tools regulated height, density and use, the location of the infrastructure, in particular, water and sewer lines has always played a significant role in the current and future development patterns. The installation of an interceptor sewer line along the western edge of Town in the mid 1970's has been an important factor in the town's growth and change.

South Hadley experienced intense development pressure as a result of the real estate boom of the late 1980's and continued to grow through the 1990's into the 2000 decade. Records of building permits issued within the Town from 1982 to 2002 (see Table 3) are a good indicator of the rate at which development occurred and the numbers of units that resulted. An analysis of the dwelling units permitted reflect a rapid growth during the 1980's, especially in the multi-family sector, but a slower, more balanced mix of housing types during the last 10 years.

TABLE 3
TOWN OF SOUTH HADLEY
DWELLING UNITS PERMITTED 1982 THROUGH 2002

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1 OR 2-FAMILY</u>	<u>MULTI-FAMILY</u>	<u>TOTAL UNITS</u>
1982	12	0	12
1983	24	20	44
1984	30	170	200
1985	36	90	126
1986	112	0	112
1987	51	82	133
1988	31	73	104
1989	59	52	111
1990	79	12	91
1991	25	40	65
1992	31	0	31
1993	54	0	54
1994	54	0	54
1995	39	0	39
1996	42	4	46
1997	46	4	50
1998	20	17	37
1999	23	18	41
2000	20	20	40
2001	17	17	34
2002	30	25	55

Sources: Town of South Hadley Building Commissioner; South Hadley Planning Board; 2004

Residential construction steadily and significantly grew during the 1980's with an average of over one-hundred (100) new units added annually between 1984 and 1989. Most of these new units during the 1980's were multi-family (apartment and condominium units). Some years reflect a strong single-family growth while others depict a stronger multi-family market. Many of the units constructed during the 1980's followed the corridor opened up by the interceptor sewer line in the 1970's, turning agricultural land into residential use.

While total annual residential construction peaked in 1984 at 200 units with the construction of the Riverboat Village Apartments, single-family construction peaked at 112 units in 1986 and dropped to 31 by 1988. Since the late 1980's, the annual residential construction has remained steady under 100 units with an average of around 45-50 units per year.

Plan approvals by the Planning Board also reflect changes in the character of the residential development as shifting more from single-family subdivisions to multi-family (predominately condominiums). From 1985 to 2006, thirty-seven (37) single-family subdivisions were approved and initiated. These subdivisions have created 417 new building lots – nearly all have been constructed upon. The largest subdivision during this time period was the Stonegate on the River with 80 lots. Slightly over half of the subdivisions created 10 or fewer lots. While subdivision activity of the 1940's to 1970's largely created relatively small lots (10,000 to 15,000 square feet), much of the subdivision activity of the last 2 decades has resulted in lots in the half-acre or larger range.

To encourage more open space in developments, in 2004, the Town repealed its "cluster housing" provision which had only been used once in 30 years and replaced it with a "Flexible Development" provision. This development option is currently being used for the 52-lot Mountainbrook subdivision which is preserving 50% of the land for common open space and the lots are in the 14,000 to 15,000 square foot range. Another 36-unit condominium development on Dry Brook Hill was also approved as a "Flexible Development" and is anticipated to break ground in 2008. Combined, these two "Flexible Developments", while providing 88 new dwellings, will also preserve over 40 acres of open space as part of the developments. If the properties were developed as "conventional" subdivisions, the only portions which would not have been developed would likely have been the wetlands.

While single-family subdivisions dominated the development activity of the 1980's and 1990's, thirteen (13) multi-family developments (predominately condominiums) were permitted. These developments account for 580 permitted dwelling units. Construction has been completed on most of the units, but is underway on 90 of the units and is anticipated to begin on another 36 units within the next year. Planning Board approval for six (6) of these multi-family developments accounting for 137 units was granted since 2004.

Although the entire Town felt the pressures of development in the late 1980's and early 1990's, some areas experienced greater impact than others. As a result of the installation of an interceptor sewer line, the Alvord Street area realized the addition of over 300 new dwelling units. Nearly all of these new units were constructed on land previously used for farming. In 1991, a research team from the UMASS projected that land in this area could accommodate an additional 308 single-family units along this corridor.

Development may never again meet the level of the late 1980's, however, changes will nonetheless continue to impact the Town's fiscal condition, environment, infrastructure and community character and such change must be planned for and directed. Often times, the increase in residential units will add a disproportionate share to the tax burden of a town because of the concomitant increase in school needs and other services. Now is the time to plan for retaining space for both passive and active recreation as well as the planned availability and expansion of industrial and commercial land.

South Hadley has not lost all of its agricultural land to development, yet it is steadily becoming a more densely populated "bedroom community", which will utilize what land remains to meet the growing demand. Realizing this, it is important for the Town to plan and equip itself for the protection and conservation of open land by identifying planning goals associated with existing and future development.

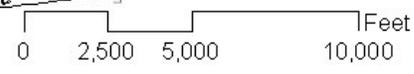
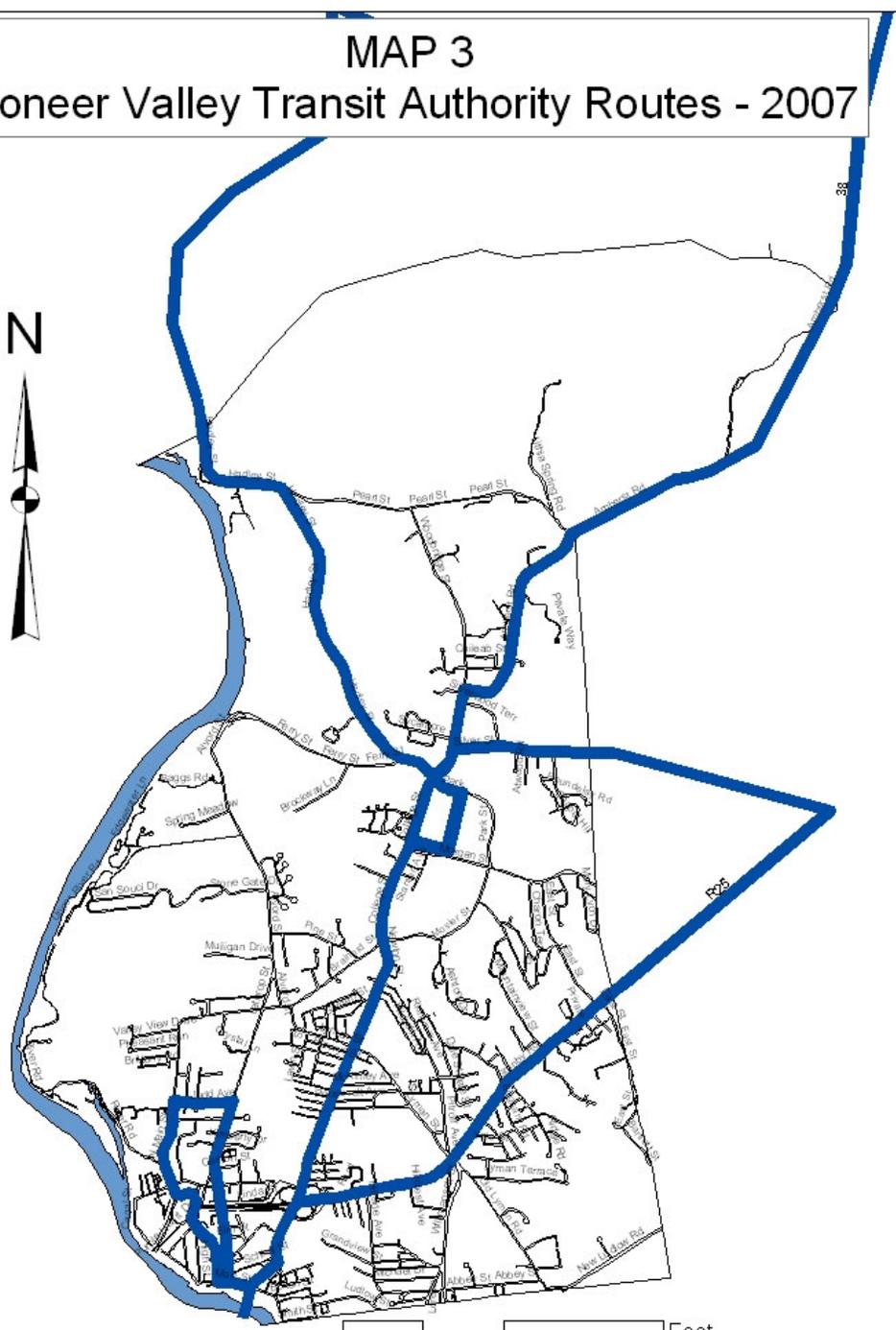
2. INFRASTRUCTURE

A. TRANSPORTATION

Although the Town of South Hadley does not have in-Town access to any of the major interstate highways, there is direct linkage to Interstate 91 via Mass. Route 202 west through Holyoke and to Interstate 90 (Mass Pike) via Route 33 south through Chicopee. Routes 116 and 47 north link the Town with commercial areas and employment and educational centers in Amherst and Northampton. Due to the absence of major interstates and railroad facilities in South Hadley, the potential for large scale industrial development appears to be limited to the industrial park in the southern portion of Town nearest to the major transportation routes. Locally, the transportation systems which are favorable for commercial, light industrial and expanded residential development exist throughout town. Completion of the rebuilding of the Route 116 County Bridge, linking South Hadley Falls with the City of Holyoke, in the mid-1990's has provide increased access between the industrial section of South Hadley, Holyoke, Chicopee and Springfield.

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) has several regularly serviced routes linking the Town with the cities of Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee as well as free bus service throughout the five (5) college area linking South Hadley with the towns of Amherst, Hadley and Northampton (see Map 3). The PVTA also provides support for van service in and around town for people with disabilities and senior citizens by providing the vans themselves and financial reimbursement of operation costs.

MAP 3 Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Routes - 2007



Source: South Hadley Planning Board, 2007

B. WATER

South Hadley has two (2) water/fire districts which serve the Town's potable water needs (see Map 4). Fire District #1 supplies the southern portion of the Town from the Chicopee line northward to Stony Brook and the intersection of Mosier and Newton Streets, Parkview East and Parkview Drive, Cypress and Westbrook and across East Street into Granby. From here to the northernmost limits of the Town, residents are supplied by Fire District #2. The two systems are interconnected at five (5) locations for emergency situations only.

With the exception of about twenty (20) or thirty (30) homes near Riverboat Village which are serviced by private wells, Fire District #1 receives its supply from the Quabbin Reservoir.

Fire District #2 is supplied by the Dry Brook wells. There appears to be no shortage in this supply and it would seem capable of supporting additional residential development at the present time. However, it has not been determined how much development this source will ultimately supply. Due to the sensitive nature of this supply, the Town and Fire District have worked to develop a regulatory framework to protect the groundwater supply. A recently approved residential development will sit atop a portion of Dry Brook Hill in the well recharge zones but will take special precautions to ensure that the groundwater is not adversely impacted.

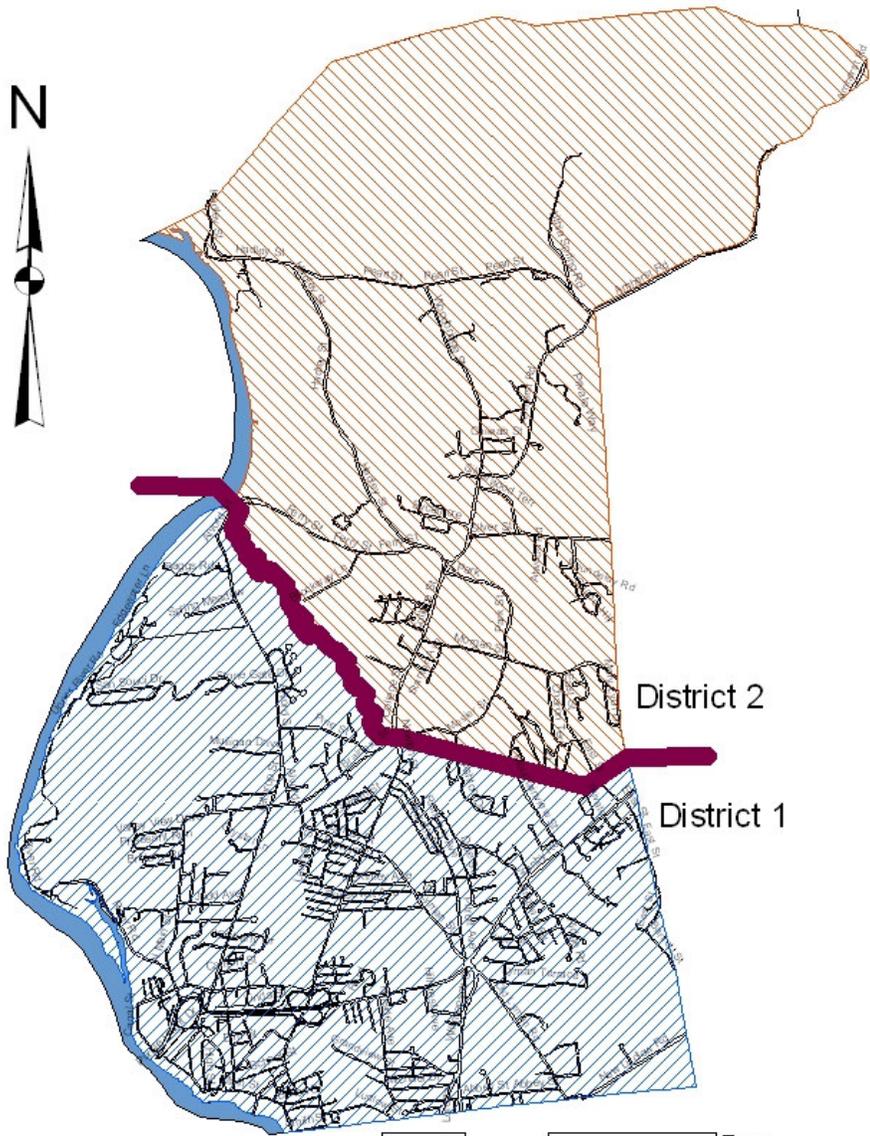
C. SEWER

The Town of South Hadley currently operates a wastewater treatment plant which serves a total of 7,300 households including 240 in neighboring Chicopee and approximately 300 homes in Granby. An average of 2.75 million gallons of raw sewage are treated daily.

The facility is currently operating at approximately 65% of capacity, and has the potential of treating 4.2 million gallons per day. Full capacity of the wastewater treatment facility is expected by the year 2020 if the planned expansion in a 5.1 million gallons per day capacity is not implemented. At least 85% of the total suspended particles are removed, and the resulting sludge is disposed of privately.

Installation of a 30-inch sewer trunk line parallel to the Connecticut River in 1976 resulted in the expanded residential development of the Alvord Street corridor in an area of prime farmland. A subsequent result of this new sewer interceptor was the development of five (5) larger subdivisions with over 175 approved lots, a 170-unit apartment complex, a 165-unit free standing condominium complex and a 200 unit retirement community, and approximately 50 other single-family homes.

MAP 4 South Hadley Fire Districts - 2007



Source: South Hadley Planning Board, 2007

0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

A Planning Board study in the early 1990's reported that a maximum build-out of the Alvord Street corridor would produce an added 200,000 gallon per day increased flow to the existing sewer systems. 'This additional flow can be handled by the current collection and treatment facilities.

Although most of the town is serviced by the public sewer system, private septic handles all of the area north of Bachelor Brook (see Map 5). A primary reason for the lack of public sewer north of Bachelor Brook include the prohibitive cost of installing sewer infrastructure along the radically changing topography in the northern areas at the foot of the Mount Holyoke Range. Not wishing to repeat the development boom which followed the Alvord Street interceptor, the Town has taken the proactive position of discouraging sewer service in this area as a means of minimizing the likelihood of development disrupting the character of the area and views of the Mount Holyoke Range.

3. LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

As the street patterns demonstrate (see Maps 1 and 2), over the past 150 years, South Hadley has developed northerly. Overall, the southern portion of the town is developed much more densely due to a variety of factors including access, zoning, and utilities. Most recent developments (see Map 6) have focused on "in-fill" sites and modern, multi-family communities. As land has developed in the southern half, the first multi-family development was recently approved for the northern third of the town.

Zoning and utility infrastructure have largely dictated the Town's development pattern and will likely continue to do so. Most of the undeveloped land in South Hadley is zoned either Agricultural or Residence A-1 (*See Appendix G, Map 1 for the current Zoning Map*). Under the Zoning Bylaw, residential development in the Agricultural district generally follow the Residence A-1 requirements, but with larger lot and frontage requirements.

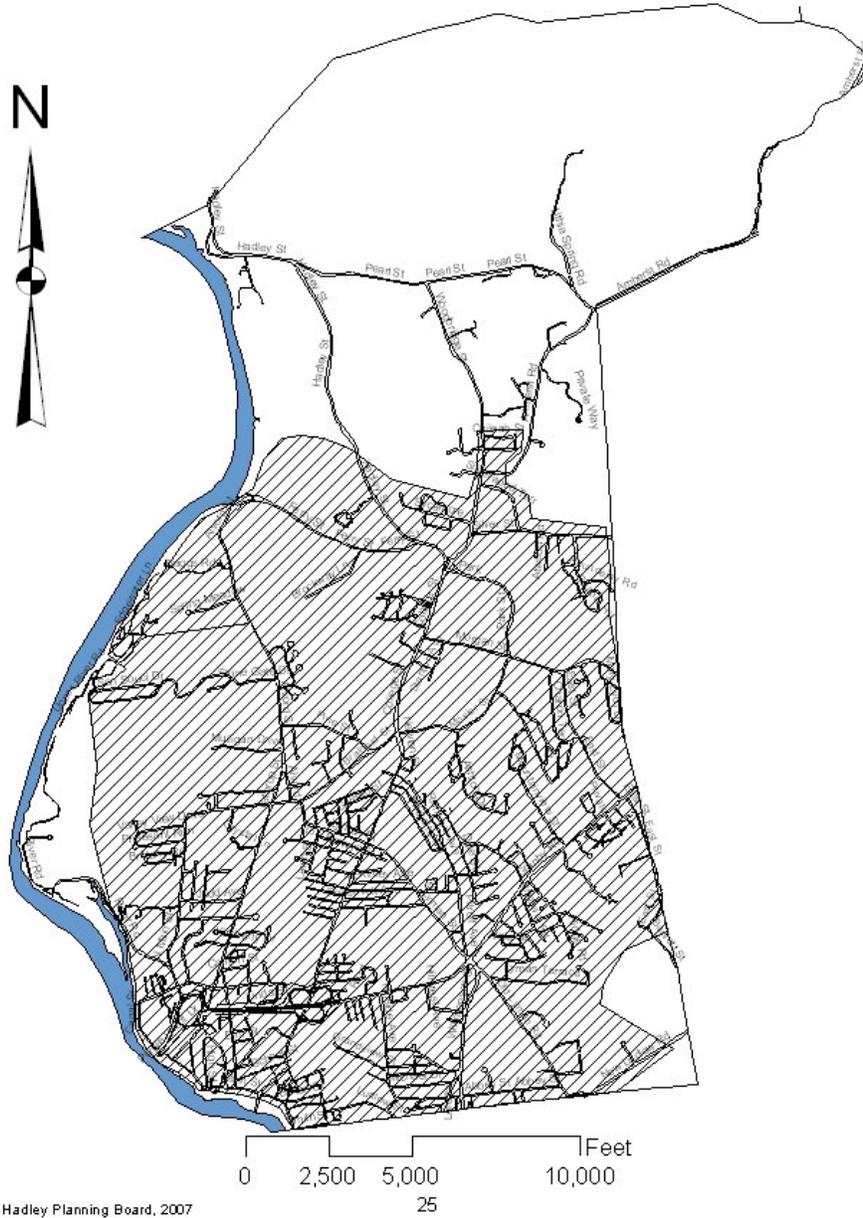
Residence A-1 dimensional requirements generally include:

- a maximum lot coverage is limited to 30%,
- lot size is limited to a minimum of one half acre lots, and
- for specially permitted properties (i.e., churches, schools), building lots are required to be a minimum of two (2) acres.

Agricultural dimensional requirements generally include:

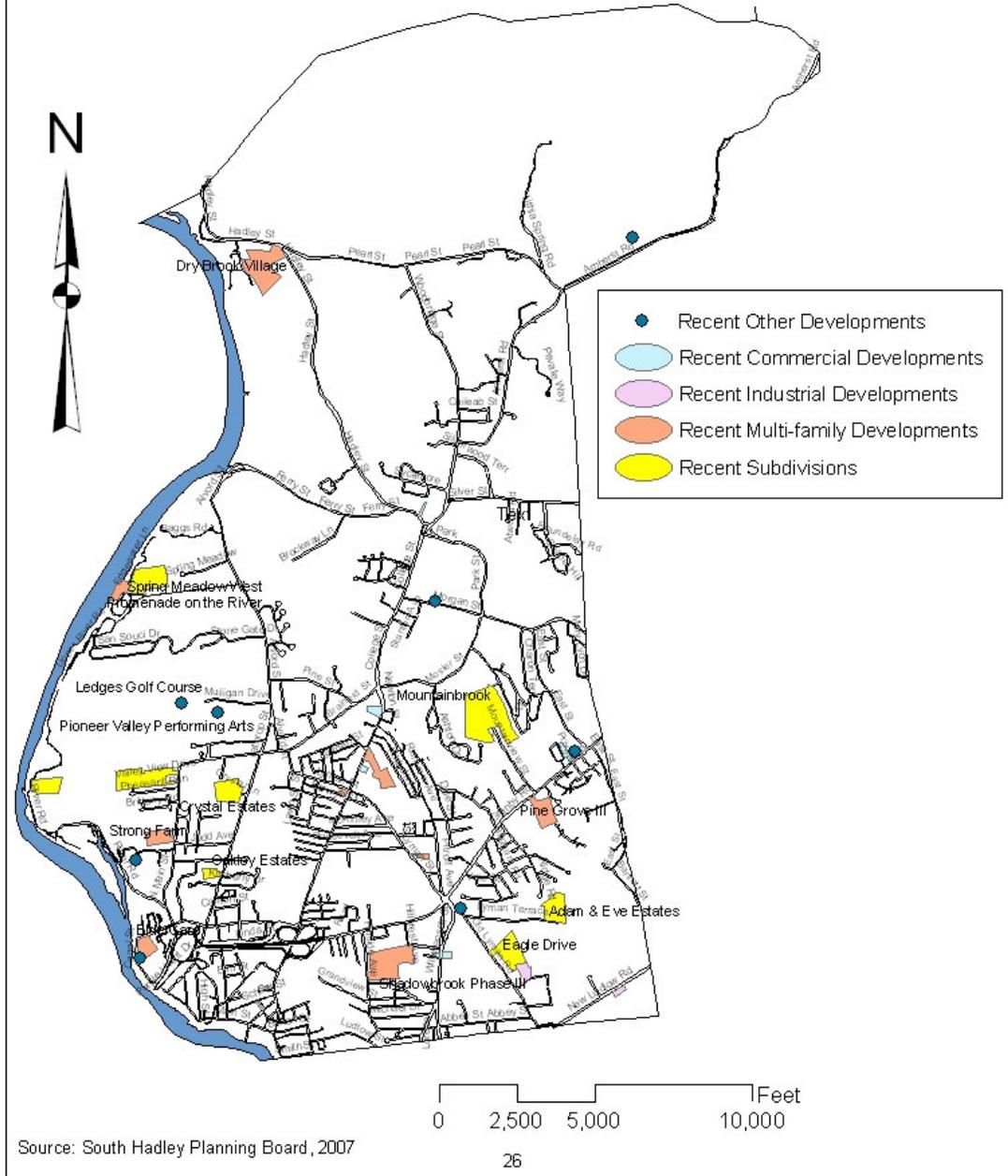
- thirty thousand (30,000) square feet is the minimum lot size,(forty thousand (40,000) square feet in the Aquifer Protection Overlay District), and
- again, a maximum lot coverage of 30%.

MAP 5 Generalized Area of Sanitary Sewer Service - 2007



Source: South Hadley Planning Board, 2007

MAP 6 Recent Developments 1998 - 2007



To illustrate the application of the Zoning Bylaw, the Alvord Street corridor, with the exception of the “Industrial Garden”, is primarily zoned Residential A-1 and Agricultural. Under this zoning, the landscape along Alvord Street has been drastically altered from its previous farm dominated landscape to its present pattern of predominately residential uses with open farm landscape interspersed. Four very large subdivisions were completed in the 1990’s on 176 acres on the Town’s open space acreage. Concern persists that the remaining large, active farm will become a massive subdivision in the foreseeable future.

This concern over the loss of agricultural land resulted in the Alvord Street Corridor Study which showed, among other things, that 285 acres along the Alvord Street corridor had been in an unprotected open space status and should result in further proposals for protective measures as amendments in the Zoning By-Law or by other means. To this end, the Town, in 1997 by an arrangement with James River Corporation, purchased some 244 acres of this land with the assistance of the State’s Urban Self-Help funds for the purpose of developing a regional multi-purpose recreational site including an eighteen (18) hole golf course.

In 2003-2004, the Pioneer Valley conducted a “Build-Out Analysis” based on South Hadley’s current Zoning Bylaw and an assessment of the constraints on land for development. The study concluded that there were 4,374 acres of land which could be developed without any known constraints. Further, the available land, under current, “by-right” zoning, could result in an additional 4,537 households, 12,839 residents, and 1,724 students. This would represent a 75% increase in the Town’s population, a dramatic decrease in the community’s open space – under current zoning regulations. The implications for community services and recreation needs are significant as such growth could result in the community which is characterized by the “Range” and the “River” becoming characterized by the “condo” and the “mansion” with little open space in between and views and access to the “Range” and the “River” becoming illusory and a fleeting memory.