

## CHAPTER III

### SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

In developing this master plan to guide the future development of Lyme, the natural capability of the land, recent demographic and economic trends and community attitudes are considered. A survey of community attitudes is the best way to determine how people feel about growth and development in the Town. An analysis of community attitudes puts recent trends into perspective qualitatively. Local opinion as expressed in the attitude survey gives the Planning Board a basis from which to begin formulating future land use policy. Local problems, assets and aspirations are introduced to the planning process via the attitudes survey.

Community attitude surveys were conducted in 1974 and 1981. The opinions expressed in both surveys are considered. It is interesting to note that over a seven year span of phenomenal growth in the Upper Valley, community attitudes about the character of Lyme have changed very little; however, attitudes about residential and commercial development and land use planning are noticeably different. Listed below are summaries of both surveys. Samples of the surveys and the tabulated responses are presented in Appendix A.

#### Summary of Community Attitude Survey 1974

The 1974 survey was prepared by the Planning Board, Selectmen and Conservation Commission. It was distributed by mail to each household, with additional copies available at businesses in Town. The response rate was 33%.

1. Present Town Character

Lyme is a good place to live.

Only one returned questionnaire contradicted this attitude.

2. Future Town Character

Lyme should remain a quiet, rural community as it is now.

3. Housing

There is an adequate supply of housing in Lyme.

Fifty-one percent of respondents expressed this opinion.

The Town should not make provisions for multi-family housing.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents supported this attitude.

Residential development should be evenly distributed and scattered over Town, not encouraged in existing villages or clustered in new "villages".

4. Historic/Scenic Preservation

Over 90% of the respondents favored preserving historic and/or scenic buildings and places.

5. Commercial Development

Additional commercial development is not desired. Commercial development was rejected by over 80% of respondents.

A small shopping center was not favored by respondents.

Seventy-nine percent of respondents did not support of this idea.

Industrial Development

Light industry was not desired.

Light industry was not favored by 67% of respondents.

Town Services

Overall town services are adequate.

Schools, roads and cost of services were identified as needing to be changed.

Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed there were adequate outdoor recreational opportunities in Lyme.

Problems

The questionnaire presented respondents with a list of issues of local concern and asked respondents to indicate which of those items they believed to be serious problems in Lyme. The problems are listed according to frequency of response.

	<u># of Responses</u>
Town dump	175
High taxes	140
Land speculation	129
Junked cars & littering	103
Community building	89
Lack of housing development	60
Traffic control	45
Lack of industrial development	35
Lack of commercial development	31
Mobile homes	27
Schools	19
Roads & land use	10

## Summary of Community Attitude Survey

### 1981

The 1981 Community Attitude Survey was prepared by the Planning Board and mailed to Lyme residents and property owners. The response rate was 32%. 1981 responses were evaluated by Board members as being, on the whole, representative of what would be answered if the survey were repeated in 1983. In instances where, Board members felt responses would be different, perceived changes are mentioned.

#### 1. Present Town Character

Lyme is a good place to live.

Almost 95% of the respondents to the survey supported this feeling. Half the respondents thought that the present population growth rate was too high, about half thought that the present growth rate was about right.

#### 2. Future Town Character

Lyme should remain a quiet, rural community with plans for the future and some commercial development. "Rural", the "same" and with "planning" were the most frequently mentioned words describing how respondents thought Lyme should be in the future.

Lyme should adopt additional land use controls.

Respondents favored additional land use controls 3 to 1. However, the people most likely to respond to the questionnaire may be those predisposed to favoring land use controls.

#### 3. Housing

There is an adequate supply of housing.

While 59% of respondents supported this opinion, it should be noted that since only people who own property in Lyme or who live in Lyme are respondents, this may not be an accurate appraisal of the housing situation.

It is not clear whether the Town should make provisions for multi-family housing.

While 50% of the respondents did not favor providing opportunities for multi-family dwellings, the Planning Board feels that Lyme residents now perceive a greater need for small dwelling units and apartments than in 1981.

Conversion of large houses to apartments is preferred to building new apartment or town house structures.

The community is unsure of where residential growth should occur. Respondents in 1981 were evenly divided in their opinion of scattered growth in the western portion of Town. 1974 respondents were clearly in favor of "scattered" residential development through the Town. Fifty-four percent were opposed to growth in existing villages and 61% were opposed to growth in clustered new villages.

Roads should not be improved or created to open up inaccessible parts of Town to development.

Respondents agreed 3 to 1 with this opinion.

4. Agricultural/Historic/Scenic Preservation

Farming, agricultural land, historic and scenic buildings and places should be preserved.

An overwhelming 94% of respondents supported preserving Lyme's agricultural base, historic and scenic features.

5. Commercial Development

Additional commercial and office development should occur.

Commercial and office development were favored by 57% of respondents. Compared with the 80% opposition in 1974, this is quite a change in opinion.

Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain) is favored for additional commercial development.

While Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain) was favored by respondents, Route 10 (north of Lyme Plain) and "scattered" through Town were also supported. Commercial development in village areas was opposed 2 to 1.

Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain) is favored for office use.

91% of the respondents thought offices should be located on Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain). Route 10 (north of Lyme Plain) was the only other location supported by a majority (58%) of respondents. Office development in village areas was opposed 2 to 1.

A shopping center is not favored.

Although 71% of respondents were opposed to shopping center development in Lyme, if one were to be built the preferred location would be Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain).

6. Industrial Development

Light industry is not favored.

53% of respondents were opposed to light industry in Lyme. It is interesting to note the slight change in attitude from 1974 when 67% were opposed. If industrial development were to occur, locations on Route 10 south and north of Lyme Plain are preferred to scattered through town and in the villages. Strong preference (76%) is to Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain). Strong opposition (83%) is to development in the village areas.

7. Town Services

Town services are adequate.

Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that Lyme provides adequate services. Planning Board members think this level of satisfaction might have increased on account of recent improvements to the police department and construction of Town Offices.

There are adequate recreation opportunities in Lyme.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents compared with 82% in 1974 agree with this opinion.

## 8. Problems

The questionnaire presented respondents with a list of issues of local concern and asked respondents to indicate which of those items they believed to be serious problems in Lyme. The problems are listed according to frequency of response.

	<u># of Responses</u>
Loss of farmland	103
High taxes	95
Lack of comprehensive land use controls	95
Land speculation	67
Lack of community buildings	61
Lack of multi-family housing	38
Lack of industrial development	35
Lack of commercial development	33
Excessive commercial and office development	33
Excessive housing development	26
Lack of housing development	19
Excessive land use controls	10
Traffic control	7

High taxes and land speculation both highly ranked in 1974, continue to be high priority concerns in Lyme. The shortage of community buildings is also a continuing problem. In the 1981 survey 95 people identify the lack of comprehensive land use controls as a serious problem, while in 1974 land use was mentioned by only a handful of people. Solid waste disposal and littering, once serious problems, are no longer perceived as such. Loss of farmland has replaced the town dump as the most frequent and serious problem in Lyme.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this evaluation of the community attitude survey, Lyme is a good place to live, with adequate services and recreational opportunities. It should remain rural with farmland, historic buildings and scenic places preserved.

Although there is no clear consensus about where residential development should occur, if multifamily housing is to be encouraged, conversion of large houses is preferred to the construction of new apartment buildings or townhouses. Additional commercial and office space could be developed on Route 10 (south of Lyme Plain), but definitely not in existing village areas. Neither shopping centers nor light industry are favored by the majority of respondents. However, no matter where building occurs, the Town should not improve or create roads to open up inaccessible parts of Town.

With the loss of farmland, high taxes and lack of comprehensive land use controls identified as the most frequently cited "serious problems" in Lyme, every Town board should take note and formally address those problems. Since a master plan is the first step in developing a comprehensive set of land use controls, it was with the firm belief in a need for a master plan that the Lyme Planning Board undertook the job of preparing this document.