

APPENDIX C: TOWN VISION STATEMENT JACOB EDWARDS LIBRARY , SOUTHBRIDGE, MA

On July 13, 2004 the library's Long Range Planning Committee discussed the 2003-2004 Southbridge Long Term Plan, a community effort. The Town's Vision Statement is a resource used in the development of the Jacob Edwards Library Long Range Plan. The statement helps the Long Range Planning Committee see the library as one of several town departments and to consider the community vision for Southbridge. The Town's Long Term Plan includes

- a vision statement generated by the community
- information about Southbridge's current situation
- potential action strategies
- agreement on the most promising actions to help Southbridge move toward the future townspeople want.¹

The *Long Term Plan's* priority objectives are:

1. Continue to revitalize the Town Center.
2. Continue to revitalize the neighborhoods.
3. Keep current business & industry, AND bring in new business & industry.
4. Get the access road to the Airport Industrial Park and rest of Town-owned property.
5. Gain more balanced set of housing choices.
6. Keep improving the schools.
7. Don't give up recreation space & programs.
8. Do a full, comprehensive plan for Southbridge.²

Members of the library's Long Range Planning Committee discussed the Town's Long Range Plan, in particular the vision statement. The discussion included the following comments:

Town Government issues

- Last Master Plan was completed in 1965, a new Master Plan is needed
- Zoning bylaws are out of date
- The volume of traffic

Economic issues

- There is a need for economic development
- Town is becoming a bedroom community, some business opportunities have departed due to lack of space, tax incentives

School issues

- School budget needs to improve—5 schools, regional vocational school
- High school needs upgrading (within 3-5 years)
- Raise the MCAS Scores--Middle School under-performing in math
- School Resource Officers (Police) in schools—role models, social workers
- Education is the key—adult education opportunities are needed

Youth issues

- Skate boarding on Main Street
- No activities for youth—boys & girls club new, needs to have better facility and services (fund raising)
- Expand service for youth

¹ *Southbridge Long Term Plan*, LandUse, Incorporated. May 24, 2004. Summary of the *Long Term Plan*.

² *Ibid.*

Quality of life Issues

- Housing, a better balance between the types, need more middle income, higher income housing
- Recreation needs—fields (no consensus about the need for additional fields)
- Multi-ethnic (Tension below the surface-no consensus on this statement)
- Town needs to build esteem—need to document what is good and build on it, communicate to residents

Library issue

- Surrounding communities use the library, okay for MA libraries but Connecticut use heavily (could charge, may take advantage of the concept)—net loss

During the July 13, 2004 Long Range Planning Committee meeting the group developed an abbreviated version of the “Vision Statement from the Community of Southbridge.” The abbreviated version of the town’s Vision Statement was developed as a reference for the library’s Long Range Planning Committee.

Southbridge needs to build esteem—needs to document what is good and build on it, communicate to residents. This is a big issue that needs to appear somewhere

The abbreviated version of the Vision Statement was developed from comments collected during the Vision exercise on July 13, 2004 and material in “A Vision Statement from the Community of Southbridge” found in *Southbridge Long Term Plan* (pages 3-4). The Long Range Plan version of the Vision Statement includes:

- Build upon Southbridge’s strong manufacturing and family owned business tradition by developing a broad business base of industry, retail, and service businesses that will provide goods, services, and employment to households with a wide spectrum of income levels.
- Improve access to the Industrial Park and other town-owned property, at the same time alleviating traffic congestion downtown.
- Develop an excellent school system for children and adults that will be a key to developing a vibrant and diverse range of businesses and residents.
- Diversify housing options so that well designed and well maintained homes will be available for the full range of people who will work for and do business with local firms.
- Integrate green spaces and recreational areas into developed areas, from the historic downtown centre, through existing neighborhoods, and into future development in outlying areas. Build more sports fields, extend and upgrade the trail system, and conserve key open spaces such as the watershed.
- Provide expanded services and programs for Southbridge residents, particularly youth and seniors.
- Encourage and support the diversity of the population of Southbridge through social, cultural, and educational opportunities so that all residents feel welcome to participate in the community.
- Maintain the high quality of town services that will continue to support the quality of life desired by residents and business owners.