

### III. Directions From the Community

#### **A. Business**

The community discussions that focused on business began at the June 12 forum, continued through the Listening Meeting with local business people, and wrapped up at the October 9 forum with the following suggested strategies and actions:

1. **Do better marketing of Southbridge and our assets.** Determine priorities. Downtown first? Industry, local, regional?
2. **Continue to development Town's Web Site.** Have more photos posted, testimonials etc.
3. **Appoint a truly active Economic Development Commission** – recruit businesses, tap customer stream so not just passing through. Encourage businesses that would attract other businesses. Cinemas & museums. Businesses that would create lots of jobs for all income & skill ranges. Assist businesses with making their way through all the town's review and permit procedures. Ask Counselors for advice regarding the mission and members of an EDC.
4. **Chamber of Commerce** – An active Chamber is needed to solicit new business in conjunction with the Town Economic Development department and the Development Authority. More participation in the Tri Community Chamber will lead to being more proactive on behalf of Southbridge. More cooperation deemed necessary between the member communities to facilitate more business. [Note health benefits through Chamber are important]
5. **Counter negative perception of being a "mill town"** – stress the positive attributes from this history: welcoming to business, services, organizations, architecture, workforce
6. **Market in multiple ways:**
  - Downtown
  - Industrial: local/regional plus national/airport
  - Hub: Boston, Worcester, Hartford, Providence
  - Tax incentives, low costs, work ethic, quality of life
7. **Continue to improve our schools** – MCAS Scores are an indicator of how well the system is performing. Concentrate on improving the scores. Also need more skilled workforce with good work habits.
8. **Keep working on more cleanliness downtown** – lots of trash, weeds and dirt around the town. Activate fines for littering
9. **Create pleasant entrance and exit corridors** – more beautification needed, for example Rt. 131 from Big Bunny: sidewalks, trees, building facades
10. **Start an annual "First Night"** in Southbridge [New Year's Eve scattered site festivities] to draw people
11. **Parking** is a problem. Investigate the possibility of returning to parallel/perpendicular parking. Make parking lots easier to find, compensate for need to find/use alleyways.

12. **Make Old Mill Buildings and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors on Main Street accessible** – work on having these buildings functioning. Investigate the possibility of having financial assistance made available to property owners for the conversion.
13. **Bring more stores & restaurants to the downtown** – this may result when/if more business in the community. Stress more pedestrian shopping. An “atrium” area that shelters in bad weather?
14. **Industrial Base** need to expand the use of buildings and land. Need small industrial firms as well as large ones
15. **Public Transportation** will be needed if industrial activity improves

**Townspeople suggest the following potential locations for business development or redevelopment**

- a. 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floors in Downtown [would require special loans]
- b. Vacant or underutilized mills. Good example = recording studio at old Westwood Textile building. Continue redevelopment in that area.
- c. Across from Delehanty Building [131 West]
- d. Property along 131 east of Town Centre and land across the River between Torrey Road, Guelphwood Road, & Route 131.
- e. Longer term: get access, utilities to airport area. A good place to develop. Light industry would be easier on the roads. Could also include a mix of housing.

## B. Housing

The community discussions that focused on housing began at the June 12 forum and wrapped up at the October 9 forum with the following suggested strategies and actions:

1. **Find free or low cost land or building** for Habitat for Humanity or similar volunteer-built project to construct affordable homes.
2. **Deal with the problem of absentee landlords** – this situation hurts renters & the town.
3. **Redevelop lovely old buildings** for new residential choices.
4. **Take existing buildings and redevelop into affordable housing** -- as an example, West Street.
5. **Seek out and use redevelopment grants.**
6. **Locate lower cost housing close to transportation and services** in the town center.
7. **Convert diverse single family, 2-family & 3-family into affordable condos.**
8. **Encourage the permitted site** off Plimpton Street for Elderly & subsidized family housing.
9. **Seek mixed affordable family and senior housing.**
10. **Encourage condominium ownership** as a way to help people take pride in their neighborhood.

Townpeople suggest the following locations for development or redevelopment to gain needed alternatives to large single family housing:

- a. Locate denser housing around the center of town, more rural housing in outlying areas
- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors on Main Street
- c. Keep three-deckers: renovate, revitalize, provide for parking
- d. At end of Pleasant near Airport. Section of elderly or assisted living near industrial area
- e. Guelphwood Road/ Torrey Road area, possibly combined with business &/or other municipal uses
- f. Town-owned land behind A-O
- g. Any other possibilities on Town-owned land??
- h. If golf course changes use – near core of Town with services, sewer, water
- i. Airport is a good place to develop, but needs access road. Could include a mix of middle/high/and low income housing if buffered from light industry

## C. Open Space, Natural Resources, and Recreation

Community discussions began with the Open Space, Natural Resources, and Recreation component of the Long Term Plan, because these elements comprise the physical base upon which a balanced and sustainable long term plan must rest. In addition, the maps that the community would submit for an approved Open Space and Recreation Plan contain valuable information for discussion about business and housing. Finally, getting started on the Open Space and Recreation Plan helped open the opportunity to apply for grants to implement the community's goals for open space, natural resource protection, and recreation.

The community discussions that focused on this component began at the April 30 forum, continued at the May 29 workshop, and wrapped up at the October 9 forum with the following priority strategies and actions:

1. Skateboarding [think seriously about it]
2. Address our fields' needs for maintenance and upgrading to achieve best use
3. Focus on youth activities
4. Develop Gibraltar Field
5. Map & identify [with signs] public walking trails, to include McKinstry Brook Trail, carpenter Pond, Airport.
6. Publicize the recreational areas in town with a small brochure.
7. Incorporate into the development review & permitting process consideration of scenic features identified by the OSRP. Work with the developer, add conditions to permits. Improve ease & efficiency of communication between Planning Board & Historic Commission.
8. Over time conserve/protect the watershed & aquifer-rich southwest quadrant of town [from Eastford Road west], perhaps with an expanded protective zoning overly district.

## **IV. From Balanced Vision to Cooperative Action**

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### **A. Introduction**

The action strategies that emerged from the 2003 -- 2004 planning process flow from Southbridge's vision statement, *Where We Are, and Where We Want To Be*, which is presented section II.A, above. The actions outlined below also reflect the priorities that townspeople expressed through the community working meetings of 2002 and 2003.

Based upon guidance received from the community during working sessions through fall 2003, the Long Term Planning Committee identified groups whose support and actions would be needed to take steps on the community's priorities. From December 2003 through early March 2004, representatives of the Committee visited the following groups to review and consider the list of priorities and potential actions:

- Town Council Subcommittees on Planning & Development, and General Government
- Director of Southbridge Housing Authority
- Gathering of business owners
- Landlord's Association
- Interfaith Hospitality Network
- Library Trustees
- Historical Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Physical Improvements Subcommittee of the Downtown Partnership
- Planning Board

A summary of these groups' advice and feedback is presented in the Appendix. Their suggestions were incorporated into the draft list of priority actions that was presented and discussed at the March 18, 2004, community workshop. This final community workshop reviewed and confirmed the priority action objectives and key strategies that are listed below. Also listed are key groups inside and outside of Town Hall whose active leadership will be needed in order for Southbridge to make progress on these important tasks. On April 9, 2004, the Planning and Development Subcommittee of Town Council voted to endorse the following chart of priority actions, key strategies, and key responsible actors.

## B. Long Term Plan: *Actions, Strategies, and Responsibilities*

Priority action objective	Key strategies	Who spearhead? <sup>2</sup>
<b>1. Continue to revitalize the Town Centre</b>	<p>Urban Renewal Plan: parking structure, Fire Station, housing</p> <p>More participation in Downtown Partnership; later hours, recruit new stores</p> <p>First Night, Museum, Thursday Nights on the Town, <i>All Around Spectacle Town</i>.</p> <p>Encourage investor owners to maintain their property.</p> <p>Continue Façade Improvement Program.</p> <p>Local Historic District to guide development &amp; redevelopment.</p> <p>Site Plan Review &amp; improve appearance of signs in all of Centre</p> <p>Long term: elevators for 2<sup>nd</sup> floors</p>	<p>Town Council Redevelopment Authority</p> <p>Downtown Partnership &amp; Town Department of Ec. Dev. &amp; Planning [ED&amp;P]</p> <p>Department of Inspections</p> <p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>Historic District Study Committee</p> <p>Planning Board &amp; Historic District Study Committee</p> <p>Redevelopment Plan will begin this.</p>
<b>2. Continue to revitalize neighborhoods</b>	<p>Continue Home Improvement assistance programs</p> <p>Beautification efforts, neighborhood cleanups</p> <p>Explore incentives, including campaigns, competitions</p> <p>Consider how to improve appearance &amp; vitality of main entryways into town: Routes 131, 169, &amp; 198 Corridors. Pick up with 2002 131 Corridor inventory report.</p> <p>Sidewalks.</p>	<p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>Community volunteers &amp; Town DPW</p> <p>The Landlords' Association</p> <p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>[continued. . .]</p>

<sup>2</sup> "Spearhead" = take the lead & monitor progress. In each case, numerous other groups will need to be involved in planning and carrying out the strategy, including many volunteers.

	<p>Restore historic buildings with architectural character.</p> <p>Renovate or replace 3-deckers</p> <p>Careful demolition and replacement.</p> <p>Program to renovate older homes and create condominiums for middle income townspeople.</p>	<p>ED&amp;P, Redevelopment Authority, Historical Commission, Historical Society</p>
<p><b>3. Keep current business &amp; industry</b></p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>Bring in new business &amp; industry</b></p>	<p>Reactivate Economic Development Commission ["EDC"].</p> <p>Continue visitation program to current &amp; new businesses.</p> <p>Make sure there are places for local business to move into and/or expand</p> <p>More retail, food, entertainment in Town Centre.</p> <p>Have EDC help applicants through a business-friendly review &amp; permitting process.</p> <p>Keep single tax rate.</p> <p>Continue to use Tax Increment Financing as a way to open State tax reductions for businesses</p> <p>Create effective marketing materials, do outreach, improve website and create special one for outreach to businesses. Stress our advantage of good utility capacity.</p> <p>Keep Airport Industrial Park competitive in pricing</p>	<p>Town Manager</p> <p>EDC &amp; ED&amp;P</p> <p>Redevelopment Authority, Planning Board, Board of Realtors</p> <p>Downtown Partnership, ED&amp;P</p> <p>Town Council, EDC, permitting boards</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Council, ED&amp;P</p> <p>EDC</p> <p>Redevelopment Authority</p>
<p><b>4. Get the access road to the Airport Industrial Park and rest of Town-owned property.</b></p>	<p>Town Council vote to instruct Town Manager to proceed</p> <p>Financial plan and package.</p> <p>Site Master Plan for Town-owned &amp; nearby properties that would be served by the access road</p> <p>Longer term: work with Central</p>	<p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Manager</p> <p>Redevelopment Authority, ED&amp;P</p> <p>[continued. . .]</p> <p>Town Manager, Town Council</p>

	Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to study creation of Mass Pike exit/entry for Route 169 or other more direct connection to the Industrial Park.	DPW
<b>5. Gain more balanced set of housing choices.</b>	<p>Including decent housing for low, moderate, middle income people. Some upper income. Enable elderly to stay in homes or have local alternative.</p> <p>Enforce sanitary code.</p> <p>Work with USDA, Habitat for Humanity, other allies to create housing alternatives that fit in Southbridge.</p> <p>Create master plan for Town-owned properties, with stress on where best to site types of housing to create balance &amp; choice. Include Torrey Rd/Guelph Rd area &amp; Tax Title properties.</p> <p>Starter housing redevelopment project by Redevelopment Authority with local banks.</p> <p>Do something with Housing Authority property on Pleasant Street</p> <p>Work with developers who want to do quality, creative development. Consider incentives for flexible development to conserve open space resources while gaining housing choices.</p> <p>Develop a Housing Plan under the Planned Production provision of Chapter 40B, including an annually updated housing strategy for certification under E. O. 418. Through program for balanced housing, position Southbridge with competitive advantage for State grants</p>	<p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>Department of Inspections</p> <p>Town Manager, ED&amp;P, Redevelopment Authority</p> <p>Housing Authority</p> <p>Planning Board, ED&amp;P</p> <p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>[continued . . .]</p>



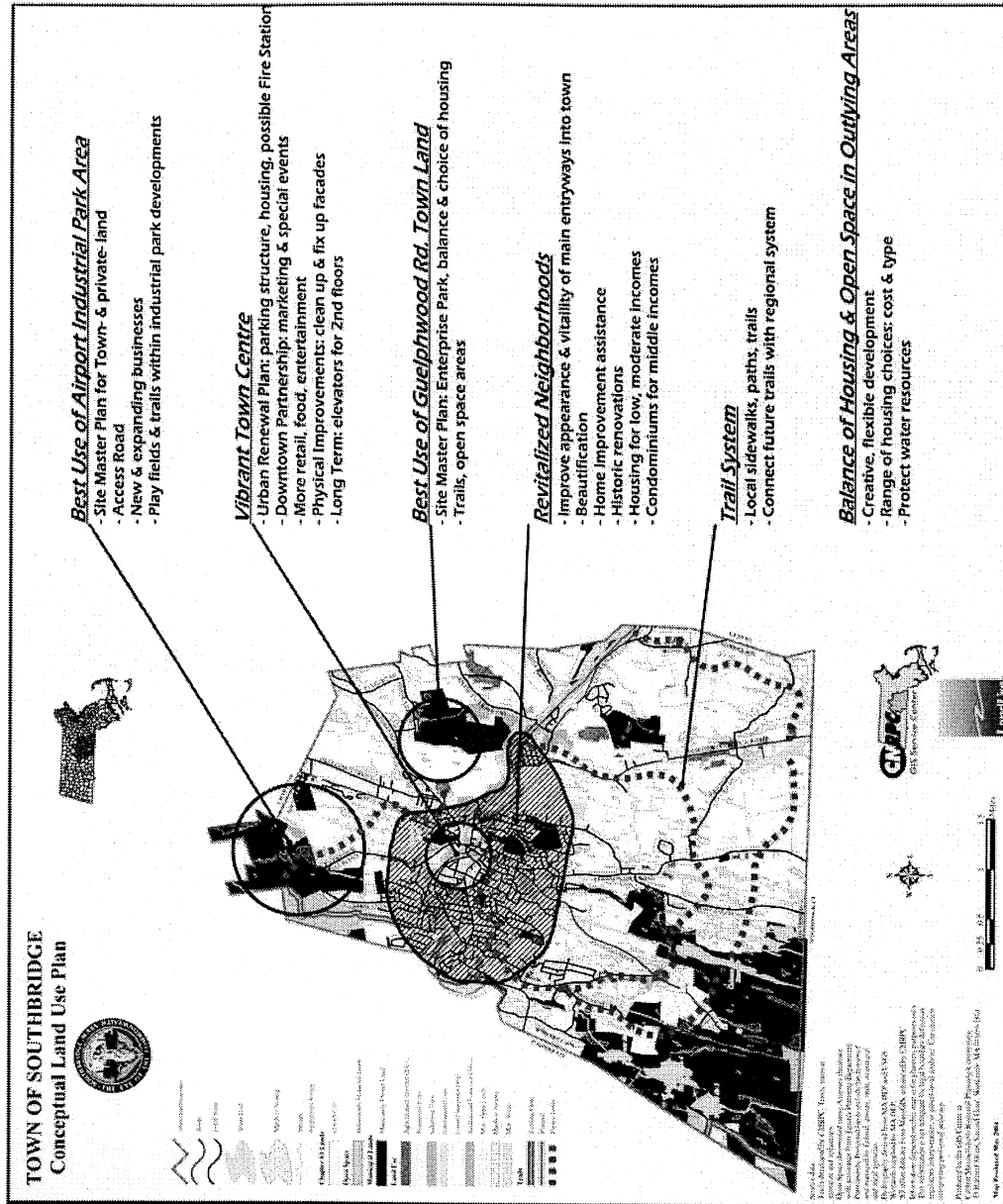
	<p>Invite surrounding towns to come to the table and work out a regional housing strategy</p> <p>Explore ways to achieve private development of affordable housing under Town control, e.g. an Affordable Housing Corporation.</p> <p>Consider enacting a Community Preservation Act funding mechanism for locally controlled housing development, redevelopment, and renovation.</p>	<p>Town Manager</p> <p>Town Manager</p> <p>Town Manager, Town Council</p>
<b>6. Keep improving the schools.</b>	<p>Emphasize the positive, spotlight strengths &amp; accomplishments. Increase parents' involvement, especially in these difficult times. Hire outside consultant to perform an educational audit that picks up where Mass. DOE audit of all schools' &amp; their programs left off. Plan &amp; carry out long term building program</p>	<p>Town Council, School Committee, the press</p>
<b>7. Don't give up recreation space &amp; programs.</b>	<p>Form Recreation Committee/Coalition of all recreation-related organizations. Plan and act on getting the most out of Gibraltar Field. Consider contracting with sports league to be responsible for some sports fields, under conditions that allow use by broader community.</p> <p>Map &amp; identify with signs existing walking trails, and publicize recreational areas in town with a small brochure.</p> <p>Ease communications among the boards involved in development review &amp; permitting. Start with Development Review Process Manual</p> <p>Work with developers for</p>	<p>Town Manager</p> <p>Conservation Commission &amp; Trails Committee</p> <p>ED&amp;P</p> <p>[continued . . .] Planning Board</p>

	<p>consideration of trails, green space &amp; scenic resources.</p> <p>Work with developers of industrial/business parks to include fields, jogging paths, etc.</p> <p>Consider how to make town &amp; school recreation fields open and accessible.</p> <p>Consider enacting a Community Preservation Act funding mechanism for open space &amp; recreation</p>	<p>Town Manager, School Committee</p> <p>Town Manager, Town Council</p>
<p><b>8. Do a full, Comprehensive Plan for Southbridge.</b></p>	<p>Build from the <i>Long Term Plan</i> and the <i>Open Space &amp; Recreation Plan</i>. Plan for Town properties and facilities. Make recommendations for growth management tools, including zoning amendments.</p> <p>Work for long term protection of water resources.</p> <p>Promote sustainable development and smart growth.</p> <p>Assess fiscal impact and management of projected growth and change.</p> <p>Analyze Zoning as one tool to achieve desired future</p>	<p>Planning Board with Committee representing key Town boards [incl. Planning &amp; Development Subcommittee, Conservation Commission, DPW, Historical Commission] and community.</p>

Each of the priority action objectives is vital to the future of Southbridge. Each will require the coordinated, positive, consistent effort of many groups and individuals – both inside and outside Town Hall. Different groups and individuals will likely feel more passionately about some of the objectives and think they are more important than the others. That's fine, because there is plenty of work to go around. People with differing viewpoints need to respect each other, and be glad that people with other viewpoints are picking up and carrying other parts of the joint effort.

### C. Conceptual Land Use Plan

The *Conceptual Land Use Plan* Map provides a preliminary overview of how Southbridge's future balance of business, housing, recreation, and natural resource areas will fit in the landscape.



## **Executive Order 418 Long Term Plan Program Housing Strategy for Community Development Plan**

This document is intended to become a part of the new Southbridge Community Development Plan, a planning tool for balanced growth with provisions for housing in balance with other critical elements, such as economic development, and recreation and open space. It was developed during the Governor's Executive Order 418 (EO418) long term planning process, which included an inventory of existing housing in Southbridge and an analysis of the Town's housing needs.

A major element of the long term planning program was the public forum process. Using input they received at public forums, the Long Term Planning Steering Committee gathered suggestions for action and formalized a list of actions, strategies and responsibilities into a draft plan. They presented the draft Long Term Plan to public agencies and requested input from them. The agencies included the Southbridge Housing Authority, the Landlord's Association, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, the Southbridge Historical Commission, and many others. A final Long Term Plan for Community Development with the suggested action, strategies and responsibilities was presented to the Town Council and endorsed unanimously on May 24, 2004. This Housing Strategy is a further refinement of the housing component of the endorsed long-term plan.

In the past, the housing strategy was found in the Town's Community Action Statement (CAS). The CAS called for increasing the supply of affordable housing, especially for elderly and handicapped households. It also recommended steps to address the most distressed housing, such as continuation of the Town's housing rehabilitation and lead paint abatement programs. At the time, most new units developed by the private sector qualified as affordable to a broad range of incomes. We can now see, however, that Southbridge is beginning to experience the trends that have escalated the cost of housing beyond the reach of low, moderate, and middle income households in other central Massachusetts communities.

### From Vision to Strategy to Action

This Housing Strategy portion of the draft Long Term Plan reflects views expressed at public forums. From the first public forum a vision statement was formulated. It was reaffirmed at all subsequent public forums. Conceptual goals or objectives were included in the vision statement:

1. Achievement of balanced diversity;
2. Restoration of existing housing;
3. Provisions for housing affordable to a broad range of incomes;
4. Accountability of absentee landlords; and
5. Maintenance of existing housing stock.

Interestingly, this vision reflects the same ideals as the housing strategy included in the Community Action Statement, first drafted in 1993.

Strategies were developed at subsequent meetings to address the objectives that had been established during the visioning process:

1. Find free or low cost land or building for Habitat for Humanity-type project, using Community Reinvestment Act Funding from local banks, with emphasis on placing clients from the Interfaith

Hospitality Network who have been responsible tenants and are ready to move on to homeownership

2. Deal with problem of absentee landlords and lack of maintenance
3. Maintain and improve existing housing
4. Redevelop existing buildings to provide affordable rental and homeownership units
5. Locate and maintain low, moderate, and middle-income housing close to services in the town center
6. Convert diverse single-family, two-family and multi-family into affordable condominiums
7. Encourage condominium ownership as a way to help people take pride in neighborhoods
8. Encourage mixed affordable family and senior housing
9. Address affordability opportunities through zoning bylaw changes
10. Include other Smart Growth principles in both regulations & administrative policies

Finally, a list of explicit actions was developed to implement the housing strategies, and, in so doing, to accomplish the objectives for housing set forth in the visioning process that had begun eighteen months before:

1. Working with the US Department of Agriculture and Habitat for Humanity, continue to approach sub dividers to seek land parcel donations. The Town will continue to foster relationships among these entities, local banks, and the Interfaith Hospitality Network to identify appropriate families for the homes.
2. Add four to five more affordable units via the CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program, Rental Restriction Agreements.
3. Perform a detailed inventory of three-family ["3-deckers"] structures with the aim of identifying candidates for renovation and conversion to condominiums.
4. Continue conversations with the Landlords' Association regarding maintenance standards and perceptions.
5. Continue housing rehabilitation and "Get The Lead Out" programs. Identify a three or multi-family building that is vacant or in dilapidated condition, and approach the owner directly about the programs.
6. Through the Southbridge Redevelopment Authority, seek an appropriate vacant or dilapidated multi-family property to redevelop into affordable rental units.
7. Continue to be proactive in watching for properties that may be developed, initiating early discussions with current and potential owners regarding ways to thoughtfully include affordable options.
8. Be open to appropriate comprehensive permit applications.
9. Continue to work with the Planning Board and subdivision applicants [currently 3] to include group housing for the elderly and/or other units designed for the elderly into subdivision developments for families.
10. Include in the Urban Renewal Plan a housing component following Smart Growth principles to include and continue to encourage housing in the Downtown.
11. Draft an Affordable Housing Plan according to Planned Production regulations as specified in 760 CMR 31.07 (1) (i).
12. Outline a strategy for achieving a site master plan for the large Town-owned property off Guelphwood and Torrey Roads, to include a mix of housing, employment centers, and open space.

The twelve suggested actions address both short and long-term housing strategies. For example, 2000 Census data shows that the growth experienced in more easterly communities, or communities located closer to major highways, had not yet come to Southbridge in 1999. Growth in both rental and ownership units was negligible, and the total population experienced a decline from the previous ten years of .4% with growth in households of only .3%. The percentage of low-moderate income households, however, increased from 45.7% to 57.1%. Seven of the twelve suggestions specifically address making units affordable. Within the last twelve months telltale signs that intense growth is about to happen have presented, and five of the twelve suggestions for actions address the need to plan for future affordable units.

The Town has already taken steps to implement suggested actions for balanced, affordable housing when it was possible to do so. Through the inclusive nature of the 2002-2004 Long Term Plan process the town gained momentum for coordinated and collaborative actions. A specific example is the way that local banks, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, and Town officials are working together to create affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income households. Other suggested actions reach beyond the present, and this document establishes goals for planning and long-term action to address them. We are confident, therefore, that our housing strategy will guide our efforts now and well into the future.

## **Appendix A: Inventory Data and Analyses**

### **1. Inventory of Open Space, Natural, Cultural, & Scenic Resources**

#### **Regional Context**

Southbridge is a town of 17,746 people located on the banks of the Quinebaug River in the south central portion of Massachusetts, nearly equidistant from the cities of Hartford, Springfield, Providence and Worcester. Although conveniently situated near larger more urbanized areas, Southbridge is the nucleus of a scenic, semi-rural region. Southbridge is one of the few surrounding communities that owns and operates their own water, sewer and municipal landfill. The Town has 5 reservoirs that provide municipal water. Approximately 2,024 acres are protected by the watershed district. About 1,100+ acres of border lands are protected by the Watershed Protection Overlay District. The municipal landfill contains a total of 54 acres, 24 acres are DEP approved and another 30 acres are within the site assignment area.

Southbridge and Sturbridge share a joint recreational facility, the Westville Lake recreation area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers own and operate this 23-acre lake that also offers picnic sites, ball fields and lake fishing. Undeveloped lands are managed by the State, which also stocks trout.

Other key regional open space and recreational resources include the Quinebaug River, the historic Grand Trunk Railway, and an expanding regional system of paths and trails.

Historically, Southbridge has been the vibrant economic core of this scenic rural region. As is typical of other mill towns throughout the Commonwealth, however, Southbridge has hit upon hard times due to the closing of the mills and the inability to attract modern manufacturing to fill the vacancies and replace the lost jobs. Our community-wide figures from the Department of Housing and Community Development show 57% of households with low/moderate income, and the Town Clerk's 2002 Town Census shows 18% of the population over age 60 (this is down 8% since the 1995 Census). Statistics concerning the youth reveal a school drop out rate of 3.6% (down from a 9.9% rate recorded in 1999), and a teen birth rate that remains 5th highest in the State.

But for the size of the Town, Southbridge would be considered an urban community due to the ethnic background of the population and financial demographics. Much of the housing stock is pre-WW11, multi-family dwellings built on postage-stamp size lots that create densely populated neighborhoods with little or no green space for children and families.

The above socio-economic statistics demonstrate the need for the town to continue the efforts to provide open space in densely populated neighborhoods and to improve and develop recreational facilities that are easily accessible by foot. Southbridge does not have a public transportation system and many of the residents do not have the wherewithal to travel outside of the community for recreation.

## History of the Community

Southbridge was incorporated on February 15, 1816, and the first Town Meeting was held the following March 6th. At the time of incorporation there were about 900 persons living in the community, which developed into a manufacturing town. The Marcy Saw and Grist Mills back in the 1730's had started the trend using the Quinebaug River as a convenient source of power.

The first cotton factory was built in 1811 at Westville with a woolen factory going up about the same time near the "old bridge". Deacon Sumner manufactured the first wool designed for sale in 1811, the wool being supplied by Calvin and Luther Ammidown, Esquires.

The War of 1812 provided impetus to clothing manufacture. "Water-privileges and water-power were sought and examined with lively interest," Moses Plimpton writes in 1836. "The introduction of manufacturing in this place in 1812 to 1814 may be considered the great cause or first step in the rapid increase of business and population in this town. As an illustration it need only be remarked, that previous to that time there were not more than ten dwelling houses within 1/4 mile of the Baptist Meeting House. There were only three dwellings in Globe Village - Captain Newell's, Gershom Plimpton, and Samuel Fiske's"<sup>3</sup>.

In 1814 Globe Manufacturing Company was incorporated. It built a large dam and gave the name "Globe Village" to that end of town. Cotton, woolen cloth, and yarn were made there. During the same year spinning and weaving machinery were introduced and that brought hardship to the many home weavers. Then in 1815 peace with Britain led to the repeal of double duties on foreign woolens. The consequent influx of foreign goods brought further hardship.

The Columbian Cotton Mill was built in 1821. The town was not populated entirely by gifted and ambitious Ammidowns, Plimptons, and Masons. Many hands of simpler people were needed in the mills. By today's standards working conditions were unpleasant but typical of the age. Power looms were installed in 1824 after much opposition from handweavers. The factories maintained their own company stores, where the workers bought on credit since they received their salaries only once a year. By 1820 there were 1,066 persons living in Southbridge. Textile manufacturing dominated town industry until well into the twentieth century. For example, the Hamilton Woolen Company, which dissolved in the early 1960s, was incorporated in 1831.

In the 1820s, however, another industry began which gave Southbridge a national reputation as an optical manufacturing center. Mechanic, inventor, and businessman William Beecher had been manufacturing articles of silver in Southbridge since 1826. About 1831 he began making silver frames for eyeglasses. A couple of years later he made steel frames that were better and less expensive than those made in Europe. These were possibly the first steel frames made in the United States. This was the beginning of what became the American Optical Company.

In 1840 Beecher sold his business to Holdridge Ammidown and Jairus Putney, who continued it until 1842 under the name Ammidown and Son. By 1850 it was called Ammidown and Company, and the manufacture of gold spectacles began. Beecher returned to the company in 1860. Name and personnel continued to change until the business was incorporated as the American Optical Company in 1869. Through the years American Optical grew to produce over 2,000 products with over 11,000 employees worldwide. The Southbridge location grew from 4 employees back in 1833 to 4,200 by 1966.

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<sup>3</sup> *Source of this quote????*



In 1933, the Harrington Cutlery Company (perhaps the first American cutlery company), merged with the John Russell Cutlery Company (established in 1833) and formed the Russell-Harrington Cutlery Company of Southbridge and Turner Falls. Under the ownership of the Wells family and American Optical, the union brought together two legendary names in cutlery "Dexter and Green River". Following the flood of 1936 and the months long clean up, the entire operations were moved from Turners Falls to Southbridge. The move to Southbridge proved advantageous to the new Company.

Meanwhile, the town worked to create infrastructure to support the growing community. The first road into Southbridge was constructed in 1739 and began at the Sturbridge meeting house. In 1828 the board of County Commissioners laid out and ordered to be constructed the county road leading from Southbridge to Dudley, by way of the Red Bridge.

The pattern of development in Southbridge is still connected to the early years. The Globe village section of the community was built and prospered as the textile mills grew along the banks of the Quinebaug River. The area of town known as "The Flats" was built to house the workers of the American Optical Company. As times progressed and people began to work out of the town centers, other sections of the community were developed.

As hard times hit the mills and the AO, the community at large was affected. The large owner-occupied three-deckers that were built for mill workers had now become economically attractive to families of limited income and landlords who live elsewhere. The lack of green space in these densely populated areas creates living conditions that are especially detrimental to children.

Unfortunately, fires have destroyed the majority of the mill buildings that used the "mighty" Quinebaug as a source of power. Nevertheless, the town is trying to protect some of this rich heritage through the development of a passive recreation trail along the Quinebaug featuring interpretive signs to depict and preserve the river's rich past.

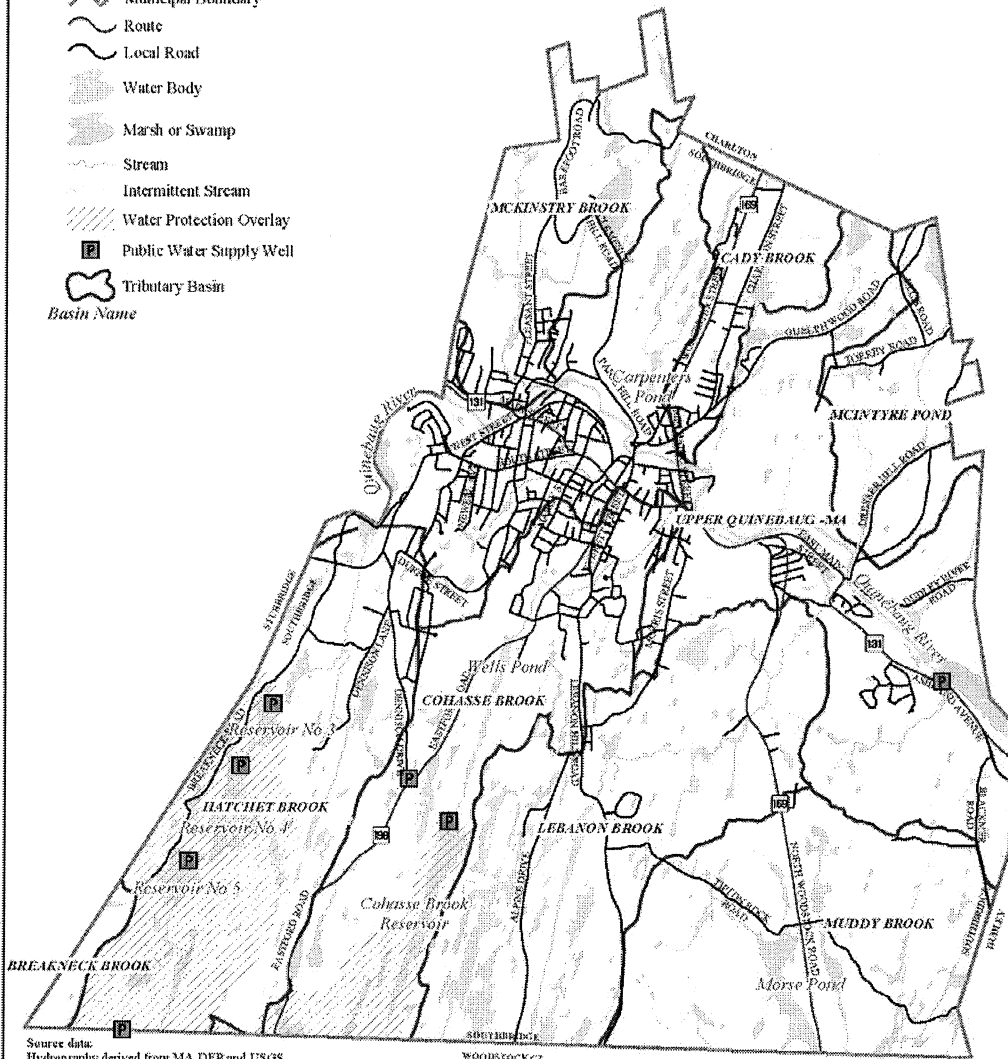
#### **Open Space, Natural, Cultural & Scenic Resources.**

[See accompanying Maps: *Water Resources, Protected and Chapter 61 Lands, Unique Features and Special Places.*]

# TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE Water Resources Map



- Municipal Boundary
- Route
- Local Road
- Water Body
- Marsh or Swamp
- Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Water Protection Overlay
- Public Water Supply Well
- Tributary Basin



Source data:  
Hydrography derived from MA DEP and USGS.  
Public Water Supply Well supplied by Mass DEP.  
Tributary basins supplied by Mass Fisheries & Wildlife.  
(Town of Southbridge lies entirely within the Quinebaug Watershed Basin)  
All other data are from MassGIS, enhanced by CMRPC.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only.  
This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition,  
regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution  
interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Center at  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.  
35 Harvard Street, Second Floor, Worcester, MA 01609-2801

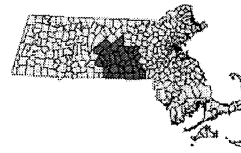


**CMRPC**  
GIS Service Center

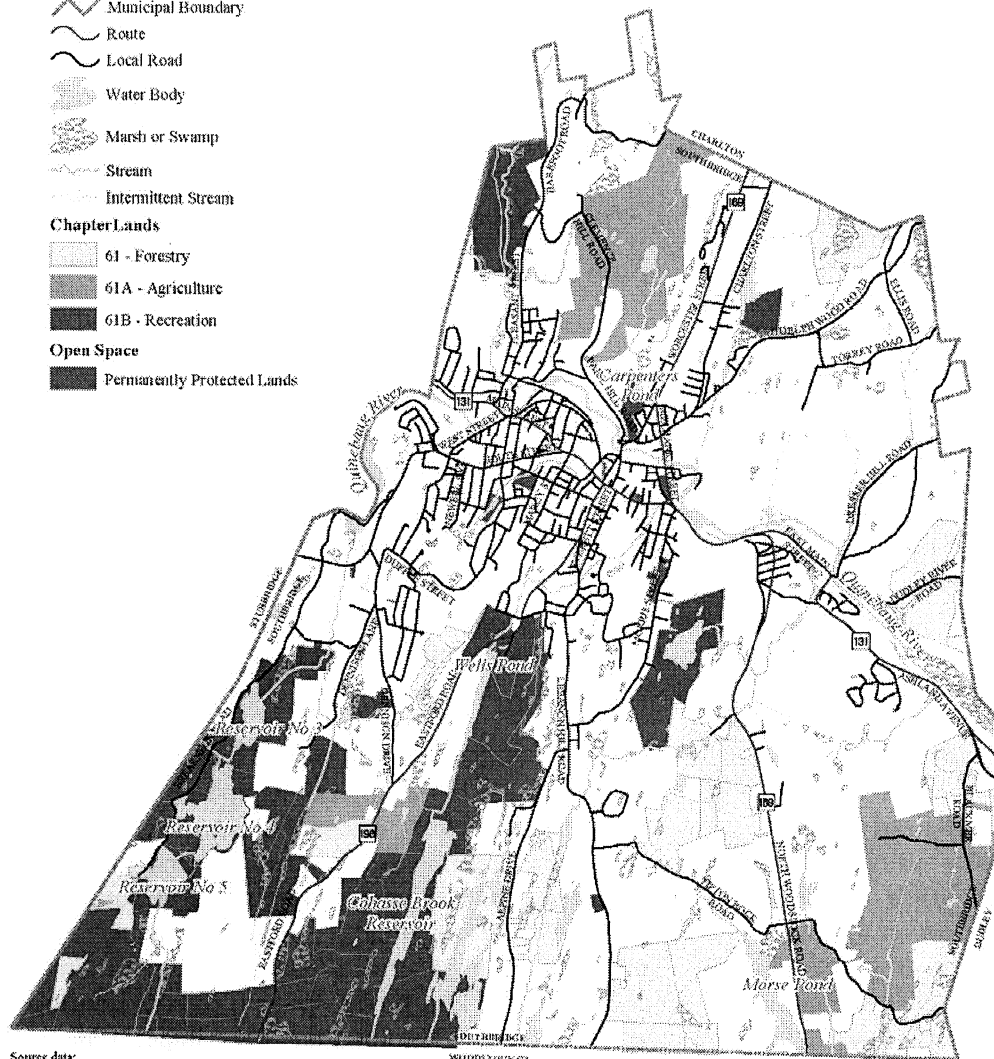
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5  
Miles

Map Produced May 2004

# TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE Protected and Chapter 61 Lands



- Municipal Boundary
- Route
- Local Road
- Water Body
- Marsh or Swamp
- Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Chapter Lands**
  - 61 - Forestry
  - 61A - Agriculture
  - 61B - Recreation
- Open Space**
  - Permanently Protected Lands



Source data:  
Open Space determined using Assessor database with assistance from Town's Planning Department.  
Permanently Protected lands include lands owned and managed by federal, county, state, municipal and local agencies.  
Hydrography derived from MA DEP and USGS.  
Wetlands supplied by MA DEP.  
All other data are from MassGIS, enhanced by CMRPC.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Center at  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission,  
35 Harvard Street, Second Floor, Worcester, MA 01609-2801

Map Produced June 2004



## Water Budget Analysis

The Town of Southbridge and the watersheds that flow into the municipal water supply lie entirely in the Quinebaug River Valley. Surface runoff either filters into the subsurface water table or flows directly into the River or indirectly into the River by way of wetland and stream systems. The small southeast portion of Southbridge that feeds into Morse Pond flows to the Quinebaug by way of Woodstock, Connecticut. Named streams in Southbridge that flow into the Quinebaug are:

- Dean Brook
- McKinstry Brook
- Cady Brook
- Hatchet Brook
- Lebanon Brook
- Cohasse Brook
- Nuisance Brook

Here is an “order of magnitude” calculation of Southbridge’s annual impact on the Quinebaug watershed system:

Southbridge’s geographic area	20 sq. mi.
x 640 acres/square mile =	12,800 acres
x $\pm$ 3.5 feet annual precipitation [estim. 40”]	44,800 acre feet
less estim. 40% loss through evapotranspiration =	26,880 acre feet

By this calculation, 26,880 acre feet of water flow through Southbridge into the Quinebaug River watershed. The water budget challenge for Southbridge is to safeguard against a short-circuiting of the hydrological cycle’s filtration into groundwater, for example, due to “fast tracking” water directly into the River via water/sewer and stormwater drainage systems.

As recently as the 1980s 85% of development in Southbridge was served by municipal sewer and water. Water came from the municipal reservoir system in the southwest section of town, was delivered to users, was recollected by the sewer system, and ultimately discharged into the River. Currently the municipal sewer system processes approximately 2 million gallons per day, and the Town has applied for an NPDES MSIV permit. Recent residential construction is taking place in outlying areas that are not on the town sewer and water systems. Thus, there is a gradual increase in the percentage of housing units that are drawing water from the subsurface through private wells and discharging back into the subsurface through private on-site septic systems. The utility systems are expanding through the Town’s requirement that whenever a subdivision reaches the definitive plan stage, if the parcel is within a mile of sewer, water, and/or stormwater systems, the utilities must be extended at the applicant’s expense to serve the proposed subdivision.

The Town’s stormwater drainage system empties into the River. As new development occurs, the Town is working to lessen the amount of flow into the stormwater system by encouraging site plans with more pervious surface. For example, the Special Permit process has been a good tool for this. Large projects are required to include on-site retention/detention.