

SUSTAINABLE SOUTHBRIDGE

A Strategic Plan for the Community of Southbridge, MA

An Interactive Qualifying Project completed in partial fulfillment
of the Degree of Bachelor of Science at
Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA

Submitted to:

Professor Chickery Kasouf

Professor Robert Krueger

In Cooperation With

Ms. Margaret Morrissey and Mr. Gabriel McCarthy

Michael Ashman

Albedith Diaz

Stephen Lima

Dimitris Saragas



March 6th, 2009

Advisor Signature

Abstract

This Interactive Qualifying Project, prepared for the community of Southbridge, Massachusetts, in coordination with Ms. Margaret Morrissey and Mr. Gabriel McCarthy, is an effort to establish a Sustainable Southbridge Initiative. This plan is a proposal to promote urban development, maintain natural resources, and fulfill the community's needs by enforcing an inclusive community and creating new economic opportunities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who assisted us in the successful completion of this project:

Our Advisor: Professor Chickery Kasouf

The WPI Team: Professor Robert Krueger, Ms. Peggy Middaugh, and Professor Dominic Golding, and Lorraine Martinelle

Our Graphic Designer: Kim Noonan

Southbridge's Town Manager: Christopher Clark

The Charrette Participants: Bill Guy, Peter Cutting, Faye Fulone Sweeney, Maureen B. Probov, Agata Lagoie, Michael Loin, John Polakowski, Susan Pelletier, Dick Whitney, Helen Salce, Seth Lajoie, Rod Murphy, Andrea Yonge, Judy Ferguson, Cindy Howard, and Glenn D'Alessio

Reporters: Gus Steeves, Sarah Hamby, and Paul Zetoz

Our Sponsors: Ms. Margaret Morrissey and Mr. Gabriel McCarthy

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND	5
2.1 SUSTAINABILITY.....	5
2.2 THE HISTORY OF SOUTHBRIDGE.....	6
2.3 THE VALUE OF GREEN BUILDINGS.....	9
2.3.1 <i>Green Building Features</i>	10
2.3.2 <i>LEED Certification</i>	13
2.3.3 <i>Southbridge’s First Green Building</i>	14
2.4 THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT	15
2.4.1 <i>Conviviums</i>	16
2.5 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS.....	19
2.6 ECO-INDUSTRIAL PARKS.....	20
2.7 COMMUNITY DESIGN	21
2.8 CASE STUDY: SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON	22
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	24
3.1 DEVELOPING A VIEW OF SOUTHBRIDGE	25
3.2 INTERVIEWING THE TOWN MANAGER.....	25
3.3 “SUSTAINABLE SOUTHBRIDGE” INITIATIVE CHARRETTE.....	26
3.4 SUMMARY	27
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	28
4.1 DETERMINING THE ASSETS	28
4.2 SUPPORT IN THE INITIATIVE	31
4.3 SUMMARY.....	32
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS	34
5.1 DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS	34
5.1.1 <i>Business Improvement District</i>	35
5.1.2 <i>Downtown Business Promotion</i>	35
5.1.3 <i>Building Design</i>	36
5.1.4 <i>Transportation Management</i>	36
5.1.5 <i>Integrating Slow Food Principles</i>	37
5.2 INDUSTRIAL INNOVATIONS.....	37
5.2.1 <i>Eco-Industrial Park</i>	37

5.2.2	<i>Alternative Energy Sources</i>	38
5.3	PROMOTING THE PUBLIC SERVICES	38
5.3.1	<i>Educating the Community</i>	38
5.3.2	<i>Providing Equal Opportunities</i>	39
5.4	CELEBRATING SOUTHBRIDGE’S DIVERSITY	39
5.5	ANCILLARY ASSETS.....	39
5.5.1	<i>Recreational Activities</i>	39
5.5.2	<i>Supporting the Arts</i>	40
5.5.3	<i>Utilizing the Hotel and Conference Center</i>	40
5.6	PRESENTING THE PLAN	41
5.7	CONCLUSION	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY		42
APPENDIX A: URBAN RENEWAL PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		46
APPENDIX B: A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING A BID IN MASSACHUSETTS.....		48
APPENDIX C: SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		69
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER CLARK, TOWN MANAGER.....		75
APPENDIX E: CHARRETTE SCHEDULE		77
APPENDIX F: CHARRETTE LAYOUTS		78
APPENDIX G: CHARRETTE REPORT		82
APPENDIX H: “SUSTAINABLE SOUTHBRIDGE” INITIATIVE BOOKLET		86

List of Figures

Figure 1: Centralized Location of Southbridge (http://maps.google.com)	2
Figure 2: Economic Statistics	8
Figure 3: Memorial Hall	14
Figure 4: Slow Food Snail (http://www.slowfood.com).....	17
Figure 5: Core Assets Venn diagram	28
Figure 6: Ancillary Assets Venn diagram	29

Executive Summary

Our project, the “Sustainable Southbridge” Initiative, encapsulates the use of sustainable developments to improve economic opportunities for the community of Southbridge, Massachusetts. Although Southbridge was once a mill town with a thriving industrial economy, it has since lost its strong industrial base due to the majority of these industries emigrating to the south and other rural areas. The town is in dire need of economic development in order to refurbish itself so that it may reach its potential once again.

Southbridge has undergone many changes within the past few years trying to create a more sustainable way of life. One example of this is the renovations that have been done to Memorial Hall in order to make it a LEED certified green building. Although a very costly procedure, the implementations to the building are a great investment as they will pay for themselves in the long run due to saved energy costs. Memorial Hall will also serve as a model for other green buildings in Southbridge and the surrounding communities, which may also help to bring in outside interest to Southbridge.

There are also two buildings in Southbridge that have recently won awards for the renovations made to them. The 12 Crane, a multi use building for commercial space, two restaurants, and residencies, received the silver hammer award in 2007 for its construction and renovation project that had an extraordinary visual and aesthetic impact on the physical landscape. The Flatiron building, after threat of demolition, received the Smart Growth award from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission in

2005. Although these are not the only sustainable efforts in Southbridge, they are the most predominant ones seen by us, as well as many of the citizens.

Although a great interest in sustainability is seen throughout the community, there are too many individual efforts made, and many of the citizen's priorities are not linked. The reason why our project is so crucial to the community is that a helping hand is needed in starting this initiative. Our main goal is to create an inclusive community that will come together to solve this problem, rather than letting them try to do it individualistically.

Our role in this initiative, in addition to bringing the community together, was to create a set of action steps that the community can follow in order to generate more economic opportunities for the town. An initial list of assets was made by focus groups formed by concerned citizens and town officials. We were then able to decipher a better list by merging some of these assets together (for example, downtown revitalization and locally owned businesses both fit into the category of downtown). As a result, we ended with a list of four core assets, which are the assets that are of highest priority to the community and can have the largest effect on the local economy, and four ancillary assets.

We then researched ways in which Southbridge could benefit by promoting each of these assets. This includes establishing a business improvement district, implementing green technologies in buildings, introducing slow food principles in restaurants, supporting the arts, promoting diversity, and many others. Action steps were then established to develop each of these concepts further and making a more descriptive plan for the town to follow. Many of these action steps are connected, supporting more than

one asset. An example of this is using the arts to create a more aesthetically pleasing downtown. This not only supports the arts, but improves the downtown.

These assets and action steps are incorporated in a booklet that was distributed to the town manager and the department of economic development, as well as being displayed in the Jacob Edwards Library. This will hopefully convince the local government to complete most of the proposed action steps. It may also convince concerned citizens to come together in order to petition the government about implementing some of these sustainable developments.

The most important part of this project was to engage the Southbridge community to promote the initiation of sustainable developments. This effort is inclusive of the community and builds upon its core assets to develop pride and a vibrant economy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Urban environments where a picturesque downtown, a vibrant economy, and a wide variety of recreational activities are offered have been a major priority for communities all over the world. Since communities are currently facing a continuing growth where the ecosystem quality can be affected, the development of sustainable projects is an alternative that helps the expansion of urban areas without damaging the environment.

Sustainability is a socially inclusive community development that produces practical solutions are based on historical, environmental, and cultural assets. Sustainability can be approached from three separate perspectives: environmental, social, and individual. The environmental perspective concerns the planet's ability for human survival. This is provided by natural resources, energy, and a life-supporting ecosystem. The social perspective of sustainability consists of political, economic, industrial, and other human-made social structures. These structures have an impact on environmental issues, including the production of environmental pollution, the growing inequality between rich and poor, and the declining birth rate in developed countries. Finally, the individual perspective of sustainability concerns an individual's actions and responses to their environment. Humans are affected by disease, illness, and mental instability that influence their physical and emotional status. As these problems build, it can adversely influence the environment and affect society's health. These three perspectives are linked together; therefore sustainability should be considered using a holistic approach.

Many businesses and residents in Southbridge have already begun to adopt this way of life. Our sponsors, Ms. Margaret Morrissey and Mr. Gabriel McCarthy, are advocates of this initiative and are very interested in engaging the community. The couple has strong relationships with owners of several of the town's assets that are undergoing this process, including the 12 Crane building and the Flat Iron building, both of which are located downtown and have recently won awards for their contribution to the community and aesthetically pleasing architecture.

There have also been renovations made on Memorial Hall. Through this reconstruction, the owners expect that Memorial Hall will be the first LEED certified green building in the community of Southbridge (Brown, 2008). There is also interest among local restaurant owners, who have shown an interest in following Slow Food principles. The idea of Slow Food is that you are serving locally grown organic food, rather than food that may have been shipped thousands of miles and produced in artificial or inhumane ways. These aspects, as well as many others, positively influence Southbridge's sustainable development.

Ironically, another factor that has positively affected the Southbridge sustainable development movement is the downturn in the national economy. With the Southbridge community in a passive economic situation, the community has started to participate in local activities, which have induced the community to contribute to the sustainable development movement.

With the assistance of Ms. Morrissey and Mr. McCarthy, and the community of Southbridge, our objective is to develop a strategic plan for the "Sustainable Southbridge" campaign that will publicize any assets the town has and will also provide

action steps for the community to follow in order to allow Southbridge to prosper in the future. In this plan we will develop a list of assets and action steps, which will be featured in a booklet to provide a plan for “Sustainable Southbridge.” This will hopefully accomplish four goals: increase awareness of the concept of sustainability; develop community engagement in this campaign; increase outside interest in the town (which may eventually lead to more tourism, and therefore more revenue); and improve economic opportunity for the Southbridge community.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Background

In order to develop the “Sustainable Southbridge” Initiative, we first researched the importance of sustainability and how it can help promoting urban development in Southbridge. We also investigated sustainability in ways that positively direct a community towards a brighter future. As we have noted, the town already shows interest in green buildings and introducing Slow Food into some of their restaurants. However, it will take much more to deem the whole community as sustainable; therefore our research includes an example of how a similar community, Northampton, MA, has successfully achieved sustainability in order to find what actions will benefit Southbridge.

2.1 Sustainability

Recently many people have become aware that we need to change our lifestyle in order to preserve the earth, as we know it today. From an environmental standpoint, one of the major problems in the modern world is climate change, or what some people refer to as global warming. This is caused by the use of fossil fuels (such as oil or coal) as energy sources and deforestation, which leads to a higher concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These gases act like a greenhouse by holding in heat radiated from the sun. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average surface temperature of Earth has increased by more than 1.2°F in the past decade, and the eight warmest years recorded in the past 150 years have all occurred within the last decade. The EPA has also predicted that the average surface temperature of the Earth may increase by up to 7.2°F by the end of the century if we keep emitting gases as we do now (Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2008). Another problem is that our

natural resources are being depleted. We need to preserve our resources for as long as possible before renewable energy sources (such as fuel cells or ethanol) have been researched and proven efficient enough so that they may replace fossil fuels as a primary source of energy. Some ways to protect these resources are by driving less and using energy-saving tactics in building design.

Sustainability can be a way of thinking through the social significance of nonmaterial wealth, qualitative values, cultural diversity, and how identity can influence social decision-making (Maser, 1997). In Southbridge, the purpose to become sustainable is to increase economic opportunities that will offer a better life quality for its residents. Becoming sustainable can be accomplished within a community through a variety of ways, including: using energy star appliances, recycling, composting wasted organics/food, using less water, finding alternative uses for toxic materials, reducing carbon dioxide emissions, utilization fair trade practices, reduction of brownfield sites, optimization of building space, and providing affordable housing and employment opportunities.

One concept that relates to sustainability is smart growth. Smart growth leads communities to preserve their history and existing infrastructure without interrupting their continuing development based on the following principles: create housing opportunities, develop walkable neighborhoods, encourage community collaboration, and mixed land uses (<http://www.smartgrowth.org>).

2.2 The History of Southbridge

Southbridge, Massachusetts was founded on February 15th, 1816. Many names were proposed for the town, including Quinebaug, Vienna, and Honest Town, but the

residents favored “Southbridge”. It was during the 1810’s that businesses in Southbridge started to prosper and the population increased. The first cotton factory was built in 1811 and the first woolen mill was built in 1813, both of which were seen to be most important factor in the town’s social and economic growth (Litchfield, 1898).

As of the late 1800’s, Southbridge had already made a name for itself. Many successful businessmen and politicians were native to Southbridge, such as Holmes Ammidown, who was a millionaire and merchant, and William Learned Marcy, a past New York governor, US Senator, and the Secretary of State and War. The assessed value of the town was \$3,589,172 dollars and the population was 8,250 (Litchfield, 1898). Workers lived very close to downtown Southbridge, supporting the commercial and retail areas. Through the Great Depression, the economy in Southbridge was stabilized due to the strength of the industry and community. This was mostly due to the American Optical’s plan to provide work for every family. However, after the majority of manufacturing industry moved out of the New England area, the town started its slow decline, causing many businesses to relocate (Executive Summary/Overview, 2006). In the past century, the town’s population has only increased to approximately 17,200. The population peaked during the 1960’s but has declined since, due to a lack of labor opportunities in the town. Southbridge’s population consists of 71.8% white non-Hispanic, 23.9% Hispanic, and the rest is a mix of African American, American Indian, and Asian. Only 68.3% of people aged twenty-five years or older have received a high school degree. The estimated median household income is only \$41,104 (including an unemployment rate of 5.6%), which is only about two-thirds that of all of Massachusetts. In 2007, 18.4% of Southbridge residents had incomes below the poverty level, compared

to about 9.3% of all Massachusetts residents. The median house/condo value is about \$216,000 as compared to \$366,400, which is the average rate for a house/condo in Massachusetts (City-Data, 2008). With such low income per household, it is a necessity to provide more affordable housing for those earning lower wages, and a better range of incomes should be available through jobs in the town.

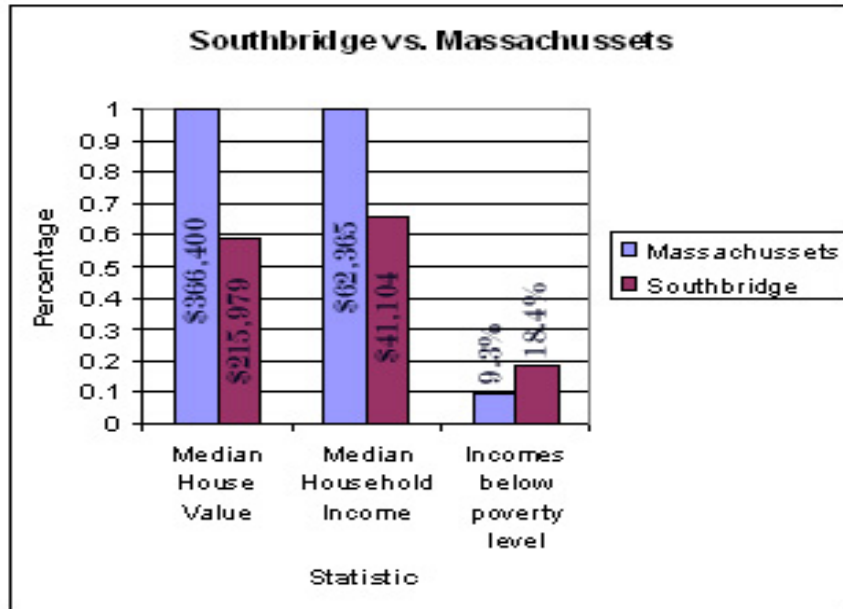


Figure 2: Economic Statistics

In the last decade, in response to these trends, Southbridge has undergone many changes to try to become more sustainable. The effort thus far includes: the design of a green building, an exploration of the integration of Slow Food ideas for many local restaurants, the clearing of trails, preservation of local land trusts, the refurbishment of condemned buildings, and the development of an Urban Redevelopment Plan for the town (see Appendix A). However, there is a lack of a necessary unified effort towards the town's goals.

In addition, two buildings have won two distinctive awards for their advancements. The 12 Crane building has won the Silver Hammer award recognizing its

“construction and renovation projects that have made an ‘extraordinary visual and aesthetic impact on the physical landscape of the community’ or that have had ‘positive economic impact on the region’” (http://www.assumption.edu/news/newshp/current_news/silverhammer.html). The same award was received by Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s Gateway Park. The Flatiron, after the threat of demolition, was renovated and received the smart growth award from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission for “us[ing] principles of smart growth to create better places” (<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards.htm>).

These concepts have received considerable attention in recent years, and many communities have attempted to enact similar plans. An example of success in a sustainable community is Northampton, MA. We have researched these topics and uncovered an abundance of literature, which explains the importance of these aspects of sustainable development.

2.3 The Value of Green Buildings

Green buildings save money and energy with the added benefit of saving the environment at the initial disadvantage of a higher cost. The idea behind green buildings is to use natural resources and make the building healthier (United States Green Building Council [USGBC], 2003). By creating green buildings, we are not only saving money due to improved human health, lowering the cost of building operations, and using resources more efficiently (California Environmental Protection Agency [CEPA], 2000), but we are also impacting the environment less overall (USGBC, 2003). According to the State of California Environmental Protection Agency, buildings consume 20% of the global wood harvest, 40% of materials entering the global economy, about 3 billion tons

of raw materials (for foundations, walls, pipes, and panels), 50% of copper in the United States, and generates 50% of greenhouse gases and pollutants that contribute to acid rain (CEPA, 2000). Implementing green building technologies helps protect a town's health and economy, as well as the environment.

2.3.1 Green Building Features

When designing a green building, the major aspect to consider is energy efficiency. In order to reach energy efficiency the designer has to consider factors like the shape, orientation, heating system, lighting and water system of the building. Besides energy efficiency, many other aspects of a building (passive solar design, solar energy, geothermal heating, and photovoltaic systems) determine if the building is green or can be converted to a green building. The passive building design can positively affect the environment by greatly lessening the energy consumption of the building. One way to affect the energy efficiency is to use high efficiency light systems with sophisticated lighting controls, which use motion controls coupled with dimmable lighting, and task lighting to reduce the overall use of lighting. By using energy efficient heating and cooling systems that are appropriate for the size of the building with an efficient building shell, the energy loss can be greatly reduced (Environment Technology Education Center [ETEC], 1997). Becoming more energy efficient will decrease the need to expand utility plants and will decrease our country's dependence on foreign energy sources.

Passive solar design refers to the heating and cooling of a building without the use of mechanical equipment. Due to the change in seasons, engineers planning the building design need to figure out ways to distribute the sun's heat during the winter and block it during the summer. The most important features in a building to do this are the windows.

With advances in window insulation (i.e. double pane), an increase in efficiency of single pane windows can be accomplished. Passive solar design is also a relatively inexpensive way to obtain efficient lighting within the building (CEPA, 2002).

Solar Energy is a natural source that in addition to heating, cooling, and lighting a building, can also be used as electrical energy or to generate hot water. By using semi-conducting materials, the sunlight is converted to electrical energy. When the sunlight is absorbed, the materials lose electrons that flow through the material producing electricity (National Renewable Energy Laboratory, 2002). In photovoltaic systems, solar cells are usually combined into modules that hold around forty fuel cells arranged in groups of ten. These are called photovoltaic arrays (US Department of Energy, 2003). On buildings, this technology is integrated in systems such as solar roof shingles, photovoltaic awnings, and opaque glass photovoltaic facades. The arrays are usually placed facing south and placed on a single axis track to follow the sun, but there are sometimes two axis tracks that allow arrays to follow the sun while also adjusting the horizontal angle depending on the time of year (Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, 2001). There are three main components to each of these systems: modules, which convert the sunlight into usable energy, inverters, which convert that energy into alternating current, and batteries, which store the excess electricity (Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, 2002).

The soil that beneath the earth is surface remains at a relatively constant temperature (soil 6 inches underground remains between 45 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit). The use of geothermal pumps is much more efficient than that of conventional heat pumps in that they only need to heat air from the ground temperature (around 50 °F) rather than the outside air temperature (Geothermal Heat Pump Consortium, Inc., 2002).

There are two different types of geothermal systems: one is an open-looped system that circulates well, pond, or lake water, and the second is a closed-loop system that circulates liquid through a flexible plastic piping grid (Ameren Corporation, 2003).

The materials used in the construction of the building are the primary source of impact on the environment. Not only does the manufacturing of the finished materials create pollution and waste, but also the removal of the raw materials from nature damages the eco-system and will degrade water quality. Some materials may also release toxic gases and will not last the complete life cycle of the building (meaning more materials would need to be gathered and manufactured) (Santa Monica Green Building Program, 2000). The best way to conserve the environment would be to make these building components out of recycled materials.

These days, many of these materials are being partially or fully made out of recycled materials, including many traditional building products (CEPA, 2000). These consist of acoustical tile, carpet, carpet pads, cellulose insulation, fiberglass insulation, fly-ash concrete, geo-textile fabrics, dry-wall backing paper, gypsum board, plastic insulation, plastic lumber, remanufactured wood products, roofing tile, rubber tiles, and many more (Santa Monica Green Building Program, 2000). Some people believe that recycled materials are of a lower quality than that of products made with new materials, but with the recent technological advances they have been very close if not just as good, as long as the products have been tested to meet the industry's standards. The cost of the recycled materials depends on many factors and may be more or less expensive than the new materials, however using the recycled materials salvaged from pre-existing buildings can cut down on the waste and disposal of the materials which may help in the long run.

The only real drawback is that there are limited options to these products such as the color and size (CEPA, 2000).

2.3.2 LEED Certification

There are many different standards for measuring a building's sustainability. These are put forth by cities, states, and organizations. The most well known and respected in the United States is the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. This rating system represents the U.S Green Building Council's national standard for "green" buildings and is designed to improve occupant wellbeing, environmental performance, and economic returns of buildings using established and innovative practices, standards, and technologies. To receive a LEED certification, a very extensive form must be filled out and builders are required to submit multiple documents about the project. A checklist with different criteria is completed depending on which assets the building provides. Each criterion in the checklist is worth a different value of points, and the final total will determine the level of certification. The four levels of certification are: basic LEED certification, 26-32 points; silver, 33-38; gold, 39-51; and platinum, 52-69. LEED certification looks at sustainable sites (erosion, building site, storm water management, and heat and light pollution), water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process. There is no specific way to meet LEED requirements, which leaves room for innovation and new ideas. In addition, there are several associations that will grant funding for feasibility studies and start-up costs for new sustainability projects (USGBC, 2008).

2.3.3 Southbridge's First Green Building

The Memorial Hall building (see Figure 1), located at 319 Main Street in Southbridge, is currently being renovated to be a LEED certified gold or even platinum green building, and the first green building in Southbridge. Memorial Hall is one of the only developments thus far in Southbridge that is truly seen as sustainable and will act as a catalyst to the rest of the campaign.



Figure 3: Memorial Hall

The hall, a three story brick building, was once a multi-purpose building, which housed: a synagogue, a newspaper printer, a dance studio, and a theater. Instead of tearing it down and building a new building with state-of-the-art features, the developers/owners want to preserve the historical aspects of the building (such as the foundation) and install specific materials to make it a green building (such as the windows and roof). So far, all of the windows have been replaced, the building has been stabilized, and the roof and exterior façade made watertight. With the current plans, an estimated total of \$1.2 million will be spent renovating the structure. In the future, Memorial Hall will not only be Southbridge's first green building, but will also be home

to commercial units, residential housing, and an office unit. The commercial units will be located on the ground floor of the building and will be approximately 1,500 sq feet each and will be available to local businesses. It is intended that the facility will attract businesses that benefit from improved latest thinking regarding sustainability and hence support the attraction of businesses with a stated desire for corporate social responsibility. The incorporation of an office unit is intended to enhance the concept of a mixed-use development within the heart of down town. Also, the installation of an elevator will make 2nd and 3rd floors of the building usable for commercial purposes for the first time, as it will now be ADA compliant. It is hoped that Memorial Hall will serve as a good model for other green buildings in the area and draw attention to the town of Southbridge.

Although having a green building would save a great amount of energy compared to a normal building, a town must have many more “green” innovations to attract outside attention as a sustainable community. Another implementation that is contributing to the idea of a sustainable Southbridge is the adoption of Slow Food processes and principles into local restaurants.

2.4 The Slow Food Movement

Carlo Petrini started the Slow Food movement in the late 1980’s in Bra, Italy. The idea behind Slow Food is to serve “good, clean, and fair food” (SlowFood.com, 2008). By “good” Petrini meant that all the food should be made by healthy plants and animals. He also believes that there is a pleasure behind eating good food that can help strengthen a community. “Clean” refers to nutritious food grown by healthy and organic means that not only tastes good, but also helps the environment and eco-system. Petrini also states that the food should be “fair,” which entitles everyone to the right to eat the healthy

delicious food regardless of his or her economic status. Food being fair also means that the people who take good care of the food should be compensated accordingly.

This is the exact opposite of how the fast food system works, where the food is of low quality, shipped up to thousands of miles before you eat it, with animals treated very poorly in the production phase, vegetables preserved for ages, and the producer having no relationship to the servers. Petrini once stated that:

“Slow Food, on the other hand, means giving the act of nourishing oneself the importance it deserves, learning to take pleasure in the diversity of recipes and flavors, recognizing the variety of places where food is produced and the people who produce it, and respecting the rhythm of the seasons and of human gatherings.” (Petrini, 2003, pg. xvii)

2.4.1 Conviviums

To gain the label “Slow Food”, individuals must join or create a convivium, which is a local chapter of the Slow Food organization. There must be a minimum of five individuals (not companies) in order to create a convivium, and according to Slow Food International Statutes, the role of the convivium is to:

“promote the philosophy of the Association, to develop around itself a local network of individuals who share the principles of Slow Food and work for their diffusion...to establish relationships and collaborations with public bodies, gastronomic associations, protective consortia, producer associations and communication media...to collaborate with other associations or entities for the protection of the environment and respect for nature... to establish and maintain collaborative and convivial relationships with other convivial, to implement activities of promotion and support for the Association’s international and national projects and programs.” (Slowfood.com, 2008)

Becoming a member of Slow Food may draw publicity to these restaurants by fans of “green” products.

With the conviviums comes the symbol. The symbol of Slow Food is a snail - emphasizing the “slow” alternative to fast food (see figure 2). This symbol is used to

promote the “Slow Food” brand. Only conviviums and the members of the group can use this symbol. Having a recognizable logo increases consumer recognition for both a group such as Slow Food or even any product or company.



Figure 4: Slow Food Snail (<http://www.slowfood.com>)

Even if the restaurants are not granted the title of being “Slow Food”, becoming more in line with Slow Food ideals has other benefits as well. One of these benefits is the savings in gas, since the food will not need to be transported from as far as it may be now. Many restaurants (namely fast food chains) receive their food from an average of over one thousand miles away. If the food served at a Slow Food restaurant was grown in the local region, hundreds of gallons of gas will be saved.

Slow Food is also good for the local community. In his article on the subject, “The Quality Revolution”, Andrew Nikiforuk, a Canadian journalist, said that

"Food tends to taste better and be healthier for the environment when the eater has some connections to the producer...That means supporting small and family businesses rather than huge food-processing firms." (Nikiforuk, 2008)

Serving Slow Food will benefit the local economy, community’s health, and environment.

Conversely, becoming “Slow Food” has its drawbacks. The biggest downside to having Slow Food in Massachusetts is that certain crops only grow during certain times of the year. In particular, most fruits and vegetables will not grow in the winter, or even

in the New England climate, and would not be able to be served throughout the year without major preservation (which is against Slow Food ideals). Although many “Slow Food” enthusiasts may enjoy eating food that is in season, with the lack of a variety of crops available during the winter in New England, people accustomed to eating out of season foods shipped in from other climates may have a hard time adjusting to eating in-season foods regularly. Slow Food might also cost more since it would be prepared organically from a smaller local farm. However, Andrew Nikiforuk stated that since you will not be able to afford as much for the same cost as other food, you would eat less of it, and therefore enjoy it more. This in turn will lead to gratification because it is better for you, your community, and the environment (Nikiforuk, 2008).

In Southbridge, there are several restaurants that want to adopt Slow Food principles: The Vienna, The Dark Horse Tavern, and The Hop Vine Café. The Vienna is a Historic Inn with eight rooms. The Dark Horse Tavern and The Hop Vine Café share one kitchen and are both located in the 12 Crane building. Although joining a convivium does not seem plausible for these restaurants (mostly because it requires unnecessary fees) and the New England climate makes obtaining certain crops year round difficult, adopting certain principles (such as purchasing seasonal crops from local farmers) would benefit the local economy. Slow Food also connects to the environmental interest: Land Trusts, trails, and open space for which there is a consciousness in Southbridge. As well, there is a plan to have an indoor farmer’s market at the Universalist Church building at the corner of Main and Hamilton streets. There is also another initiative to have an allotment system of gardening for those who don’t have the land but want to garden.

2.5 Business Improvement Districts

A Business Improvement District (BID) is “a method to finance and manage commercial area improvements in designated districts in order to restore or promote business activity” (<http://www.mass.gov/Ehed/docs/dhcd/cd/bid/bid398.pdf>). BIDs have been around for over two decades and are an important element in small businesses. Some of the services that might occur are additional security, additional marketing, supplementary cleaning, etc. Establishment of a BID falls under Massachusetts’ general law chapter 40O. Property owners in the BID are given a fee along with their real property tax and then supplied with programs not offered by the city or town. The tax collector collects the fees and allocates them to the BID. The fee for a BID can be evaluated with equations given by the BID legislation. The assessed amount cannot exceed .5% of the total assessed value of the property. The BID has the choice to set a maximum for the annual fee. There are several types of buildings that can be excluded from the annual fee, these include owner-occupied residential, agricultural, or tax exempt buildings. If a property does not pay its BID fee it may have a lien placed on it by the city or town. A board of directors is elected by the BID property owners manages a BID. The board decides how the collected funds are used in the BID. There are several points that need to be addressed before a BID can be petitioned. Owners of at least 60% of the real property and at least 51% of the assessed evaluation of the real property within the proposed BID need to approve of the plan and sign the petition. Also the boundary of the BID must be defined and an improvement plan must be presented with the petition. Also the petition must contain the location of the BID management group and the criteria for fee exemption from any BID property owner who shows financial hardship. Within 30

days of receiving the BID the municipal local governing body needs to hold a public hearing on the proposed BID. Before the hearing written notification needs to be sent to each property owner within the BID at least 30 days prior to the hearing. The written notifications and public notices need to contain the information from the petition. The municipal body will make its decision within 45 days of the hearing. Afterward all property owners must be notified in writing and publish public notification. Within 30 days of the municipality's decision any property owner may opt-out of the BID. For more information on creating BIDs in Massachusetts, one should consult "A Guide to Establishing a BID in Massachusetts" (see Appendix B).

2.6 Eco-Industrial Parks

An eco-industrial park (EIP) is a group of companies that collaborate with each other for cleaner production, which is an increase in efficiency in economic and environmental issues (Martin). The United Nations Environment program states, "Cleaner production is the continuous application of an integrated preventive environmental strategy applied to processes, products, and services to increase overall efficiency and reduce risks to humans and the environment The three classes of objectives CP seeks to achieve are:

- Production processes: conserving raw materials and energy, eliminating toxic raw materials and reducing the quantity and toxicity of all emissions and wastes
- Products: reducing negative impacts along the life cycle of a product, from raw materials extraction to its ultimate disposal
- Services: incorporating environmental concerns into designing and delivering services" (Evans and Stevenson, 2000)

Some of the principles associated with EIP are: closed loops through reuse and recycling, maximizing efficiency of materials and energy use, minimizing waste generation, and trying to market byproducts instead of labeling them as waste. Successful EIPs integrate engineering, architecture, urban planning, business management, real

estate development, finance, landscape design, ecology, economic development, information systems design, and other disciplines into their development (Lowe). EIPs may impart benefits to local companies, the local community, and the other participating companies. Every EIP member exchanges labor, capital, and materials with other EIP members to maximize productivity. Some benefits that may come with an EIP are its ability to bring economic and environmental opportunities, industrial recruitment, diversification of the industrial base, and encouraging the development of new companies. EIPs offer many benefits to its members but there are risks involved. These may include regulatory and technological uncertainties because of its new organizational methods, allocation of development funding, attracting viable companies, and gaining the cooperation of regulatory agencies. The largest problem is making the EIP flexible enough to be productive and stable (Martin). The eco-industrial park concept is the future of industrial park development and organization.

2.7 Community Design

The town is also initiating a few other improvements recommended in the Downtown Southbridge Urban Renewal Plan (URP), which was adopted by the Southbridge Redevelopment Authority (SRA) (see Appendix: A). The first of these is the replacement of developments along Central Street and Larochelle Way with mixed-use buildings. These structures will primarily have storefront retail with residential or commercial uses on any floor above that. The URP also suggested expanding parking by developing a parking garage in the center of the retail area of downtown. Elevators will connect to the 2nd floor of the rear of the Main Street Buildings thus following ADA compliancy. Sidewalks will also be improved to create a better walking area for

pedestrians in the downtown area. Many roads will be slightly altered (expanded, narrowed, and closed off) to improve driving efficiency of the overall project area. Lastly, the abandoned mill facilities in the area next to the Quinebaug River are going to be “converted into recreational open space” in order to create a rail trail (Downtown Revitalization Project, 2006). The 12 Crane building and The Flatiron, which are also located alongside the river, could act as main attractions along the rail trail. The URP has an estimated a cost of twenty million dollars.

2.8 Case Study: Sustainable Northampton

Northampton, MA draws many similarities to Southbridge, the main one being that they are both large artistic communities. The Sustainable Northampton plan that was implemented in 2007 (for Executive Summary, see Appendix C) focuses on land use, energy efficiency, recreation, arts, preservation of culture, housing, transportation, and education, many of which we will include in our plan for Sustainable Southbridge. In 2007, Northampton was awarded the "Healthy Motion Award" for the commitment in improving bike and pedestrian access, and in 2008, the American Style Magazine recognized the town as one of the “Top 25 Arts Destinations.”

One sustainable development in Northampton has been the Village at Hospital Hill. This was a major redevelopment project that included the production of mixed-use buildings in a campus style neighborhood. The plan includes “a research facility, live/work artist studios, a childcare center, and an assisted living facility” (<http://www.mass.gov/>). This project will not only be successful because it involves the reuse of existing structures (which preserves the town’s culture), but it will also supply 107 new retail business locations, which will provide jobs and more places to shop. In

addition, with the 307 residential locations on site, the project will reduce the need to drive as it will serve as the primary location of interest for shopping and working for many of the residents.

Similar to the Northampton redevelopment plan, the Southbridge initiative will incorporate mix use buildings, energy efficiency, preservation of culture, and other aspects that will improve the community. The executive summary for the Northampton redevelopment plan served us as a basis and gave a starting point for developing the “Sustainable Southbridge” initiative.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As previously mentioned, the overall objective of our proposed project was to create a “Sustainable Southbridge” initiative that will engage the community in order to implement sustainable developments in the town. Although a town vision plan (the Urban Renewal Plan) is in progress and sustainable efforts have been made, the town must cooperate to seek the benefits. Increasing economic opportunity requires a well developed strategic plan and collaborated effort from the entire community. Although there is an interest among the community to become sustainable, this initiative is necessary to bring the community’s mixed priorities together for one strong effort. From January 15th, 2008 through March 6th, 2009, our team worked with our sponsors and other members of the Southbridge community to develop the plan for a “Sustainable Southbridge.” We created a list of objectives that we needed to complete in order to develop our plan for the town:

- Get the community involved
- Develop a list of core assets
- Develop a list of strategic priorities and action steps
- Create an informational booklet to outline assets and action steps

With a limited time of only seven weeks to accomplish this project, we prioritized our objectives and started by visiting Southbridge to become familiar with the community and interact with residents. The following two weeks were spent performing an interview with the Town Manager, Christopher Clark, and preparing a charrette¹ to engage the community in this project. The last four weeks of the allotted time were spent developing

¹ A charrette is a planning workshop in which a large group of professionals and other concerned people are brought together in order to solve a problem of common interest.

strategic priorities and action steps, and implementing them into a booklet that will be used as an educational tool to engage the community in this initiative.

3.1 Developing a view of Southbridge

During the first week of the term, we visited Southbridge numerous times to get acquainted with the town. In order for us to benchmark Southbridge, it was necessary to become knowledgeable of the community. During these visits, we located and took pictures of interesting areas that we discovered, such as the Arts and Cultural Center, Town and Country Flowers, the Vienna, Big Bunny Market, Memorial Hall, and the Southbridge Credit Union. The pictures obtained were later implemented in our charrette layouts (see Appendix F) and in our promotional booklet (see Appendix H). From these visits we were able to build a small list of assets, which was then used in the charrette to help spark people's interests on the idea of developing a list of high priority assets. We conversed with the owners and patrons of some of the local businesses downtown to gain their perspective on Southbridge and possible future developments.

3.2 Interviewing the Town Manager

On Tuesday February 3rd, 2009, we had an interview with the Town Manager of Southbridge, Christopher Clark. This interview provided us with his view on Southbridge's current state and how creating a "Sustainable Southbridge" would benefit the town. He provided us with information about future projects including the development of trails, establishment of a satellite campus for Quinsigamond Community College, and the expansion of local businesses. The community has shown Christopher Clark their excitement and optimism for a sustainable initiative. He expressed that

communicating the benefits of the “Sustainable Southbridge” initiative during the charrette should be our major priority. The interview minutes can be seen in Appendix D.

3.3 “Sustainable Southbridge” Initiative Charrette

On Friday February 6th, 2009 between 3:00 PM and 4:50 PM, we held a charrette at the Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge. In weeks prior to the event, we sent out emails and 30 personal invitations. The charrette was also publicized through Dick Whitney’s community website and the Southbridge Evening News. Attendance consisted of our project group, a moderator, two facilitators, the town manager, and seventeen community activists. The moderator ran the charrette, while the facilitators directed the focus groups. The primary reason was to develop a list of the community’s core and ancillary assets, which we later analyzed and used to promote the town. A detailed schedule of the charrette was produced so that we could accomplish every task during the allotted time of one hour and fifty minutes (see Appendix E). We started the charrette by introducing the concept of sustainability and the importance of an inclusive community in order to develop greater economic opportunities.

The next step involved four layouts, which were collages of pictures of different aspects of the town (economic, environmental, historical/cultural, and lifestyle assets) (see Appendix F). At this time, everyone attending the charrette had the opportunity to comment on each aspect of the town by writing remarks on post-it notes and pasting them on the respective layout. This gave us a long list of assets that were later prioritized in the focus groups.

We then broke up into two focus groups consisting of two note takers, a facilitator, and several participants who discussed the topics that were written on the post-

it notes. Post-it notes of similar categories (e.g. river and dam would be categorized as waterways) were grouped together and then each category was deemed as either a high, medium, or low priority. At the end of the focus groups, bubble charts were used to label each of the categorized assets as core or ancillary.

To conclude the charrette, the focus groups reported back, shared their views on which assets were primary, and defined how these assets would motivate the community and attract visitors. A guestbook was used to take down contact information so that follow up interviews could be conducted if necessary. A charrette report was created (see Appendix G) to summarize the group's conclusions.

3.4 Summary

Given the limited time at our disposal, we determined that a charrette in combination with an interview with the Town Manager would provide us with the information needed in order to create the "Sustainable Southbridge" Initiative. The most important part of this initiative is the community's involvement, which was clearly seen during the charrette. The community will further develop as they implement the action steps that we have provided in an informational booklet.

Chapter 4: Results

The results determined for this project were strictly done by a subjective analysis. For our strategic plan to be successful, it was required to determine core assets for the community to promote in order to create more economic opportunities. A clear unified effort throughout the community is also a necessity. We relied heavily on qualitative data from field studies and our own personal knowledge from prior research in order to accomplish the objectives at hand.

4.1 Determining the Assets

The main objective of the charrette was to determine a list of core and ancillary assets that the town sought to be promotable or in need of development. An asset is deemed core when it is of highest importance to the community and offers economic potential. Increasing economic opportunity for Southbridge is the most important aspect of this initiative. As a result of the charrette, we were given two lists of both core and ancillary assets determined by the two focus groups. Although each group had similar perspectives, their final lists were different from each other. The following Venn diagrams present their opinions:

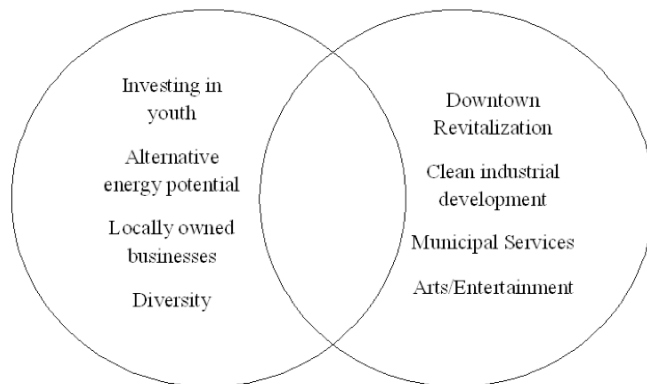


Figure 5: Core Assets Venn diagram

The first Venn diagram displays what each group sought to be the town’s core assets. As you can see, they did not come to an agreement on what primary assets of the town are, however, many of the core assets determined can be grouped together and also match up with the other group’s ancillary asset choices seen below. Since we were not completely familiar with the entire town or the recent history, we relied heavily on the suggestions given by the community.

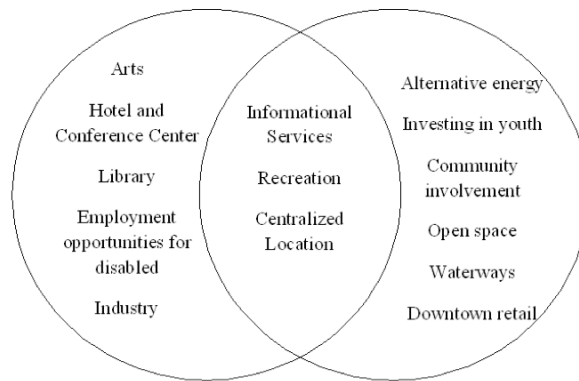


Figure 6: Ancillary Assets Venn diagram

After examining the charrette results, four core assets were determined by merging each core asset from the first focus group’s decisions with those of the second group’s. This was done so that we could establish a smaller list of core assets to focus on promoting. “Downtown revitalization” is something that can be done to reform the downtown area, and since most of the “locally owned businesses” in Southbridge are downtown, we merged these two into the asset of “downtown.” “Alternative energy potentials” are ideas that the industries can focus on to preserve the environment, minimize energy costs, and create new jobs, so this can be grouped with “clean industrial development” to create the asset of “industry.” “Investing in youth” is an action that can be performed by the municipal services of the town, so this as well as “municipal services” were both grouped into “public services.” We then had to pick which was more

important for economic development; “diversity” or “the arts.” We chose “diversity” because the arts are already promoted much more than the diversity that Southbridge has to offer. Although the arts are very important, artists in Southbridge have already seen success (with the multiple theaters and galleries throughout the town), whereas we have not seen a strong support for diversity, something that should be celebrated. Our finalized list of core assets is as follows:

- Downtown
- Industry
- Public services
- Diversity

We felt that the most important core asset is the downtown because it serves as the focal point to the residents and visitors. Most restaurants and locally owned businesses are located downtown, making it the commercial hub in Southbridge. Its industry also plays a large role in the economy. Not only was the town founded because of a necessity for industry, but also currently the industrial areas of Southbridge provide many jobs for local residents as well as being an economic foundation for the town.

Many of the ancillary assets determined by the community during the charrette either matched the core assets determined by the opposing group or could be merged with the core assets listed above. Some of the other ancillary assets given were not seen as a unique way the town could promote its economic development (such as providing jobs for the disabled; this is already done by an organization, The Center of Hope). After we examined the lists given to us by the community, we created a more refined list of ancillary assets to be promoted:

- Informational services
- The Quinebaug River
- The arts
- The Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center

Although seventeen concerned citizens participated in the charrette, this group was not completely representative of the entire Southbridge community. Even though there were a wide variety of ages being represented, there was no youth, and more importantly, no minorities. As previously stated the Hispanic community represents approximately 30% of the community; they have a large impact on Southbridge. The participants also seemed to be very interested in sustainability and were all acquainted. Based upon their manner during the charrette and knowledge of the concept of sustainability, we presumed that the charrette participants are very active in participating in similar events. We hope that the participants in our charrette can serve as the leading force behind this initiative and engage the entire community.

4.2 Support in the Initiative

The most significant result we've seen so far in this process is the town's involvement and interest in the future implementation of this "Sustainable Southbridge" Initiative. During the term, we were interviewed by both the Southbridge Evening News newspaper and the Worcester Telegram and Gazette, both bringing publicity to the initiative. After the Southbridge Evening News article was released, residents of Southbridge approached us during visits to the town and discussed a sustainable future for Southbridge. We have also received emails from interested individuals who had read about us in the Telegram and Gazette to discuss the possible future for Southbridge. Our charrette was also featured on the local cable channel. The most important part of this

project was to get community involvement, and it has been done through the multiple local informational services.

This excitement was also seen during the interview with the town manager Christopher Clark. One of his comments was that many towns are undergoing processes to further develop themselves, and Southbridge is “in that transition phase, and much farther along than many others.” From the time he took out of his busy schedule to meet with us, as well as his enthusiasm, it is apparent that he is very excited about making change to the town of Southbridge.

One observation that we had made during our project that creates a problem for the initiative is that the community has mixed priorities. Throughout the focus group portion of the charrette, everybody was insisting that every asset mentioned was a high priority asset, and said that for many of the assets chosen for the low and medium priorities were only selected because they “could not make every asset high priority.” One example of this that we noticed is that many individuals have made sustainable developments that haven’t influenced other establishments, therefore only effecting the community slightly. This may be due to over-optimism for Southbridge’s future. For an economic development plan to succeed, unity and inclusivity is needed, and mixed priorities are sure to create failure.

4.3 Summary

With the development and analysis of the core and ancillary assets, we completed our understanding of Southbridge’s views and needs. While discussing Southbridge’s future with Christopher Clark, the charrette participants, and other residents, we observed a great interest in this initiative. We also observed that mixed priorities between the

residents is a major problem that may obstruct the future development of the town, but by prioritizing action steps towards the determined primary assets, a smooth transition to improve sustainability in the town may emerge. One of the major benefits of this initiative will be the development of new economic opportunities, which can be linked to the improvement by sustainability.

Chapter 5: Implications

To guide the residents of Southbridge to implement sustainable developments in their town, we have devised a list of action steps. The action steps were created to improve each of the core and ancillary assets. Many of these steps were based off the ones that were suggested to Northampton, Massachusetts (and can be seen in their sustainability plan, see Appendix C) because of the similarities seen between Northampton and Southbridge's ways of life. We also suggested many other ideas in which we felt would strongly benefit the town. Residents of Southbridge and other individuals who are interested in sustainability suggested possible ideas to us, many of which were implemented. The action steps were divided into categories:

- Business Improvement District
- Downtown Business Promotion
- Building Design
- Transportation Management
- Slow Food
- Eco Industrial Park
- Alternative Energy Sources
- Education
- Equal Opportunities
- Diversity
- Recreation
- Arts
- Hotel and Conference Center

We have also grouped the action step categories to help classify which assets they will help promote.

5.1 Downtown Improvements

There are many ways in which the community can promote the downtown. As previously mentioned, the downtown should be Southbridge's main priority because it

has the largest impression on residents and visitors. Maintaining streets and sidewalks, improving the aesthetic appearance, and promoting downtown businesses will accomplish this.

5.1.1 Business Improvement District

Creating a Business Improvement District (BID) for the town of Southbridge would be a great way to promote the downtown businesses and provide upkeep services for the downtown. In order to create a BID, the town must create a petition, which must have each of the following: signatures of the owners within the planned area, a site map that outlines the boundaries of the proposed BID, the proposed improvement plan, and must identify and locate the management group. The BID must also have a board of directors, which is elected by the BID property owners (<http://www.mass.gov>). Through the BID, some changes Southbridge could make to improve the downtown are: keep brick facades and sidewalks clean, create banners to promote downtown businesses, and plant flowers to create a more pleasing atmosphere.

5.1.2 Downtown Business Promotion

In addition to creating a BID, the downtown businesses of Southbridge can be promoted in many ways. One way would be to create a pamphlet of local businesses that can be distributed to increase outside interest. The downtown area should also be developed to be more aesthetically pleasing. This can be done in a variety of ways: creating custom painted trash barrels, the previously mentioned banners to be hung on lamp-posts, having local artists paint murals on brick faced buildings, and making shop-fronts more eye-catching to draw in more customers. The downtown businesses must also focus on offering unique services rather than something every other business offers.

5.1.3 Building Design

Green building design is very energy efficient and saves the culture and history of renovated buildings. Although extremely costly initially, green buildings are a very good investment over time. Some of the things that should be done if renovation is believed to be beneficial are to: reuse the old building's structure, develop improved storm-water management and water conservation methods, and incorporate more energy efficient methods such as green roofs or geothermal heating. If creating a new building is necessary, there shall only be the construction of low impact developments. For existing establishments, implementing energy efficient appliances (preferably Energy Star rated) and light bulbs will conserve energy, therefore decreasing electric bills and being friendlier to the environment.

5.1.4 Transportation Management

With the compact downtown, the need for local residents to drive is not always necessary. Promoting bicycle use by creating bike lanes and providing bike racks may lower the use of cars by local residents who work in the downtown. Public transportation should also be provided for this same reason. More parking should be created in the downtown area, which was addressed in the Urban Redevelopment Plan. To help improve traffic flow and maximize safety, all traffic lights should be utilized and timed to work in unison, and selective vehicle control should be incorporated. The sidewalks and crosswalks should also be made more pedestrian friendly and extended to reach places, such as the 12 Crane, that are not as easily accessible as everything on Main Street.

5.1.5 Integrating Slow Food Principles

The idea behind Slow Food could be implemented, but looking through the feasibility of Slow Food we believe that establishing or joining a convivium is not a smart investment, but rather the town's restaurants should practice the core principles that Slow Food promotes. Buying organic or natural food grown at local farms is not only healthier for you, but also benefits the community's economy by creating a relationship between the buyer and supplier.

5.2 Industrial Innovations

Since the industry in Southbridge is a major part of its economy and history, new innovations should be made to endorse industry. The industrial areas in Southbridge provide many jobs for its residents, as well as the resources to generate technological advancements for the town. Eco-industrial parks and the use of alternative energy sources are two ways in which industry can thrive.

5.2.1 Eco-Industrial Park

An Eco-industrial park could greatly benefit Southbridge because it creates a symbiotic² relationship between businesses, which promotes inclusivity and helps the local economy. In order to create an EIP, an appropriate site must be chosen: it must offer access to industry and have easy access to transportation routes. Members for the EIP must then be chosen so that symbiotic relationships between businesses may be created and the companies all have technical and economic feasibilities. The companies must then collocate to improve economic and environmental opportunities.

² From a business point of view, a symbiotic relationship is a relationship where both companies are benefitted by each other's actions.

5.2.2 Alternative Energy Sources

In addition to adopting EIP practices, the local industry can also incorporate alternative energy sources to cut down on energy costs and harmful emissions. By adopting green building technologies, such as the use of photovoltaics and geothermal heating, they can vastly decrease the amount of energy used from conventional power plants and decrease the amount of green house gases being dispersed from plants running on coal, diesel, and oil. Southbridge may also begin developing wind farms on the tops of its many hills, which will require following local zoning ordinances, environmental regulations, and other laws.

5.3 Promoting the Public Services

Southbridge's public services provide promise to Southbridge's residents, however, they should be encouraged and improved in order to create a more inclusive community and brighter future. The hospital, library, and school system all play a major role in serving the community's needs.

5.3.1 Educating the Community

Since the main focus of sustainability is to provide a brighter future for the community, it is necessary to not only support education, but also educational excellence, especially for youth. Another good idea is to provide job finding or entrepreneurial services at the Jacob Edwards Library or the hotel and conference center. There is also talk about creating a satellite campus for Quinsigamond Community College within one of the American Optical buildings, which would be a great way to draw in students from all over the area as well as promoting a higher education.

5.3.2 Providing Equal Opportunities

Every citizen of Southbridge should be given equal opportunities. By this, we mean that everyone deserves: adequate health care and living wage jobs at a variety of incomes. There should also be a range of affordable housing opportunities and the support of a diverse business base. In addition, in order to minimize homelessness in Southbridge and surrounding areas, the town should create and maintain shelters.

5.4 Celebrating Southbridge's Diversity

Currently there are many festivals and events that promote Southbridge's diversity, such as Southbridge Fest and many ethnic picnics. These events are great for celebrating Southbridge's diversity, however, we feel that it would greatly benefit the town to hold many more festivals, each celebrating the different cultures prominent in the community. Also, there are not a wide variety of ethnic foods offered in restaurants around the town. Since restaurants are a large part of Southbridge's downtown, this would be a great way to celebrate diversity every day, rather than one day a year, as well as bringing in more potential patrons.

5.5 Ancillary Assets

Each of the ancillary assets can be improved upon to help create more economic opportunities and services for the community. Although not considered to be of highest priorities to the community, these assets still play a major role in this development and the promotion of these will have a huge effect on the community.

5.5.1 Recreational Activities

There are many waterways and open spaces in Southbridge where recreation can be promoted. The Quinebaug River, which has class four rapids in certain spots, can be

used for activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing. Locating launch spots and making parking more accessible will promote these activities. There is ample parking at Crane Street, River Street, and West Street, but it would be a benefit to find more locations. There are also many other bodies of water in Southbridge, such as the Lyman Pond, which could be used for fishing, boating, swimming, and ice-skating in the winter. Building docks, developing boat launch ramps, and creating and managing snack shacks, can benefit the town. Open spaces could be utilized for camping and to hold fairs or other local events. These open spaces, as well as the waterways must be kept clean and in working order.

5.5.2 Supporting the Arts

The arts are very important to Southbridge's culture; therefore, as previously stated, they should be used to improve the appearance of the town. Art education should be expanded and supported. The town should also support creating and maintaining art venues (such as galleries and theaters), as well as providing affordable living and working spaces for artists.

5.5.3 Utilizing the Hotel and Conference Center

The Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center is located at the old American Optical facility. It offers 203 guest rooms, a restaurant, a fitness center, and multiple conference rooms. Currently, the center is under-utilized and has great potential to be a great aspect of the town. Some things that could be done to draw in popularity to the hotel and conference center are to hold seminars and government meetings within it. The conference center can also be used to hold festivals during the wintertime.

5.6 Presenting the Plan

The final goal of our project was to provide, in a colorful and exciting manner, an educational tool to exhibit these strategic priorities and action steps. To complete this task, we created a booklet that identifies the town's core and ancillary assets, and states the action steps. Although individuals unassociated with the local government cannot complete most of these steps, the booklet is a way to bring the community together to support the changes that the town may undergo. This booklet will be provided to the town manager and the economic planning development office in town hall. There will also be copies on display for the community to view at the Jacob Edwards Library. The booklet is documented in Appendix H.

5.7 Conclusion

Although it is easier to see with some than others, most of these action steps tie together, which requires a combined effort among the community to make this process successful. By completing these steps, as well as any others we may not have thought of, Southbridge will create more economic opportunities for the community as well as show everybody what Southbridge really has to offer.

Bibliography

- 12 Crane*. (2008). Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://www.12crane.com/>
- A Guide to Establishing a BID in Massachusetts*. Retrieved February 20, 2009, from <http://www.mass.gov>
- Ameren Corporation*. (2008). Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <https://www2.ameren.com/residential/etGeothermalSystems.aspx>
- Brown, M. (2008). Memorial Hall Will Get Green Feel. *Worcester Business Journal Online*, December 6, 2008.
- CEPA (California Environmental Protection Agency). (2000). A Technical Manual for Material Choices in Sustainable Construction.
- City-Data. (2007). *Southbridge (MA), Economy and Business Data*. Retrieved December 6, 2008, from <http://www.city-data.com/business/econ-Southbridge-Massachusetts.html>
- City-Data. (2008). *Southbridge, Massachusetts (MA) Detailed Profile*. Retrieved November 29, 2008, from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Southbridge-Massachusetts.html>
- Climate Change*. (2008). Retrieved November 27, 2008, from <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html>
- Devuyt, D., Hens, L., & Lannoy, W. (2001). In Devuyt D., Hens L. and Lannoy W. (Eds.), *How green is the city? Sustainability assessment and the management of urban environments*. (1st ed.) Columbia University Press.
- Downtown Revitalization Project. (2006). *Executive Summary/ Overview*
- The Flatiron of Southbridge*. (2005). Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://www.flatironofsouthbridge.com/>
- Geothermal Heat Pump Consortium, Inc.* (2008). Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <http://geoexchange.org>
- Gevorkian, P. (2007). *Sustainable Energy Systems*. New York : McGraw-Hill: McGraw-Hill Professional.
- Google Maps*. Retrieved February 12, 2009, from <http://maps.google.com>

- Grewal, D., & Levy Michael. (2008). In Hughes D., Barbour N. and Raemisc D. (Eds.), *Marketing* (1st ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Lavore, D., McAdams, C., & McNee, S. (2008). Development of a Self Sustaining Building Through the use of Alternative Sources of Energy. *IQP*. November 18, 2008.
- Litchfield, W. J. (1898). The optical city. *The Southbridge Journal*, (15)
- Eco-Industrial Park Handbook for Asian Developing Countries, (2001).
- Marketplace*. Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://slow-food-boston-marketplace.blogspot.com/>
- Maser, C. (1997). *Sustainable Community Development Principles and Concept*. Delray Beach, Florida: St. Lucie Press.
- Medeiros, R., Gillet, A., Foss, A., & Baker, M. (2003). *Green Building Design*. Unpublished manuscript.
- National Renewable EnergyLaboratory*. (2008). Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://www.nrel.gov/learning/>
- Newstronic. (2008, 2008). March 27th Rally for Boting Against Casella Landfield Expansion in Southbridge. Message posted to <http://www.newsotronic.com/MA/SOUTHBRIDGE/2008/03/26/march-27th-rally-for-voting-against-casella-landfill-expansion-in-southbridge-2/>
- Nikiforuk, A. (October 27 2008). The quality revolution. *Canadian Business*, 81(18), 128-132.
- Northampton Awards and Recognitions*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from http://www.northamptonma.gov/aboutNorthampton/Northampton_Awards/
- Northeast Sustainable Energy Association*. (2008). Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <http://www.nesea.org>
- Petrini, C. (2003). *Slow food: The Case for Taste*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Plimpton, M. (1882). *History of Southbridge*. Southbridge, MA: Journal Steam Bookprint.
- Eco-Industrial Parks: A Case Study and Analysis of Economic, Environmental, Technical, and Regulatory Issues. (1996).

Rsmeans, & R. S. Means Company Staff. (2006). *Green building : Project planning & cost estimating : A practical guide to materials, systems & standards; green products--specifying & assessing cost vs value; resource efficiencies, health, comfort & productivity; commissioning*. Kingston, Mass: R.S. Means.

Santa Monica Green Building Program. (2008). Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://greenbuildings.santa-monica.org/>

Silver hammer award.(2003). *Assumption College Archive of Press Releases*, February 10 2009.

SlowFood.com. *Slow Food International | Good, Clean and Fair Food*. Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://slowfood.com/>

Smart Growth Online. Retrieved February 18, 2009, from <http://www.smartgrowth.org>

Sperling's Best Places. (2008). *Southbridge, MA*. Retrieved December 6, 2008, from <http://www.bestplaces.net/City/Southbridge-Massachusetts.aspx>

Stone, K. D., Mercier, G. E., & Chenarak, N. V. (2003). *Sustainable Development in Modern Lifestyles*. Unpublished Manuscript.

Sustainability. (2008). Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://www.sustainable refurbishment.com/>

Sustainable Communities Network. *Sustainable Communities Network*. Retrieved November 25, 2008, from <http://www.sustainable.org/>

Sustainable Northampton Plan. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from http://www.northamptonma.gov/aboutNorthampton/Sustainability_Plan

Traditional Neighborhood Development Case Study: Village at Hospital Hill Northampton, MA. Retrieved February 23, 2009, from http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/CS-tnd-northampton.html

U.S. Department of Energy. (2008). *Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy*. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://www.eere.energy.gov>

United States Green Building Council. (2008). Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://www.usgbc.org>

Vienna. (2008). Retrieved December 8, 2008, from <http://www.thevienna.com/>

Welcome to GreenBuilding.com | Everything you want to know and more about green building. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from <http://greenbuilding.com/>

Welcome! : *Slow food USA*. Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://slowfoodusa.org/>

Whitney, D. (2008). *Southbridge History & More Southbridge, Massachusetts*. Retrieved November 18, 2008, from <http://www.dickwhitney.net/RBWSouthbridge.html>

Appendix A: Urban Renewal Plan Executive Summary

Executive Summary/ Overview

The Town of Southbridge is on the threshold of an exciting initiative to continue its downtown's revitalization, and it is with great anticipation that the Southbridge Redevelopment Authority (SRA) adopts this Downtown Southbridge Urban Renewal Plan (URP). This plan is a continuation of the efforts that were started with the Town's Long Term Plan in 2003-2004, and the Open Space and Recreation Plan, completed in 2004. The Long Term Plan, prepared through an involved community process, identified the downtown area as highly underutilized, with partially occupied buildings, vacant land and large parking lots. It recommended a proactive approach to revitalizing downtown to make it an exciting destination to live, work, and play. The URP is an outcome of this recommendation. It aims at taking the Long Term Plan's vision to the next level by preparing this implementation strategy for downtown.

Historically, the Town of Southbridge had a thriving textile industry, which formed its economic core. The various industries attracted workers to live close to the downtown area, which, in turn, supported downtown's commercial and retail uses. The strength of these industries, particularly the American Optical Company, even stabilized the local economy through the downturn of the great depression. But with the migration of the manufacturing industry out of New England, the downtown underwent a slow decline, causing many commercial and retail businesses to relocate. This trend was also influenced by the growth of new retail centers in suburban areas and the improvements in roadway and transit access to these suburban areas.

After the decline of the major industries, the Town of Southbridge went through a period of downtown revitalization in the 1970's. This was based upon the recommendations of an Urban Renewal Plan that was never approved. Those efforts focused on preserving the Town's historical architecture and character and improving the Main street streetscape. While some of the buildings were preserved, there is still more that needs to be done. This current URP takes on the challenge of finding a solution for reusing and redeveloping key older industrial sites that have declined through the years of underutilization and neglect, as well as redeveloping underutilized parcels and buildings in the downtown area. The Plan also meets all the State requirements for designation as an 'urban renewal area', which provides the SRA with the authority to successfully implement the community's vision.

The proposed URP Project Area is located in the core of downtown Southbridge. Generally speaking, the Project Area extends from Main Street north to the Quinebaug River, with its eastern border along Foster Street and its western border roughly following Hamilton Street for a short distance before cutting north to the River. Existing conditions in the Project Area clearly illustrate its eligibility as an 'urban renewal area' and the need for the Town's involvement in revitalization efforts. Almost 45% of the land currently occupied by vacant lots or parking areas can be potentially redeveloped to higher and better uses. A large number of older buildings are only partially occupied, and require rehabilitation or redevelopment. Additionally, the existing infrastructure is not conducive to attract new development, with narrow disconnected roads, traffic congestion, poor pedestrian facilities, and inadequate parking.

The URP recommends resolving all the issues discussed above through a series of infrastructure improvements to support the redevelopment of key parcels that will position the Town to attract new growth and development. These recommendations are based on the goals defined by the community as part of the Long Term Plan planning process. The key goal that applies to the Project Area is to create a mixed-use, retail and commercial pedestrian friendly downtown, with new parks and open space that blends in new development while preserving the area's historic character.

Specific Plan recommendations for development, transportation and open space improvements are summarized below.



In terms of **land use and development**, the URP suggests replacing existing development along the west side of Central St. and along Larochele Way with new mixed-use buildings. These buildings would be designed for ground level storefront retail, at feasible locations, along with residential and/or commercial uses on the higher floors. Such mixed-use development will maximize and diversify the potential use of the highly visible space, while integrating with surrounding improvements and development patterns.

This URP recommends that **parking** should be consolidated and expanded, with the redevelopment of the Central Street surface parking lot into a parking garage. This will open up additional land for development and improve the connections between the parking area and businesses. This parking garage will provide much needed and better organized spaces in the center of the retail area and will support the proposed new development along Larochele Way and Central Street. In addition, to the extent possible, the garage design will attempt to provide connections directly onto the upper floors of adjacent underutilized buildings along and near Main street as well.

The existing abandoned industrial facilities along the Quinebaug River should be converted to **recreational open space**, connecting the downtown to its waterfront and expanding eco-tourism opportunities. The property adjacent to the Rail Trail on Central Street, which is currently a convenience store, is recommended for a Trailhead Park as a way of capitalizing on the Rail Trail, and maximizing the value of newly developed properties along Larochele Way.

A series of **infrastructure improvements** will improve the flow of traffic, relieve congestion and improve the walkability of the Project Area.

- A realignment of Hamilton Street with a smooth connection onto Larochele Way, thus reducing the curve at the Hook Street intersection. This new alignment will result in a more traditional intersection, which will greatly improve safe pedestrian flow in this area, particularly from the new parking garage to businesses on Hamilton Street.
- Replacing Larochele Way with an expanded extension of Hamilton Street and extending it to meet Foster Street.
- The closing of Hook Street at the Central Street to eliminate this blind intersection and then reducing Hook Street in width to serve as an access drive to the businesses along it.
- Eliminating the portion of Foster Street between Central and North Streets to eliminate the acute intersection at Foster and Central Street. In return, Foster Street will be connected to Central Street along the alignment of the extended Larochele Way.
- Widen Central Street along the sections where it abuts the new trailhead park and the new redevelopment parcels on Central Street. A widened Central Street in this area will improve traffic flow, still accommodate on-street parking and allow for wider sidewalks, thus improving the pedestrian environment.

These vehicular improvements will be complimented by **sidewalk and streetscape improvements** to Main Street and surrounding corridors creating a seamless network of pedestrian friendly streets within the downtown core.

The Action Plan for bringing this vision to fruition is detailed in the URP. The **Financial Plan** estimates that approximately \$20 million will be required to fully implement the recommendations of the URP. To support this financial plan, a variety of federal and state grant sources have been identified as potential funding sources.

As a result of this plan, the Southbridge Redevelopment Authority plans to meet its goal of creating a more vibrant downtown area through a series of public actions intended to stimulate private investment resulting in a revitalized central business district with a mix of opportunities for citizens to live, work, shop and play.



Appendix B: A Guide to Establishing a BID in Massachusetts

Business Improvement Districts

A Guide to Establishing a BID in Massachusetts

For More Information Contact:

Emmy Hahn
Massachusetts Downtown Coordinator
DHCD
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114
P: 617.573.1364
Elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us

Deval L. Patrick, Governor

Tina Brooks, Undersecretary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?	2
What activities or improvements can a BID undertake?	3
How is a BID financed?	4
How is a BID managed?	6
What is the required process for implementing a BID in Massachusetts? ...	7
How is an established bid altered or dissolved?	10
Appendix A. Business Improvement District Legislation	12
(MGL Ch. 40 O)	
Appendix B. Municipal approval process for implementing a BID	19

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared by staff of the Department of Housing and Community Development to help communities interested in organizing and implementing a Business Improvement District (BID) in Massachusetts.

According to the International Downtown Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to downtown revitalization and a national clearinghouse of BID information, in 1994 Massachusetts joined over 40 other states when it passed legislation enabling the local formation of BIDs. Hundreds of BIDs are currently operating in the United States.

A BID is a downtown management strategy and financing tool that allows commercial districts to develop, fund, and administer programs and services targeted solely within the district. The key to their success is the participation by the private sector businesses and property owners who recognize the benefit of a private sector solution to downtown management and improvement. Downtown property owners within the district add an assessment to their existing real estate property tax to fund the additional services and programs that they have designed and the BID will implement to improve the business climate. The municipality provides its power to raise and collect revenues to operate the BID, thus making the BID a true public-private partnership.

Downtown property owners initiate BIDs for various reasons. Often the impetus is the loss of a major retailer or several storefront vacancies. Other catalysts include the impending arrival of large discount department stores on the outskirts of town or a progressive local administration seeking to revitalize the community center, stabilize the property tax base, and boost civic pride.

This guide defines a Business Improvement District and outlines the improvements and services a BID is specifically enabled to undertake under Massachusetts law. It also describes the finance mechanism and range of fee structures a BID can employ. The steps a BID must go through to gain municipal approval and commence operations are outlined in the text. A chart in the Appendix defines each phase of the approval process and the time required for municipal action. Although no existing BID is known to have been dissolved, the process for dissolving a BID is also included.

WHAT IS A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a method used to finance and manage commercial area improvements in designated districts in order to restore or promote business activity. The BID is a specifically designed geographic district established to provide additional and supplemental services such as business retention and recruitment, professional management, marketing, improved maintenance, enhanced safety and security, and physical improvements to the streetscapes of the district. The BID is financed by property owners within the district who agree to an additional assessment to their real estate property taxes, which is then exclusively dedicated for improvements that will benefit the entire district. The municipality collects the assessed funds and provides them to the BID, which directs them to enhanced or additional services which are not traditionally offered by the municipality. The funds from a BID are used only to supplement municipal services and are not permitted to replace those existing services.

There are three primary advantages of a BID. The first is the ability to provide additional and enhanced services that improve the business environment. The second advantage is the capability of professional management of retail and commercial services, much like those offered in a mall, that enhance the district and strengthen a municipality's economic capacity. The third primary advantage is the predictable and reliable source of funding that a BID offers. In short, BIDs allow for the organized and professional implementation of competitive business practices and services developed and maintained cooperatively at the local level.

In Massachusetts, a BID can be formed in any geographical area in which at least 75% of the land is zoned or used for commercial, retail, industrial or mixed uses. The BID concept of private assessment for common improvements is not unlike a betterment district where property owners pay for specific utility benefits. It has also been compared to the common charges assessed to all shopping mall tenants which are used for maintenance, security, and promotions. A BID can provide all of these services to compete more equitably with shopping malls.

WHAT ACTIVITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS CAN A BID UNDERTAKE?

The legislation enabling the formation of BIDs in Massachusetts can be found in the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40 O (See Appendix A). Throughout the country, BID activities fall into the following general activities:

- 1) District Management Services - A BID provides funding for and requires a management entity to develop and implement the commercial area improvements based on individual districts needs.
- 2) Maintenance and Security - These must be supplemental services beyond the level which a municipality provides in the areas of street cleaning, snow removal, landscaping and security.
- 3) Business Services - BIDs commonly undertake business recruitment practices including compiling district data on vacancies, available space and its characteristics, commissioning market analyses, consumer surveys, and providing storefront design, merchandising, and business development assistance.
- 4) Promotion and Marketing Services - Typical of many BID programs are common advertising, district promotions and special events not normally provided by a municipality.
- 5) Physical Improvements and property management - BIDs are sometimes formed specifically to finance downtown public improvements and operate properties such as parking facilities.

The Massachusetts legislation broadly provides the rights and powers of a BID approved by a municipal governing body (town or city council or town board of selectmen) including the following:

1. Retaining or recruiting business
2. Administering and managing central and neighborhood business districts
3. Promoting economic development
4. Managing parking

5. Designing, engineering, constructing, maintaining or operating buildings, facilities, urban streetscapes or infrastructures to further economic development and public purposes
6. Conducting historic preservation activities
7. Leasing, owning, acquiring, or optioning real property
8. Supplementing maintenance, security or sanitation
9. Planning and designing services
10. Formulating a fee structure
11. Accumulating interest
12. Incurring costs or indebtedness
13. Entering into contracts
14. Suing and being sued
15. Employing legal and accounting services
16. Undertaking planning, feasibility and market analyses
17. Developing common marketing and promotional activities
18. Supporting public art and human and environmental services as related to the enhancement of the business district
19. Conducting other supplemental services or programs that would further the purposes of this chapter (MGL Ch. 40 O)

The flexibility of a BID allows each district to develop its own improvement plan based on its own needs. One community may initiate a BID solely to provide supplemental maintenance and security. A small downtown may determine that a BID is an appropriate replacement for a volunteer effort to raise funds for the replacement of holiday decorations or the sponsorship of promotional events. Another may form a BID to develop and manage a parking facility.

HOW IS A BID FINANCED?

All property owners within the BID are assessed a fee in addition to their real property taxes to fund the supplemental services and programs. The collector-treasurer of the municipality collects the fee and distributes it to the management entity designated by the BID. The amount of the fee is established by each BID but annually cannot exceed one-half of one percent (.005) of the total assessed value of the real property owned by participating members in the district. For example, for every \$5 million in assessed valuation of participating property owners within the district, the BID can generate a maximum of \$25,000. However through its improvement plan, the BID has the option to limit or cap this maximum annual fee derived from

individual properties or the total annual revenue generated by the BID. The municipality may exempt 1) owner-occupied residential, 2) agricultural, or 3) tax exempt properties from the BID fee.

The basis of the fee is determined by a formula using any one or a combination of the following:

- 1) assessed valuation
- 2) different levels for varying classifications of real property
- 3) benefit zones
- 4) square footage
- 5) street frontage
- 6) any other formula which meets the objectives of the BID

There are a number of considerations for a BID when deciding on a fee structure. The total revenue generated by the BID fee is driven by the improvement plan outlining the supplemental services and programs to be undertaken by the BID. By developing a general idea of the district needs and their costs, BID supporters can prepare a budget to fund the programs to meet those needs. An initial cursory analysis of the revenue potential for a BID can be done by computing the assessed valuation of the entire proposed district and determining the maximum amount that could be assessed. Communities may want to undertake that exercise to determine roughly if a BID would generate sufficient revenue to begin to meet district needs.

The fee structure should meet the BID's objective and satisfy district property owners. Basing the fee solely on assessed valuation is the simplest and, perhaps, easiest structure for property owners to understand. Larger property owners have a larger assessed valuation which is a built-in mechanism to correspond to the presumably greater benefit the larger property would receive from the BID services and programs. (A larger property has a larger sidewalk to clean, etc.) A fee structure that includes an assessment for square footage or front footage is also a method that property owners can calculate for themselves and relate to the benefits provided. For example, existing BIDs throughout the country have assessments that generally range from \$.05 to \$.15 per square foot with larger urban BIDs closer to the \$.25 range. This cost can be favorably compared with nearby shopping mall assessments for ease of relating costs to benefits. Property owners typically pass the assessment costs through the lease to their tenants. If the BID is being formed solely to develop and manage a parking facility, then the BID supporters may want to develop a

fee structure that equitably considers the level of benefit with those properties nearest to the structure and more densely benefiting from the improvements paying a higher assessment. Again, the fee structure will depend on the needs of the district and the particular objectives of the BID.

The International Downtown Association reports that small communities with populations ranging from up to 25,000 have budgets ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Cities of up to 80,000 people have average budgets of \$100,000 to \$125,000 with large urban budgets reaching into the millions.

The collector-treasurer of the municipality collects the district fees and distributes them together with any earned interest to the management entity designated by the BID within thirty days of collection. Any fees unpaid thirty days after billing become a lien on the property after being recorded in the appropriate registry to the BID management entity. The funds must be used solely to fund the items identified and approved in the management plan.

In addition to receiving funds generated by the district fee, the BID is also authorized to receive grants, donations and gifts. In Massachusetts, a BID is specifically permitted to incur debt, or borrow funds to implement approved improvements.

HOW IS A BID MANAGED?

A BID is managed by a Board of Directors who may act as the “management entity” required by statute, or who may designate a separate management entity to receive the funds and implement the district improvement plan. It is not uncommon for existing downtown organizations or Community Development Corporations to act as management entities for BIDs. The local municipal governing body may establish rules and regulations governing the BID Board of Directors. The Massachusetts enabling legislation does not require specific Board composition, but typically BIDs ensure representation from property owners, retailers, residents, and corporations on their Board of Directors. Many BIDs include municipal officials or their appointees as voting or ex-officio members in order to strengthen communication and cooperation between the municipality and the BID. The number of Board members varies depending on the size of the district, but generally ranges in the teens, with the exception of very large urban districts which tend to have larger Boards. Some Boards are elected by the general district membership with a number of automatic seats for designated officials such as the Economic Development

Director or specific positions like a university or hospital president. While the Massachusetts enabling legislation leaves the composition and regulations of the BID Board of Directors up to the municipality without specific guidance, it is essential to keep in mind that in addition to the guaranteed revenue that a BID provides, its ability to bring committed business and community leaders to the table to assume responsibility for the economic development of the downtown is one of its greatest assets.

WHAT IS THE REQUIRED PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING A BID IN MASSACHUSETTS?

The legal process for establishing a BID in Massachusetts is outlined in MGL Chapter 40 O. BID supporters must allow over four and one-half months to obtain municipal approval in addition to the requisite consensus building, marketing of the BID to property owners, developing an improvements plan to address district needs, and establishing or identifying a management entity to implement the plan. Establishing a BID typically requires 15 to 24 months from the planning stage through municipal approval.

There are basically four components of the municipal approval process:

- 1) Petition
- 2) Public Notification and Public Hearing
- 3) Declaration of BID by municipal governing body and commencement of BID activities
- 4) "Opting-out" period

1) Petition

The statute requires that those property owners supporting a BID petition the local municipal governing body. The petition must contain the signatures of the owners of at least 60% of the real property and of at least 51% of the assessed valuation of the real property within the proposed BID. The petition must also contain the following:

- 1) a description and site map delineating the boundaries of the BID
- 2) the proposed improvements plan which details the supplemental services and programs, revitalization strategy, update mechanisms, budget, and fee structure

- 3) the identity and location of the BID management entity
- 4) the criteria for waiving the fee for any property owner within a BID who can provide evidence that the imposition of such fee would create a significant financial hardship (these hardship criteria could be developed locally and a committee of BID members could review such waiver requests.

The petition may also include a mechanism for reimbursing the municipality for the costs incurred in establishing the BID, and for costs incurred in collecting the district fees.

Prior to the public hearing, the municipal governing body will direct the town/city clerk or his/her designee to determine that the petition contains the required items and that the required process of notification was followed. Within 30 days of receipt of the petition, the city/town clerk must forward the petition to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

2. Public Notification and Public Hearing

Within 60 days of receipt of a BID petition, the municipal governing body must hold a public hearing. Written notification of the public hearing must be mailed to each property owner within the boundary of the proposed BID within 30 days prior to the hearing. Notices must be mailed to each address listed in the property tax records. Notification of the public hearing must also be published in a general circulation newspaper for two consecutive weeks at least 14 days prior to the public hearing. These mailed and published notices must contain the same information provided in the petition. Specifically, this includes the BID boundaries, the proposed fee level, the proposed benefits, the basis for determining the district fee, and the process by which a property owner may elect neither to participate in nor benefit from BID.

The municipal governing body will hear comment on the proposed BID plan and its intended effects at the public hearing. They will also read into the record the basis for determining the district fee and the process by which individual property owners can “opt-out” of the BID by electing neither to participate in nor to receive benefits from the BID.

3) Declaration of the BID and Commencement of BID Activities

Within 45 days after the public hearing the municipal governing body, in its sole discretion, may by a vote declare the district organized and describe the

boundaries and service area of the district. At this time a BID may begin operations. Notice of the declaration of the BID and the process by which individual property owner may elect to “opt-out” of the BID must be mailed or delivered by the municipal governing body to each property owner within the BID. This information must, once again, be published for two consecutive weeks in a general circulation newspaper with the last publication being at least seven days prior to the last day of the 30 day “opting-out” period for individual property owners.

4) “Opting-Out” Period

The Massachusetts legislation structures BIDs as “fee for services” programs funded by an assessment on each participating property within the district. In Massachusetts, fees are voluntary, not mandatory, therefore individuals have the right to elect not to pay the fee or receive services or benefits. Any property owner within the BID may, within 30 calendar days after the municipality declares the BID, elect not to participate or “opt-out” of the BID. By “opting-out” a property owner is neither subject to the BID fee nor eligible to receive any of the benefits or services of the BID. In order to “opt-out,” a property owner must notify the city/town clerk in writing of his/her intent not to participate in the BID. However, property owners may elect to participate at a future date by notifying the city/town clerk, BID board of Directors, and the BID management entity in writing of such an intention. The decision to participate will be permanent as stated above until BID dissolution or property transfer.

Upon transfer of participating property within a BID, the new owner may elect not to participate within 30 days of the closing, provided that he/she reimburses the BID for the allocable share of debt, incurred prior to the date of withdrawal, as determined by the management entity.

The provisions allowing property owners to “opt-out” or elect not to participate in the BID, once again underscores the critical need for consensus building and peer-to-peer marketing of the BID concept, its costs and benefits prior to petitioning the municipality to establish a BID. While the statute requires support of at least 60% of real property owners and the representation of at least 51% of assessed valuation within the district, actual practice in other states has proved that support from 80-90% of district property has been more successful.

HOW IS AN ESTABLISHED BID ALTERED OR DISSOLVED?

The BID improvement plan is contained in the original petition to the municipal governing body and outlines the programs and services the BID will provide as well as the fee structure and fees generated to implement that plan. The improvement plan must be updated every three years by the BID Board of Directors and a copy of the updated plan must be mailed or delivered to each BID member. The updated plan will take effect upon approval of a majority of the electors or BID members.

In addition to the required update of the BID improvement plan every three years, the statute allows for more significant amendments to that plan at any time. However, any amendment to a BID plan that calls for additional improvements, provides for expenditures or program services which affect more than 25% of the project budget, proposes that the BID incur indebtedness, or changes the fee structure, management entity or district boundary, will require municipal approval. Such amendments must be recommended by the BID Board of Directors with the concurrence of the owners of at least 51% of the assessed valuation of all participating real property and 51% of the participating real property owners within the BID. Municipal approval of amendments to a BID plan must follow a public hearing process that includes a 30 day advance publication of a hearing notice and allows the municipal governing body 30 days to vote on the proposed amendment. Amendments become effective on the date of municipal approval. If an amendment increases the BID boundaries, written notices must be mailed to any affected property owners who have 30 days following approval of the amendments to "opt-out" or elect not to participate in the BID.

Anecdotal evidence of the success of BIDs and the satisfaction of participating property owners shows that not one of the hundreds of existing BIDs in the country has elected to dissolve. Nonetheless, the state enabling legislation provides for that option. A petition with the signatures of the owners of at least 51% of the assessed valuation within the district or at least 51% of the real property owners within the district must be delivered to the municipal governing body, who will hold a hearing within 30 days of its receipt. The municipality may then declare the BID dissolved. A BID with any outstanding indebtedness, obligations, and liabilities will not be permitted to dissolve unless funds are on deposit or a repayment schedule has been approved by the municipality.

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS

CHAPTER 400

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS [1994, CH. 173]

(PLEASE CONSULT GENERAL LAWS FOR ANY CHANGES SINCE 1997)

Sec.

1. Definitions.
2. BID Powers and Rights.
3. Property Owners to Initiate Organization of BID; Contents of Petition; Filing.
4. Public Hearing on Petition; Notice; Declaration of Organization of BID; Election Not to Participate.
5. BID Board of Directors.
6. Fee Formulas for Supplemental Services and Programs: Exemptions.
7. Effect of Approval of BID; Determination of Fee Formula; Receipt of Funds.
8. Collection of BID Fees; Duties and Responsibilities of Collector-Treasurer; Liens; Audits.
9. Amendments to BID Improvement Plan; Procedures.
10. Dissolution of BID; Procedure.

§1. Definitions.

As used in this chapter the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

“Business improvement district board of directors” or “Board of directors”, a locally designated board of property owners or their designees who are assigned responsibility for the management of a business improvement district.

“BID”, a business improvement district formed pursuant to this chapter, which is a contiguous geographic area with clearly defined boundaries in which at least three-fourths of the area is zoned or used for commercial, industrial, retail, or mixed uses.

“BID member”, a property owner who elects to participate in a BID.
“Elector”, a BID member, or a natural person designated by a member to vote by proxy for such member; provided, however, that such designation shall be in writing and filed with the city or town clerk; provided, further, that only one such proxy may be designated by an owner.

“Fee”, a payment for services or improvements specified by the BID improvement plan.

“Improvement plan”, the strategic plan for the BID which sets forth the supplemental services and programs, revitalization strategy, budget and fee structure, as well as the management entity for the business improvement district, and is approved by the local municipal governing

body as part of the creation of the BID. An improvement plan shall, within the limitations described in section nine, be updated at least once every three years by the BID board of directors, and a copy thereof shall be mailed or delivered to each BID member. The updated improvement plan shall take effect upon the approval of a majority of the electors. Any amendment to the improvement plan under section nine shall be deemed to be an update of the improvement plan.

“Local municipal governing body”, the city council or board of alder-men in a city or the board of selectmen or town council in a town.

“Management entity”, an entity designated in an improvement plan to funds to carry out and implement the purposes of the Bid, and which shall be governed by the BID board of directors to act as the management entity, or may designate that the management entity will be selected by the board of directors. If a management entity is utilized, such entity shall be required to furnish a surety bond conditioned on the faithful performance of its duties.

“Property”, any real property located within the BID.

“Property owner”, the owner of record of property.

“Standard government services”, governmental functions, programs, activities, facilities, improvements and other services which a municipality is authorized to perform or provide.

“Supplemental service”, the provision of programs, public services, activities, amenities, or information addition to the standard governmental services provided to the BID.

§2. BID Powers and Rights.

The rights and powers of a BID approved by a municipal governing body shall include: retaining or recruiting business, administering and managing central and neighborhood business districts; promoting economic development; managing parking; designing, engineering, constructing, maintaining or operating buildings, facilities, urban streetscapes or infrastructures to further economic development and public purposes; conducting historic preservation activities; leasing, owning, acquiring, or optioning real property; supplementing maintenance, security, or sanitation; planning and designing services; formulating a fee structure; accumulating interest; incurring costs or indebtedness; entering into contracts; suing and being sued; employing legal and accounting services; undertaking planning, feasibility and market analysis; developing common marketing and promotional activities; and supporting public art and human and environmental services as related to the enhancement of the business district or other supplemental services or programs that would further the purposes of this chapter.

§ 3. Property Owners to Initiate Organization of BID; Contents of Petition; Filing.

The organization of a BID shall be initiated by a petition of the property owners within the proposed BID which shall be filed in the office of the clerk of the municipality.

Such petition shall contain:

(1) the signatures of the owners of at least fifty-one percent of the assessed valuation of all real property within the proposed BID and sixty percent of the real property owners within the proposed BID;

(2) a description of and a site map delineating the boundaries of the proposed BID;

(3) the proposed improvement plan which shall set forth the supplemental services and programs, revitalization strategy, update mechanism, and budget and fee structures;

(4) the identify and location of the management entity designated to implement and oversee the ongoing improvement plan; and

(5) the criteria for waiving the fee for any property owner within the BID who can provide evidence that the imposition of such fee would create a significant financial hardship.

Such petition may include a mechanism for reimbursing the municipality for the costs incurred in establishing the BID, and for costs incurred in collecting the district fees.

A copy of said petition shall be filed with the secretary of the executive office of communities and development within thirty days of receipt of such petition by the clerk of the municipality.

§ 4. Public Hearing on Petition; Notice; Declaration of Organization of BID; Election Not to Participate.

The local municipal governing body shall hold a public hearing within sixty days of the receipt of a petition. Written notification of such hearing shall be sent to each property owner within the boundary of the proposed BID at least thirty days prior to such hearing, by mailing notice to the address listed in the property tax records. Notification of the hearing shall also be published for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the area at least fourteen days prior to such hearing. Such public notice shall contain the proposed boundaries of the BID, the proposed fee level, the proposed benefits, the basis for determining the district fee, and the process by which a property owner may elect not to participate in or benefit from the BID.

Prior to the public hearing, the local municipal governing body shall direct the town clerk or city clerk or his designee to determine that the establishment criteria has been met as set forth in section three.

At the public hearing, the local municipal governing body shall determine if the petition satisfies the purposes set forth and the establishment criteria of this chapter and shall obtain public comment regarding the

§ 5

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS

C. 400

improvement plan and the effect the proposed BID will have on the property owners, tenants and others within the BID. If it appears that said petition is not in conformity with the purposes and establishment criteria, the local municipal governing body shall dismiss the petition. At the public hearing, the presiding officer or clerk of said governing body shall read into the record the basis for determining the district fee pursuant to section seven and the process for property owners to follow who elect not to participate in or benefit from said BID in accordance with the provisions of this section.

Within forty-five days after the public hearing, the local municipal governing body, in its sole discretion, may by a vote declare the district organized and describe the boundaries and service area of the district. Upon such declaration, the BID may commence operations.

Notice of the declaration of the organization of the BID and of the time period within which an owner of real estate within the district may elect not to participate shall be mailed or delivered to each property owner within the proposed BID. Said notice shall describe the process by which a property owner may elect not to participate in the BID, explain that membership in the BID is irrevocable until dissolution of the BID or a transfer of BID property, and include a description of the basis for determining the district fee, the projected fee level, and the proposed services to be provided by the BID. Such notice shall also be published for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the area, the last publication being at least seven days prior to the last date for an election not to participate.

Any property owner within the BID may, within thirty calendar days after such declaration of organization by the local municipal government body, elect not to participate and not be subject to the BID fee. Such property owner shall notify, in writing, the city or town clerk of the intent not to participate in the BID. Such property owner shall not receive benefits or services from the BID. Property owners who choose not to participate in the BID may, at a later date, elect to participate in the BID by notifying the city or town clerk, the BID board of directors, and the management entity in writing. The decision to participate in the BID shall be permanent until dissolution of the BID as set forth in section ten, or until the transfer of such property as provided herein. Upon the transfer of any participat-

ing property, the new owner shall have the option to withdraw the property from BID participation within thirty days of closing; provided, however, that the new owner shall reimburse the BID for the allocable share of any debt which may have been incurred but remains unpaid prior to the date of withdrawal, as determined by the management entity.

Nothing in this section shall prevent the filing of a subsequent petition for a similar project.

C. 400 MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS § 5

§ 5. BID Board of Directors.

Each BID shall have a board of directors who shall oversee the management entity to insure the implementation of the improvement plan. The BID board of directors shall be designated by a majority vote of the electors, or their designees, who own real property participating in the BID. The local municipal governing body may establish rules and regulations governing the BID board of directors.

§ 6. Fee Formulas for Supplemental Services and Programs; Exemptions.

All real property located within the proposed BID shall be considered in the fee formula for the supplemental services and programs as outlined in the improvement plan.

The municipality may exempt from fees certain properties, specifically classified as: (1) owner-occupied residential; (2) agricultural; or (3) tax exempt.

§ 7. Effect of Approval of BID; Determination of Fee Formula; Receipt of Funds.

By formal approval of a BID, the local municipal governing body shall adopt the district fee structure for the financing of items submitted in the improvement plan for the BID; provided, however, that the total fees assessed in any one year may not exceed one-half of one percent of the sum of the assessed valuation of the real property owned by participating members in the BID district.

The basis of such district fee may be determined by a formula utilizing any one or a combination of the following:

- (1) different levels for varying classifications of real property;
- (2) benefit zones;
- (3) assessed valuations;
- (4) square footage
- (5) street frontage; or

Amendments to the BID improvement plan which provide for additional improvements, program services or expenditures which affect more than twenty-five percent of the total project budget, incurring indebtedness, changes to the fee structure or management entity or changes to the district boundaries shall be subject to the approval of the local municipal governing body; provided, however, that said governing body, after a public hearing, determines that it is in the public interest to adopt said amendments.

The local municipal governing body shall give notice of the public hearing for amendment by publication of a notice, in at least one newspaper having general circulation in the district, specifying the time and the place of such hearing and the amendments to be considered. Such notice shall be published once at least thirty days prior to the date of such hearing.

The local municipal governing body may, within thirty days of the public

C. 400

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS

§ 9

hearing and, in its sole discretion, declare the amendments approved or disapproved. If approved, such amendments shall be affective upon the date of such approval.

Upon the adoption of any amendments to the district boundaries which increases the size of the district, any owner of property to be added to the district shall be notified of the new boundaries of the district in accordance with section four and may elect not to participate in the BID as provided in such section.

§ 10. Dissolution of BID; Procedure.

A BID may be dissolved by petition to the local municipal governing body and a subsequent decision by such governing body to authorize dissolution.

In order to be considered by the local municipal governing body, a petition to dissolve a BID shall contain the signatures of the owners of at least fifty-one percent of the assessed valuation within the district or at least fifty-one percent of the real property owners within the district.

The local municipal governing body shall hold a public hearing within thirty days of receipt of a completed petition on the issue of dissolution.

Following the public hearing, the local municipal governing body may declare the BID dissolved; provided, however, that no BID shall be dissolved until it has satisfied or paid in full all of its outstanding indebtedness, obligations, and liabilities; or until funds are on deposit and available therefor; or until a repayment schedule has been formulated and municipally approved therefor. In addition, the BID shall be prohibited from incurring any new or increased financial obligations.

Any liabilities, either current or future, incurred as a result of action to accomplish the purposes of the BID improvement plan shall not be an obligation of the municipality, but said liabilities shall be paid for entirely from revenues gained from the project or facilities authorized, or from the fees on the properties in the BID.

Upon the dissolution of a BID, any remaining revenues derived from the sale of assets acquired with fees collected shall be refunded to the property owners in the BID in which fees were charged by applying the same formula used to calculate the fee in the fiscal year in which the BID is dissolved.

Appendix C: Sustainable Northampton Executive Summary

(http://www.northamptonma.gov/aboutNorthampton/Sustainability_Plan/)



Draft for Public Review
**SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON
SUMMARY**

October 2007

Sustainable Northampton: Summary

The Approach

Northampton has developed—over many months and with input from a wide variety of constituencies—a vision for its future as well the goals, principles and strategies required to support and implement that vision. This undertaking, called Sustainable Northampton, is a comprehensive plan that seeks to ensure the city can continue to meet its current and ongoing environmental, social and economic needs without compromising the future for succeeding generations.

As a practical matter, finite resources, coupled with a significant desire to better support a diverse and sustainable community, require the city to make choices about how best to use its natural, social, economic, and human resources. City residents and elected officials recognize that these choices are local decisions that will impact the natural environment, the community, and quality of life, and are intended to guide Northampton's role locally, regionally, and globally.

Sustainable Northampton commits the city to becoming a model community for sustainable policies and practices.

The plan is intended in its most important form as a plan of action for the next ten years. However, there are several aspects that cut across that time frame:

- Sustainability is a concept for ensuring a high quality of life for future generations. Consequently, the plan projects that these actions will provide benefits far into the future.
- Some actions are continuations of recent programs and require ongoing diligence to maintain. Consequently, some of these actions 'flow through' the plan.
- The metrics or measurements of progress are intended to be part of a yearly report to inform the City how well this plan is achieving these goals. Consequently, the City will receive a report card each year and every five years can revisit the proposals in this plan and update them to ensure the plan maintains the course towards true sustainability.

The Vision

The overarching themes influencing all aspects of Northampton's future are social equity, economic vitality, and environmental security. The vision recognizes the leadership role Northampton can play in the broader region by advancing these themes.

Northampton affirms its commitment to:

- Leadership in the advancement of sustainable practices that manage land use for long-term benefits, reduce dependency on nonrenewable fuels, reduce consumption of resources without offsetting benefits, and improve our impact on the environment.
- Inclusiveness, tolerance and civic-mindedness by embracing diversity and encouraging full participation in community conversations. It is assumed that controversy and debate, which is to be expected, will be resolved by a community commitment to the city's long-term well-being.
- Vibrancy as a city that supports arts, non-profit organizations, higher education and businesses in an atmosphere that allows growth and prosperity while conserving our heritage, natural resources, and history. We will build on and celebrate our uniqueness as a community.

The Guiding Principles

Northampton will achieve this vision by following a set of Guiding Principles leading the key actions and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.

PROVIDE SOCIAL EQUITY

The Guiding Principle:

"Support a diverse and integrated community where all residents have the opportunity to excel on a social, economic, and academic level and to lead independent and successful lives"

Basic Approach:

- Provide access to jobs and services: health care, transit, commercial areas, government, life-long education and housing choices.
- Create an environment of safety, tolerance, diversity, and fairness.
- Target outreach to immigrant, low-income, elderly and other under-represented communities to foster greater understanding, collaboration, and participation.
- Improve property maintenance and physical accessibility.
- Ensure environmental justice in all neighborhoods.

Sample Metrics: Access to services and jobs

Wellness Target: Full access to health care from prenatal to elderly

Jobs Target: Living wage jobs available for a full range of incomes

THINK REGIONALLY

The Guiding Principle:

"Act as a part of a broader region through the resources connecting us beyond our municipal borders, such as watersheds, rivers, roads, economy, culture, or common goals"

Basic Approach:

- Educate people on their regional connections in easily understood terms; e.g., map resident commuting patterns, watersheds, and the retail and service market areas.
- Consider regional opportunities and impacts when making local decisions.
- Continue and expand regional collaborations.

Sample Metric: Decisions that consider regional impact

Decisions Target: All government decisions to consider regional implications

MAKE THE CITY ENERGY EFFICIENT

The Guiding Principle:

"Significantly improve energy efficiency in city buildings and programs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage conservation and use of alternative and renewable energy sources throughout the community"

Basic Approach:

- Incorporate 'green' building design and up-to-date energy efficiency and management in city facilities and operations.
- Reconstitute and revitalize the Northampton Energy Resources Commission and ask it to propose standards and promote public education.
- Add renewable energy sources.
- Encourage private sector investment in green technologies and energy efficiency.
- Develop and implement a climate protection plan.

Sample Metric: Trend in total energy demand from City facilities

Energy Demand Target: 2 to 3% reduction in energy costs per year

Renewable Energy Target: 25% of energy supplied by renewable sources by 2017

PROVIDE HOUSING

The Guiding Principle:

"Support a wide variety of housing types and increase rental and homeownership units to create and preserve a range of affordability and choice in housing options"

Basic Approach:

- Encourage and facilitate a range of housing options, price ranges, and types by City, non-profit, and private developers.
- Provide shelters and permanent housing along with programs to prevent and end homelessness.
- Ensure home ownership and rental opportunities.
- Provide both subsidized and market rate affordable housing units.

Sample Metric: Number of affordable housing units created

Production Target: Range of unit costs corresponding to income levels in Northampton

PROMOTE ARTS AND CULTURE

The Guiding Principle:

"Support artists and arts, local culture and history, and education at all levels as vital to a successful well-balanced community"

Basic Approach:

- Maintain and create new venues for performance, rehearsal and presentation.
- Expand public art and arts education.
- Provide affordable living, office, and studio space for the arts community.
- Build partnerships between the arts community, City, institutions, and businesses.
- Increase investment in arts and culture.
- Protect and preserve the City's heritage resources through public education, resource inventories, technical assistance, guidelines, and incentives.

Metric: Number of performance and rehearsal spaces and galleries in the City.

Target: Maintain or increase the number of venues

INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Guiding Principle:

"Connecting municipal capital improvements directly to the goals of Sustainable Northampton"

Basic Approach:

- Coordinate infrastructure upgrades to support Sustainable Northampton priorities, desired development patterns, and desired services.
- Encourage green infrastructure and alternative design such as Low Impact Development, improved stormwater management, context sensitive design, green roofs, street tree plantings, and water conservation methods.
- Utilize public facilities for maximum efficiency.

Sample Metric: Capital project plans

Conformance Target: One hundred percent conformance with Sustainable Northampton

Allocation Target: Allocation for future projects raised from 2.1% to 5% of yearly budget

DEVELOP ACCORDING TO PLAN

The Guiding Principle:

"Adopt land use patterns that maintain a mix of urban and rural areas; concentrate development in neighborhood, village, and commercial centers supported by adequate infrastructure; promote energy efficiency; and protect environmental open space, and agricultural resources"

Basic Approach:

- Ensure rezoning and capital programs coordinate with the Future Land Use Map and Sustainable Northampton goals.
- Allow and encourage development according to the Future Land Use Map.
- Encourage creative design, infill development, and mixed-use development.
- Create and preserve high quality built environments.
- Expand and invest in public open and green spaces, parks, and recreation both urban and rural.
- Protect and maintain prime agricultural lands and support the farming economy.
- Preserve natural resource by minimizing development and infrastructure impacts, protecting wildlife habitat, and encouraging ecological linkages.

Sample Metric: Amount of development, by number of projects/building permits and floor space, corresponding to the use designations of the Future Land Use Map

Project Target: All new development projects conform to the Future Land Use Plan

FOSTER AND RECOGNIZE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Guiding Principle:

"Recognize and foster the unique history, character and function of each residential, commercial, mixed use and open space neighborhood"



Basic Approach:

- Build at densities following historic and current trends of development and future needs.
- Differentiate between urban, mixed, and rural areas.
- Encourage mixed-use development and housing within walking distances to neighborhood commercial areas, parks and recreation, schools, and public transportation.
- Keep urban and village centers attractive with green space, parks, historic preservation, design guidelines, and transitions into surrounding neighborhoods.
- Develop design criteria for gateways to create a welcoming entries into the City.

Sample Metric: Number of infill housing units

Infill Target: A minimum of 50% of all housing

FOSTER ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The Guiding Principle:

"Recognize that a diverse and vibrant economy is integral to a successful community and support business and job development that contribute to the community and the city's long-term sustainability"

Basic Approach:

- Support a diverse business base and promote sustainable business practices.
- Provide entrepreneurial and workforce training and business assistance.
- Promote and market Northampton and local businesses.
- Ensure the vibrancy of downtown, village, and commercial centers.
- Encourage key business sectors that create jobs and living wages.
- Promote a thriving creative economy.
- Provide a positive business environment.
- Create a supply of commercial and industrial sites.

Sample Metrics: Number of businesses and number of jobs

Business Target: Increase value of businesses by number of jobs, wages and property valuation

Job Training Target: Increase in job training commensurate with regional economic growth

INCREASE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND EFFICIENCY

The Guiding Principle:

"Make the city increasingly more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented"

Basic Approach:

- Design for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Reduce congestion on the streets with Context Sensitive designs.
- Implement transportation demand management (TDM).
- Expand and improve the public transit system.
- Improve bicycle and vehicle parking in the downtown.
- Design transportation systems for safety and efficiency.

Sample Metric: Increase in transit use and transit oriented development

Transit Target: Increases in use exceeding growth in population but commensurate with transportation demands

Access Targets: 1500 feet of bikeways and 1500 feet of sidewalks per year

PROVIDE LIFELONG EDUCATION

The Guiding Principle:

"Improve citizens' lives through continuous, high quality education"

Basic Approach:

- Continue support for existing public school and library programs.
- Promote high achievement and educational excellence at all levels.
- Encourage continuum of education by providing adult education and programs to support higher education, career development, and workforce education.
- Seek partnerships between public and private entities to enhance the provision of services to learners at all levels.

Sample Metric: Number of graduates from K-12 programs that enroll in post-secondary education or enter the job market in their field of vocational or agricultural training

Education Target: Increase average educational level for population

ENSURE RESPONSIBLE MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

The Guiding Principle:

"Operate the city as a democratic enterprise that is responsive and responsible to the fiscal, economic, social, and environmental interests of its citizens"

Basic Approach:

- Partner with community groups to assist with voter outreach and community participation to encourage greater involvement in the public conversation and the formal public hearing and decision-making process.
- Develop revenue streams in an equitable and consistent manner for all populations in the City.
- Minimize adverse municipal fiscal impacts of development, consider the overall environmental impacts, and provide incentives for projects that support social and economic goals.
- Ensure the budget is developed and implemented in a consistent and transparent fashion to meet the most pressing needs across the City.

Sample Metric: New revenue sources added

Revenue Growth Target: Three percent increase per year in non-property tax revenues

Implications and Impacts

The guiding principles, goals, and actions in the Sustainable Northampton Plan reinforce the core principles that define Northampton as a community and promote change in the way City government and the community function together to achieve economic vitality, environmental security and social equity.

Challenges and conflicts are expected to arise along the way that will require creative solutions to the changing environment around

us in order to achieve the greatest outcome for the citizens of Northampton. Some of the broader implications, impacts, and conflicts identified during the Sustainable Northampton planning process include:

- Northampton can be a leader in initiating and achieving our desired goals, and partnership will be needed by all sectors of the local, regional, and national community to achieve complete success of community goals.
- Some goals and actions such as increased energy efficiency, greater efficiencies in government, improved communication and transparency, and improved infrastructure and municipal services may require new approaches and increased municipal costs to achieve longer-term benefits.
- Desired land use and environmental goals may require balancing lifestyle, development patterns, property values, and changes to established neighborhoods.
- Maintaining Northampton's vibrant local economy will be influenced by local decisions, broader market forces, regional and national decisions. All need to be considered in local policy.

Appendix D: Interview with Christopher Clark, Town Manager

We are using sustainability to help attract tourism in Southbridge. Right now, sustainability is a hot ticket in attracting tourism. How do you feel about sustainability in Southbridge?

Here are some things about sustainability. In terms of live-ability, where you live, shop, and work should all be in a close proximity to minimize your car usage. If you look at a map of Southbridge, most of the housing is downtown. We are also trying to make use of trail grants. Right now the only way from Sandersdale (where the Big Y is located) to the downtown area is to walk down a street. We want to develop the old railway that would come down by the old A.O. building which is now the conference center and hotel. This would be about a mile in distance. We also have the Grand Trunk Trail that goes from Palmer to Dudley. This railroad has historical significance. The story behind this was that the money to fund the railroad was on the Titanic, so when it sunk, the money for the railroad disappeared and the railroad was never completed. If you look in Auburn, there are ten different patents for the way they separate trash. We have a very similar process. We also have single stream recycling which makes recycling way more convenient for our residents.

What about attracting tourism? What are your thoughts on that?

Old Sturbridge Village is a regional attraction. It may take a day or two to visit everything they have to offer. If people were to come to the area to see it, what attractions in Southbridge could attract these tourists? In Sturbridge, restaurants are really big. However, I feel as though restaurants are big in Southbridge too. However, they do not have a very active nightlife, whereas we do. The Mill Street brewery and 12 Crane buildings both offer concerts and other types of shows.

Do you think Southbridge can change for the better?

This transformation doesn't happen overnight, but rather over time. We are in that transition phase, and much farther along than many others.

How do labor costs affect the town?

The other day I was reading an article about labor costs in Germany. It reminded me of how Hyde tool factory incorporates robots and computers to process tools. Metal is put into the machine. Then computers analyze the metal and map it out into different shapes for their products and use that to maximize use of the metal to eliminate waste. The use of these machines requires low labor costs, and they do not get sick or take vacations when they want to. Using machines for advanced processing should not be overlooked. Previously, I worked in Wellesley and most town workers (for example, DPW) could not

live in the town with the high living costs up near an average of a million dollars per home. We have affordable housing and direct access to both the Mass Pike and I-84.

What about the workforce for future generations? Are there any improvements you see happening in the future?

With a better educated work force, better jobs can be offered. Right now, 2,000 students at Quinsigamond Community College are from the Southbridge area (Southbridge and surrounding towns). We would like to be able to set up a satellite campus in Southbridge, possibly at the conference center in order to give these students a better opportunity to learn skills needed to be successful in these technical areas. Not only will this help us but it will also free up more space on the main campus for more students. If this happened, we would have more of a college town reputation which gives a positive connotation. One thing people don't understand is that you don't need a four year college degree to make money or have a career. It may be somewhat true, but you can also take specific courses to learn a specific skill in order to be successful.

What can you say about pitching the idea of "Sustainable Southbridge" to the town?

When I worked in Wellesley, there was one instance where a traffic engineer pitched an idea but did it so poorly and unenthusiastically that things actually go worse rather than improving. If you can't convince people of what you're trying to sell to them, things will not go far. One word of advice is to remember that Southbridge has a small town feel with city amenities.

Appendix E: Charrette Schedule

Friday, February 6, 2009 from 3-5pm

Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge, Massachusetts

Needs: layouts, easels, pens, post-it notes.

Assign people to groups as they walk in.

Agenda:

3.00-3.05: Settling in

3.05-3.20: Introduction, goals and local sustainability presentation

1. **Introduction:** Professor Dominic Golding and students. Welcome everyone. Thank them for coming. Excitement for new initiative.
2. **Goals for the afternoon:** Explore ways Southbridge can leverage its existing resources to re-brand itself as a destination.
3. **Presentation:** Students to prepare a 10-minute presentation sustainability criteria.
4. **Process explanation:** Professor Dominic Golding

3.20-3.50: Responses to layouts. Individuals walk around with post-it notes and comment on Southbridge's existing assets. What are the most important ones? What's there? What needs to be added?

A facilitator will collect the cards.

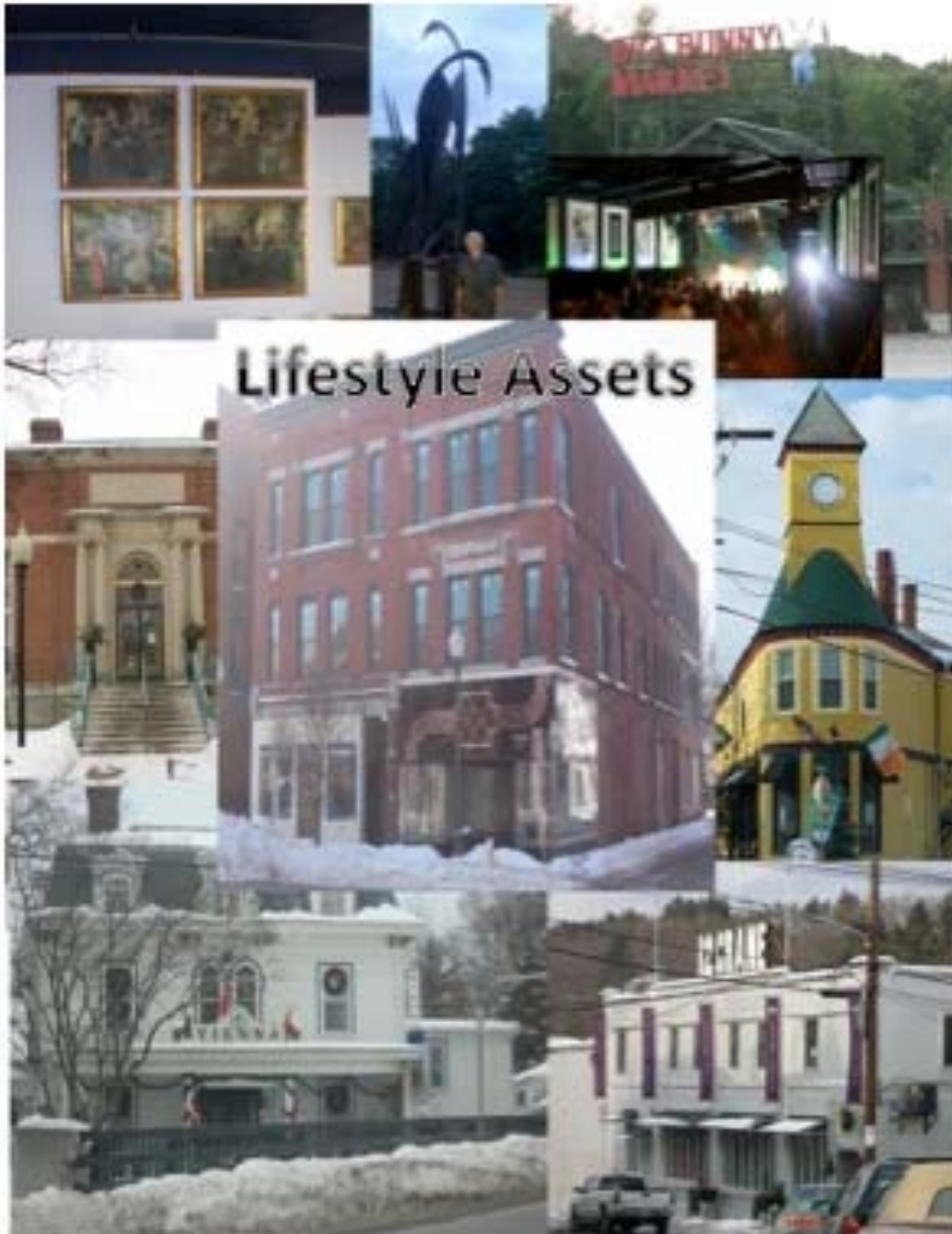
Facilitators: Professor Robert Krueger and Ms. Peggy Midaugh

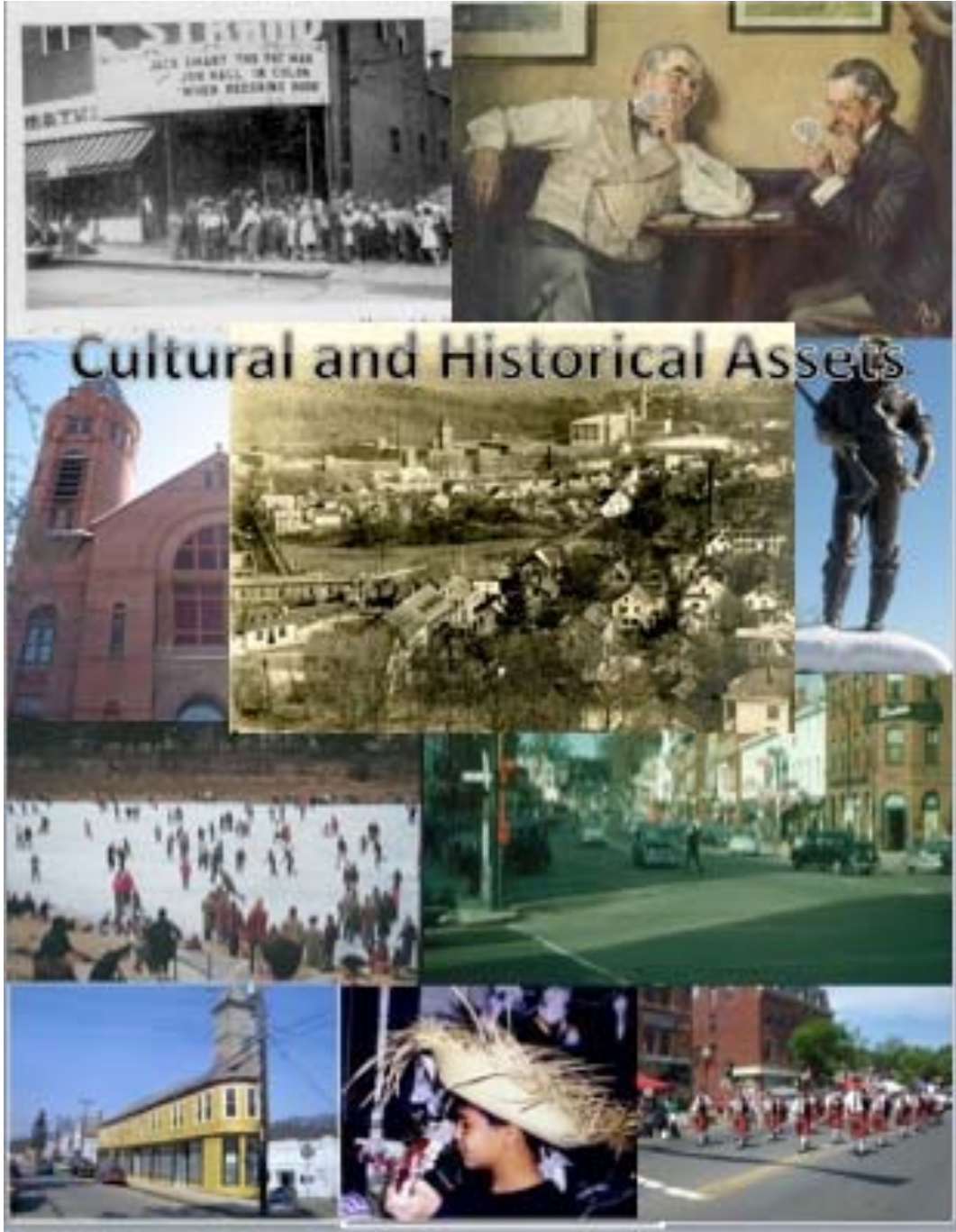
3.50-4.20/4.30: Facilitators to lead group discussion. Goal is to prioritize existing resources. Work off of the butcher paper with major and minor circles. With the respondents organize the cards on the paper. There will be one sheet per domain (economic, historical/cultural, environmental, other).

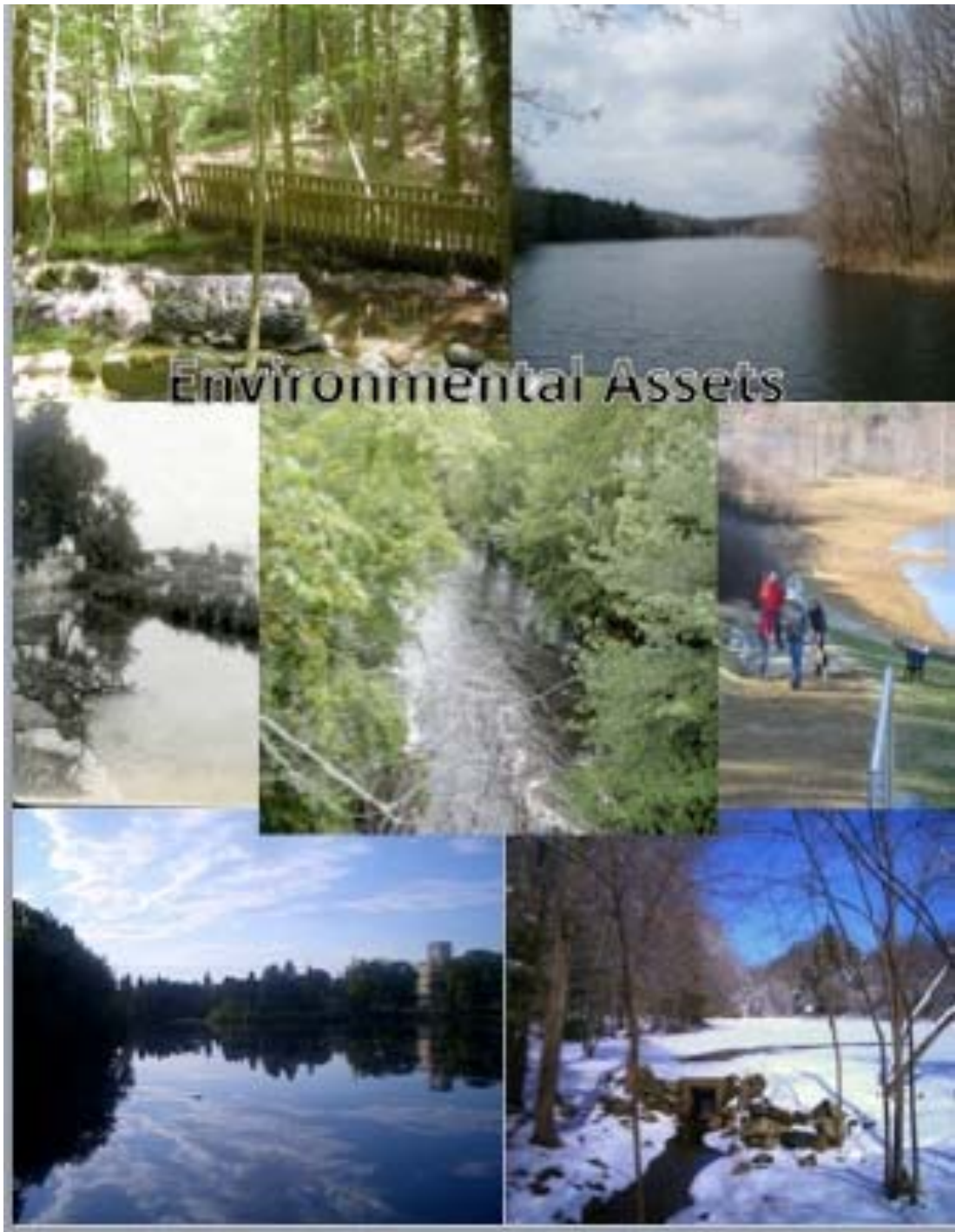
Questions to ask are: 1) What are Southbridge's core assets?; 2) Which of these assets would you place the highest priority on to build off of for a "Sustainable Southbridge" initiative?; 3) What about these assets will excite residents and attract outsiders?

4.30-4.50: Report back. Wrap up. Each group will report back on the priorities within each of the domains.

Appendix F: Charrette Layouts







Environmental Assets



Appendix G: Charrette Report

“Sustainable Southbridge” Charrette for

The Town of Southbridge, Massachusetts

February 6th, 2009

Summary of Process

The town of Southbridge, Massachusetts has been struggling to successfully institute a “Sustainable Southbridge” campaign. In order to do so, this would require involvement from the entire community rather than individualistic ideas or implementations. The two goals that were to be accomplished today were to create a list of assets in which to be promoted in order to put Southbridge on the map, as well as sparking the community’s interest to become inclusive in the process of creating a “Sustainable Southbridge”.

The meeting took place on February 6th from 3:00 - 5:00 pm in the Pioppi Room, at the Jacob Edwards Library, located at 236 Main Street in downtown Southbridge. The meeting was attended by a diverse group of concerned citizens and community activists who hailed from various organizations including: the Downtown Partnership, local businesses, the town government, and the Casella Recycling Center.

Preparations for the meeting included creating a presentation to introduce the idea of sustainability and why an inclusive community effort would benefit the town of Southbridge. It was also necessary to develop poster sized collages of different assets the town possesses from four different perspectives: economical, environmental, cultural and historical, and lifestyle. These were used in an activity in order to determine what the

community sought out to be the core assets of the town and to solicit ideas from the charrette participants.

Invitations were mailed out, and were also emailed. The meeting was also publicized in the Southbridge Evening News (local paper) and on a community member's website (<http://www.dickwhitney.net>).

Meeting Agenda:

The meeting began with an introduction by WPI professor Dr. Dominic Golding, a powerpoint presentation by Michael Ashman, Albedith Diaz, Stephen Lima, and Dimitris Saragas of WPI to initiate thought processes about core assets.

Attendees were broken up into two groups designated by different color post-it notes and then asked to pursue the eight collages (two sets of four collages) which were set up on the easels bordering the Pioppi Room. Then they were asked to write down any core assets they saw in the towns on their colored post-it notes and paste these post-it notes to the collages corresponding to the category they fit into. After 25 minutes participants were gathered into their groups and then participated in a 50 minute brainstorming session to determine which assets were of higher priority and which were ancillary. The groups then presented their respective views in the "report back" period.

Notes:

Group 1: Fuchsia

- Core Assets
 - Downtown Revitalization
 - Beautiful Architecture on Main Street
 - Hotel and Conference Center
 - Restaurants
 - Diversity
 - Heritage Clubs
 - Southbridge Fest
 - Clean Industrial Development
 - Hyde Manufacturing
 - Hyde Lens
 - Airport
 - Municipal Services
 - Private Health Care Services (Harrington Memorial Hospital)
 - Education (Schools, Library, etc.)
 - Cemetery
 - Waste Collection
- Ancillary Assets
 - Open space
 - Free Flowing Water
 - Dams
 - Nature Trails
 - Water Ways
 - Quinebaug River
 - Informational Systems
 - Local Community Newspaper
 - Websites
 - Cable Access
 - Downtown Retail
 - Photo Shop
 - Three Flower Shops
 - Alternative Energy
 - Micro-hydro-power Potential
 - Wind Power
 - Landfill Operator Progressive Towards “Green Tech”
 - Community Engagement
 - Volunteerism
 - Large Number of Organizations (Rotary Club, Lions Club, etc.)
 - Investing in Youth
 - Centralized Location
 - Easy Access from Major Roads
 - Lots of Traffic from Northeast Connecticut
 - Recreation

- Country Clubs
- Hiking
- Fishing

Group 2: Green

- Core Assets
 - Investing in Young People
 - Chorus and Theater Programs
 - YMCA- Daycare, Afterschool Programs
 - Education on Recycling and Sustainability
 - Alternate Energy Potential
 - Landfill
 - Windpower
 - Huge Potential in Recycling
 - Locally Owned Businesses
 - Beautiful Downtown Architecture
 - Contribution to Local Economy
 - Presence of multiple ethnic communities
 - Festivals
 - Churches
- Ancillary Assets
 - Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities
 - Center for Hope
 - Local Business Opportunities
 - Local Press
 - Location (I-84/Mass Pike/South Central Mass)
 - Recreation
 - Skating on the Rez
 - Town Swimming Pool
 - Horse Buggy Rides
 - Concerts on the Common
 - Arts
 - Brick Walls for Murals
 - Cultural Arts Center
 - Local Theatre Company
 - Optical Industry
 - Hyde Manufacturing
 - Dexter Russell
 - Potential for Fiber-optics
 - Hotel and Conference Center
 - Jacob Edwards Library

Appendix H: “Sustainable Southbridge” Initiative Booklet



Sustainable Southbridge

Michael Ashman - Albedith Diaz - Stephen Lima - Dimitris Saragas
with Robert Krueger - Dominic Golding - Peggy Middaugh

Sustainable Southbridge Initiative

A strategic plan for community development



These are some of the possible logos for the initiative. Others are spread throughout the rest of the booklet. All "Sustainable Southbridge" Initiative logos were created by Kim Noonan.



This report is a result of a collaboration between the Worcester Community Project Center at WPI and the community of Southbridge, Massachusetts.

Sustainable Southbridge Initiative3	3
Economic Development5	5
Southbridge's Core Assets8	8
Downtown Southbridge10	10
Public Services11	11
Diversity13	13
Industry14	14
Ancillary Assets15	15
Action Steps21	21
References31	31

Sustainable Southbridge Initiative

Imagine the future. A picturesque downtown, with pedestrian activity connections between Southbridge's economic center and its enumerable amenities. A vibrant economy.

This report is a result of a town planning initiative called "Sustainable Southbridge." Research was undertaken by WPI students and faculty between October '08 and March '09. This project culminated in a charrette on February 6th, 2009.



Concept: Sustainable Southbridge

The purpose of the initiative was to create a list of priorities and develop action steps to promote urban development, maintain natural resources, and fulfill the community's broad needs. This effort is inclusive of the community and builds upon its core assets to develop pride and a vibrant economy. The sustainable Southbridge initiative will lead to more economic opportunities and a brighter future.



From the left: Dominic Golding, Margaret Morrissey, Lorraine Martinelle, Albedith Diaz, Dimitris Saragas, Robert Krueger, Michael Ashman, Stephen Lima and Peggy Middaugh at the Sustainable Southbridge's Charrette. Feb. 6, 2009

Sustainability and Economic Development

Sustainability improvement consists of the creation of new technologies, renovation of existing assets and the promotion of inclusiveness within the community. These aspects directly affect the local economy by improving the resident's quality of life and creating new job opportunities.



**Sustainable
Southbridge
Initiative**



**Sustainable
Southbridge
Initiative**

Sustainability in Action

Residents in Southbridge are already familiar with project-based sustainability. These projects have developed job opportunities and have provided the community with investment, jobs, and additional resources.



The Flat Iron Building was awarded the Smart Growth award by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission in 2005.

Smart Growth leads communities to preserve their history and existing infrastructure without interrupting their continuing development, based on the following principles:

- Creating housing opportunities
- Developing walkable neighborhoods
- Encouraging community collaboration
- Mixed land uses

When a community implements the Smart Growth principles, it is eligible to compete for the National Award for Smart Growth Achievement. Southbridge won this award in the Smart Growth and Green Building category when the Flat Iron building was recognized for using the Smart Growth principles.

Sustainability in Action



The 12 Crane Building was awarded the Silver Hammer Award in 2007.

The 12 Crane building in Southbridge provides its residents with music, entertainment, fine art and distinctive dining. This building is a result of the transformation of an industrial site to an entertainment and housing complex, which required the labor of local skilled workers.

After the renovations of 12 Crane, the building was awarded the Silver Hammer Award by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. This award recognizes construction and renovation projects that have an extraordinary visual and aesthetic impact on the physical landscape.



The Silver Hammer Award

Core Assets

Core assets are valuable resources of a town that create a sense of place among the residents and visitors. During the February 6th charrette over 30 residents identified four core assets of Southbridge.



Southbridge's core assets:

- Downton Southbridge
- Public Services
- Diversity
- Industry



Southbridge Charrette

What is a charrette?
A charrette is an activity where a group of people are brought together in order to discuss a topic of common interest. During a charrette the groups of people are divided in sub-groups where solutions and ideas about the problem in question are developed. Each sub-group presents their findings and a general dialogue where solutions are discussed, conclude the charrette.

Southbridge: A Centralized Location



Centrally located between Hartford, CT and the major cities in MA, Southbridge is just 6 miles from the Mass Pike, 4 miles from route 20 and 3 miles from I-84 and the Old Sturbridge Village.



Downton Southbridge

Downtown Southbridge is a combination of restaurants and local businesses. The architecture is mainly a mix of Victorian façades that enhance the character of the town and captivate people's eyes. With affordable housing located at a close proximity to its businesses, Southbridge's downtown offers a city like atmosphere for residents and visitors.



Although Main Street has great walkability, there are many other attractions located near Main Street that are not easily accessible. This inconvenience is caused by the lack of sidewalks, cross walks, and road conditions. A great benefit for the town would be the implementation of sidewalks or walking trails that connect these points of interests, especially for the elderly and the disabled.

Public Services

The Harrington Memorial Hospital, has been offering quality clinical services and has provided job opportunities to the community, since 1931.

The Casella Recycling Center, invests in new technologies in order to improve sustainability, in Southbridge, and beyond.



“Southbridge has a small town feel with city amenities.”
- Christopher Clark, Town Manager



Harrington Memorial Hospital

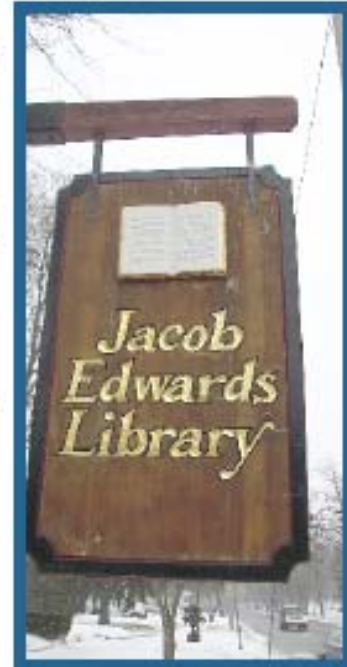


Public Services (Cont'd)

The Jacob Edwards Library, promotes education, culture and lifelong learning for the community of Southbridge.

The YMCA, provides the community with recreational activities, fitness programs and child care.

Public Schools, provides the community with a safe, inclusive learning environment.



Chariton St School



Kids at the YMCA

Diversity

Southbridge is home to a wide variety of ethnicities. Each ethnic group brings cultural novelties and development to the town. Cultural diversity growth has been a major goal of the community. For example, during the summer the town hosts a festival where the community gets together and learn about their different backgrounds.



Residents of Southbridge have expressed interest in a more diverse restaurant circuit. Restaurants that represent each ethnic group's culture would be a great business investment.

Industry

Southbridge has a rich industrial history that dates back to the early 1800's establishing the town's economy.

The Hyde tools manufacturing plant in Southbridge makes various home improvement tools such as paint scrapers, wire brushes and trowels.



The Dexter Russell Company is the largest producer of professional cutlery in the United States.



Industrial Southbridge, MA



Dexter Russell Inc. 1818

Ancillary Assets: The Quinebaug River

The Quinebaug River is considered the heart of Southbridge. In the 1800's the water power of the river attracted textile mills, saw mills and grist mills to settle in the town, which increased the population and the economy.



The Quinebaug River

Ancillary Assets: Recreational Activities Opportunities

The Quinebaug River can be a source for many recreational activities. Kayaking, canoeing and fishing are some of the fun activities that the river could offer to the residents of Southbridge.



Bottling the water of the river could be an economic opportunity for the town. Southbridge could use the Casella Recycling Center as a great source in order to produce recyclable water bottles. This could be a source for new job opportunities.



Workers at the Casella Recycling Center

Community effort in collaboration with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission could make this simple idea a reality.

Ancillary Assets: Information

Southbridge is widely connected through the website (<http://www.dickwhitney.net>) and its newspaper the Southbridge Evening News.

The Southbridge Evening News has been informing the community on current events of the town and its surrounding areas since 1923.

The Whitney web site upheld by Dick Whitney (a lens designer with Karl Zeiss) provides the community with a collection of historical documents, events calendar and pictures of the town since 1999.

Southbridge's Cable Television (SCTV) is another way of connecting the community. The Southbridge public access cable TV channel 12, provides the residents with the highlights of hosted events and information on upcoming events.



Ancillary Assets: Arts

The Southbridge community is characterized by its dedication to the arts and culture. Local artists like John Ferrara, Loretta Medeiros, Jean Murphy, Anna Ozolins and Lynn Wrona exhibit their work at the 12 Crane building.

The importance and history of the arts in Southbridge and the surrounding areas are preserved by The Quinebaug Valley Cultural Center. This membership association has been promoting the arts and humanities since 1977.



Painting by John Ferrara



Painting by Loretta Medeiros



Painting by Lynn Wrona

Ancillary Assets: Arts

The Gateway Players Theater Inc. is a community all volunteer theater that provides quality life performances and workshops to the residents of Southbridge and the surrounding areas.



The Art and Soul Studio in Southbridge is a destination where the community can explore their creativity by letting their imagination flow. This studio, located at the Flat Iron building, offers classes, workshops and events for both children and adults.

Since brick walls are very common in Southbridge's architecture, painted murals representing the town's history will be a major attraction for visitors. This idea could be accomplished by incorporating the local artist skills and the town resources.



Ancillary Assets: Hotel and Conference Center

The Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center is the renovated American Optical facility. This large facility provides a fitness center, ball room, restaurant, auditorium, and 203 guest rooms.



Although this center offers quality service with the new millennium technology, which can accommodate large business reunions, the facility remains under-utilized. Through an incentive that focuses on advertisement of the center's features the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center could become a main attraction.

Action Steps: Business Improvement District

A sustainable alternative to increase Southbridge's economy and local businesses would be the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) A BID is a public-private partnership in which businesses of a designated area pay an additional tax in order to fund improvements to their district. Through a petition approved by the legislative governing body of the district a BID can be established. The additional taxes collected by the BIDs are used for maintenance of streets, sidewalks, parks, and open areas. The money can also be used for additional marketing, security, and other developmental projects.

The petition for a BID must contain the following:

- Signatures of the owners within the district.
- A site map outlining the boundaries of the proposed B.I.D.
- The proposed improvement plan.
- Identification and location of the management group.

Additionally a BID must have a Board of Directors with members elected by the BID property owners.

For further information on developing a BID contact the Division of Community Services, and the Department of Housing and Community Development. Supplemental information can be found in Massachusetts guide for developing a BID in the following website: <http://www.mass.gov>

Action Steps: Eco-Industrial Park

As mentioned earlier an effort within the community in collaboration with the local businesses, could improve Southbridge's sustainability. Through an Eco-Industrial Park (EIP) which is a group of businesses that cooperate with each other, the community could reduce waste, pollution, and improve efficiency.

Some recommendations and criteria to establish an Eco-Industrial Park are:

1. Location

- Close proximity to industries
- Easy access to transportation routes

2. Members

- Companies with potential symbiotic relationships to others
- Determine technical and economic feasibility for companies

3. Development

- Improve economic and environmental opportunities

The Casella recycling center could help the establishment of Eco- Industrial Parks by selling recycled plastics to local companies. This will help companies to cut down on material cost and waste.

For further information on establishing an EIP review the EIP handbook such as the one developed by the Earnest Lowe group for Asian developing countries.

Action Steps: Renewable Energy

Another way to improve sustainability in Southbridge could be through the use of renewable energy.



Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources. Currently we are dependent on fossil fuels, a limited resource. Although with fossil fuels dwindling, renewable energy is becoming a priority. Some examples of renewable energy implementations are: biofuels, geothermal, water power, solar energy, and wind power.



Action Steps: Renewable Energy (Cont'd)

Some recommendations in order to involve the community of Southbridge in the use of renewable energy are:

- Identify renewable energy development areas
- Integrate solar panels into houses roofs
- Establish wind farms in windy open space areas
- Use biofuels for cooking and space heating home
- Establish biodiesel retail locations
- Investigate zoning ordinances

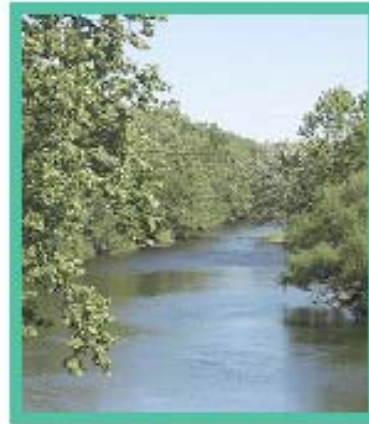
Southbridge can strongly benefit from the use of biofuels. Biofuels are materials obtained from dead biological materials. These materials can be solid, liquid or gaseous. Nowadays biofuels are a green alternative in order to produce energy and transportation fuels.



Action Steps: Environmental Recreational Activities

Southbridge's environment offers various opportunities for new recreational activities.

The Quinebaug River offers the community activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing where an area designated for parking should be available.



Quinebaug River Southbridge, MA



Lyman Pond

Local ponds and other water bodies could be promoted as places for fishing and swimming where if regulations are met boat launches could be brought. Additionally snack shacks can be established near these areas. This incentive will open new job opportunities for the community.

The open spaces and hiking trails could be used as part of designated camp grounds where fairs and other local events could be held as long as the area is kept clear of litter.



Westville Dam

Action Steps: Green Buildings

Green buildings are designed by using natural resources with the purpose of protecting the community's health and environment. With the implementation of green building technologies, the community of Southbridge will save money in energy, water, and building operation costs.



Memorial Hall Building

Southbridge has started the implementation of green building technologies through the renovation of the Memorial Hall. The Memorial Hall will be Southbridge's first green building and will offer commercial units, residential housing, and office space.

Community motivation and collaboration is required in order to continue the development of sustainable projects and new businesses. Green building technologies should be Southbridge's basis when it comes to building designs, renovations, and constructions.

Action Steps: Slow Food

The Slow Food movement consists of serving food that is good, clean and fair. Good food that is made from healthy plants and animals, clean food grown by healthy and organic means which helps the eco-system and fair food which can be acquire by anyone regardless of their economic status. This movement was started in the late 1980's by Carlo Petrini in Bra, Italy.



The Southbridge's residents can integrate the Slow Food ideas into restaurants and their daily lives by:

- Obtaining organic food from local farms
- Encouraging the community to eat seasonal food
- Establishing trade networks with local farms
- Creating groups that share and discuss the Slow Food principles

Action Steps: Education and Transportation

The following aspects should be taken into consideration in order to complete the Sustainable Southbridge Initiative.



Education:

1. Promote public education
2. Promote educational excellence
3. Provide seminars (such as job finding or entrepreneurship)
4. Educate the community about regional connections



Transportation Management:

1. Promote bicycle use
 - Create bicycle trails, lanes
 - Provide bicycle racks
2. Improve parking
3. Improve downtown traffic light situation to maximize safety and traffic flow
4. Make sidewalks and crosswalks more pedestrian friendly
5. Incorporate selective vehicle control
6. Provide more public transportation

Action Steps: Building Design, Hotel and Arts

Building Design:

1. Reuse old buildings
2. Create low impact developments
3. Develop storm-water management and water conservation methods
4. Incorporate green building design and energy efficiency methods
 - Green roofs
 - Geothermal heating



Hotel and Conference Center:

1. Promote the hotel and conference center
 - Hold Seminars
 - Hold Government Meetings



Arts:

1. Expand artistic education
2. Maintain and create art venues (galleries, theaters, etc.)
3. Provide affordable living and work space for artists
4. Use art to improve the appearance of the town



Painting by John Ferrara

Action Steps: Downtown, Community and Diversity

Downtown Business Promotion:

1. Make a brochure with local businesses that can be distributed to increase outside interest
2. Make the downtown area more aesthetically pleasing
 - Custom trash barrels
 - Banners on lamp posts
 - Murals on brick faced buildings
3. Advertise the uniqueness of your business



Equal Opportunity:

1. Adequate health care for all
2. Living-wage jobs with a variety of incomes
3. Provide a range of affordable housing opportunities
4. Create/maintain shelters to minimize homelessness

Diversity:

1. Promote festivals and parades among the different ethnic groups
2. Establish more ethnic based restaurants to bring in outside customers



References

Images

Google Earth

www.dickwhitney.net

www.mediabistro.com

www.deutschetelekom.com

dianeandersonforhouse.com

www.ci.santa-paula.ca.us

www.silverstarcn.com

www.greenunion.co.uk

coolgreenfrog.net

www.hbacleveland.com

www.spacegrant.nau.edu

www.martharoseconstruction.com

www.hydertools.com

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dexter-Russell

www.rcswd.com

www.12crane.com

www.gatewayplayers.org

www.artandsoulstudio.org

www.wardell-armstrong.com

www.freewebs.com

Information

www.mass.gov

www.smartgrowth.org

www.slowfood.com

www.greenbuilding.com

www.northamptonma.gov