

- Southbridge Airport Industrial Park
- American Optical / Southbridge Business Center
- Globe Village/Mill Street/ Route 131 West Corridor
- Downtown Southbridge
- Hamilton Street/Crane Street
- Route 169 Business Corridor
- Route 198 Industrial/Commercial Zones

3. 21 Targeted Industrial Buildings ( Appendix IV)

Existing industrial buildings with available space for lease can respond quickly to existing and new companies wishing to grow in Southbridge. A detailed inventory of these buildings is provided as an appendix. It will be important to periodically update this list for marketing purposes and business recruitment.

4. Targeted Downtown Vacant Space/Existing Inventory ( Appendix V)

Similarly, downtown vacant space provides opportunities for downtown Southbridge to grow without the need for new construction. This inventory provided as an appendix can be used by public officials and private parties to augment downtown economic development programs directed to Downtown Southbridge.

5. Targeted Vacant Land ( Appendix VI)

A vacant land inventory provided as an appendix can be used by public officials and private developers searching for cleared land. These sites by land use classification, location and owner include;

Industrial

Moon Street / Worcester Street	United Lens
Guelphwood / Evergreen Streets	Southbridge Sheet Metal
Evergreen Streets	Southbridge Sheet Metal
East Main Street	Southbridge Associates
Hartwell Street	Hyde Manufacturing Co.
Marsh Ave.	Hyde Manufacturing Co.
Elm Street	J. I. Morris
Ashland Avenue	Rita Brown

Commercial

Guelphwood Road	Guelphwood Road Realty
Guelphwood Road	Robert Cotton
Pearl Street	Alex Kamizirides
East Main Street	Fileno Realty Trust

Residential

Charlton Street	Lee Lyman	continuing care retirement community (CCRC)
Worcester Street	United Lens	rezoning to industrial to allow for expansion
Guelphwood Rd.	Adrian Gauvin	CCRC and rezoning for industrial development

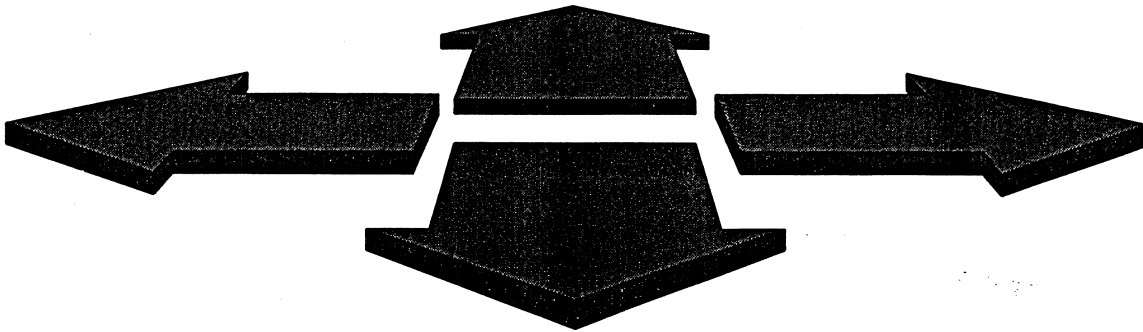
6. Hazardous Waste (21E) Sites

The Town of Southbridge in knowing where the 21E sites exist should consider membership into the Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA) to assist in the clean up of contaminated parcels. These sites due to their location within ETA areas, within downtown and along business corridors that have supportive utilities offer great potential for economic activity. As a first step, it is recommended that the following twenty-one (21) sites be targeted for clean up.

Brown Ground / 21E Sites

<u>Parcel</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contaminant</u>
Energy Retailers/Sunoco	9 Main Street	Petroleum
Former food store	39 Main Street	Benzene, toluene
Mass. Electric	176 Main Street	xylem
Shawmut Bank	249 Main Street	Petroleum
Main St. Shell	904 Main Street	Petroleum
Shell gas station	135 East Main Street	Petroleum
MD Motors	401 East Main Street	Petroleum
McKinstry Oil	Foster Street	Diesel fuel
McKinstry Oil	6 Dupaul Street	Petroleum
Not stated	20 Dupaul Street	Fuel Oil
Floods Auto & Tire	93 Hamilton Street	Petroleum
Southbridge Livery	121 Hamilton Street	Gas, fuel oil
American Optical	10 Cabot Drive	#6 fuel oil
American Optical	14 Mechanic Street	Petroleum
Town of Southbridge	41 Elm Street	Petroleum
Southbridge Tire Co.	136 Central Street	Petroleum
XTRA Mart	114 Worcester Road	Petroleum
Texaco Station	176 Worcester Road	Petroleum
Not stated	146 Ashland Avenue	Petroleum
Not stated	34 Eastford Road	Hydraulic fluid
JP Manufacturing	13 Lovely Street	Hydraulic fluid

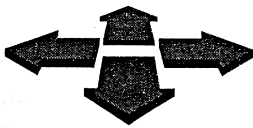
### **III. Recommended Economic Development Initiatives**



The following individual goals stand as a programmatic guidepost for implementation of an economic development action plan and for recommending local initiatives.

Downtown As A Tourist Center  
Continue Dialogue On Economic Development  
Pursue Grants For Library  
Private Sector Take A Larger Role  
Mapping For Undeveloped Land  
Utilize Community Organizations  
Activate The Latino Community  
Think Positive / Long Range  
Business Programs In Education  
Broaden Educational Base  
Lower Tax Rate For Business

Remove Blight Along Rte.131  
Tri-State Access Improvements  
Federal Highway Access  
Greenway Plan - Westville  
Victorian Theme To Main Street  
Build Upon DOD And CAFA  
Branch Office Of Local College  
Festivals / Events  
Chamber Of Commerce  
Located In Downtown



#### **GOAL A: A New Business Environment for Southbridge**

Create a more favorable business environment and climate in Southbridge. Following the lead of State government, develop a local economic development atmosphere that; 1.) accepts positive change and encourages action, 2.) streamlines the development process, 3.) intensifies the marketing of Southbridge and its assets and 5.) establishes strong public private / partnerships, locally and regionally and statewide.

For on-going initiatives in the Town of Southbridge, the consultants recommend strong business support for;

Defense Business Management University (DBMU)

- a. The Town should work with the American Optical Company and Franklin Realty Advisors to establish mechanisms to increase the prospects for local residents to be hired for the various building trades jobs which will be come available. An environment of cooperation must be

established by the Town and a working relationship relative to training and employment is critical. Furthermore, the Town has an important participatory role in the development of DBMU and needs to provide technical and financial assistance to the project. The Town's interest in securing as many construction trades jobs for Southbridge's low and moderate income residents needs to be expressed forcefully in all negotiations regarding the implementation of this important project.

***A short-term initiative.***

b. The Town should work with the selected education vendor for DBMU to expand educational activities available to area residents, especially female head of households. For example, the University of Massachusetts is being considered for providing educational services to DBMU. UMass is also a participant in the Center for Advanced Fiberoptics Applications (CAFA) which will be located on property adjacent to DBMU in the AO complex. If UMass were to be involved in both these facilities, there would be a strong rationale for the Town to encourage UMass to have a more general satellite campus of UMass in Southbridge. Such satellite campus could be oriented to financial, business and technology as an outgrowth of UMass's other activities in Town and, as a consequence, could significantly expand vocational education opportunities targeted to the Hispanic population in the Southbridge area and make it a center for such activities. ***A continuing initiative.***

c. Already part of the overall plan for DBMU, the AO facilities are proposed to be used as a conference center setting for parties other than DOD when DOD training is not scheduled. To date, Southbridge has not gained significant benefits from the tourism business which has focused on surrounding areas of Sturbridge, Brimfield and Putnam, Connecticut. Given the Tri-Community Area Chamber of Commerce's travel and tourism component, it will be important for the Chamber and the Worcester County Convention and Visitor's Bureau to start involving Southbridge as part of the area tourism industry and assist the Town and DBMU in securing conference venues compatible with the schedule and facilities Southbridge has to offer. These service jobs will be ideally suited for Southbridge's low and moderate income population.

***A continuing initiative.***

2. Center for Advanced Fiberoptics Applications (CAFA)

a. The Town must assist CAFA in securing political support for funding and legislative initiatives, as the Town has already. The Central Massachusetts Legislative Caucus is an excellent vehicle for this initiative. For example, CAFA is currently promoting the passage of Senate (MA) Bill #S-2033, which would provide incentives to advance manufacturing and scientific and technological research. CAFA believes this bill would benefit the Southbridge based fiberoptics industry. Furthermore, CAFA is seeking state financing through state bond issues. The Town can use its political resources to encourage support of initiatives where CAFA and Town interests are the same. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

b. CAFA is has its own space in Building 2L at the AO/Southbridge Business Center. Future plans include expansion within Building 2L for CAFA operations as well as for companies which will be created, based on CAFA technology. The Town must assist this expansion potential by identifying Building 2L as a certified project in an Economic Opportunity Area. By doing so, it provides CAFA the capability to more effectively finance expansion and the potential to have financial incentives passed on to new companies which will be created by CAFA or participating entities. In addition to local tax incentives which can reduce annual occupancy costs, state financing programs and various tax incentive programs are available. Accordingly, Southbridge can create the incentive to keep CAFA-initiated companies in Southbridge rather than having

them locate in suburban locations, as have many of the fiberoptics companies to date. **A short-term initiative.**

3. Southbridge Airport Industrial Park

a. The Southbridge Airport Industrial Park will attract companies from existing old mill buildings in Southbridge. The owners of these existing buildings will be vocally critical of the Town building facilities to compete with private owners. This is a matter of philosophy and the perception of the building owners is accurate. Pragmatically, however, change is constant and change in this regard is good. The Town's principal purpose in the Southbridge Airport Industrial Park is to expand business and job opportunities to the benefit of low and moderate income persons. With companies currently leaving the old mill buildings in Southbridge for more modern buildings in the suburbs, Southbridge cannot sit idly aside and allow this to occur. It must provide for modern manufacturing and industrial facilities if the Town is to maintain its economic base. It is not so much that Southbridge is trying to compete with the older mill buildings in Town; it is more that the Town of Southbridge will be competing with suburban properties that will attract Southbridge manufacturers if the Southbridge Airport Industrial Park was not to be built. **A continuing initiative.**

b. Economic growth is more likely to occur in companies already in the area than from companies moving into the area. Economic development specialists will predict, with documentation, that 90% of an area's economic growth will be from the expansion of existing companies or from new companies created by local people. Accordingly, efforts to market the Southbridge Airport Industrial Park should focus on companies in south central Massachusetts and northern Connecticut. These companies will tend to look for new facilities in their own geographic area when contemplating a move, mostly because of where the work-force lives. In fact, national studies have found that the single-most influencing factor in determining where a company will locate is the proximity to the residence of the company's top official(s). Southbridge, and its neighboring communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut, have an extraordinary residential environment. This fact should not be forgotten in efforts to promote the Southbridge Airport Industrial Park and any other economic development initiative of the Town and business community. **A continuing initiative.**

c. Currently, the most direct access to the airport and adjacent properties is via Pleasant Street. The town, in planning for the industrial park, is proposing to build an access road from Worcester Street, Route 169, near the Charlton Tower line. There have been repeated efforts to better connect the town with Route 20 near its intersection with Route 49. With the proposed development of the industrial park at the airport, a stronger case exists for such efforts to be resumed. Physically, the extension of Pleasant Street from the airport to Routes 20/149 does not appear to present severe difficulties. However, doing so would require the cooperation of the Town of Charlton, the State and various organizations and agencies. Currently, re-paving of the existing section of Route 49 between Route 20 and Route 9 has been approved. Resumption of discussions of a Route 49 extension to Southbridge seems timely. However, the process of building a new road such as this is lengthy. If approved, the town should not expect such a road to be completed until early in the 21st Century. **A continuing initiative.**



**GOAL B: Aggressive Economic Development Policies and Programs**

Retain existing commercial business in Southbridge and aggressively attract and pursue new development. Promote economic development in target areas of Southbridge. Create a consensus for positive economic change.

1. Support for Existing Business

a. Concerns Identified in Manufacturing Survey.

As previously noted, a survey was mailed to Southbridge manufacturers. Of the 52 surveys which reached the desired address, 24 responses were received by mail, for a response ratio of more than 46%. In October, a follow-up telephone survey received 12 additional responses for a total response of 36, or 70%. 21 own their manufacturing facility and 15 rent. Six who own their facility identified excess space in the buildings and would wish to lease to others. A total of 500,000 sq.ft. was identified as available for lease, including AO responding that 350,000 sq.ft. is available. When asked if their company will need more space soon, 13 said Yes. Five did not state floor area; of the remaining six, an aggregate floor area need of over 50,000 sq.ft. was identified. 3,385 employees were identified at responding companies currently. When asked how many employees they would project for their companies 24 months from now, growth to 3,603 employees was stated.

When asked if there were companies they would like to have located in Southbridge which are compatible with the business and which could improve business by having them nearby, responses included glass-making, optical measurements, materials laboratories, information technology, computer installation management, metal fabrication, heat treating services, steel suppliers, industrial supply services, more machine shops, OEM capital equipment, molding & extrusion, turnkey PET recycling companies, miniature optical component manufacturers, finish painting companies and plating companies. Two responses stated that they wanted stable companies to improve the Town's economy. A majority of responding companies requested information from the Town regarding public sector assistance programs available to manufacturers.

An analysis of the survey would suggest the following:

(1). Southbridge manufacturers are not apathetic. A 70% response to a survey is exceedingly high. Given the level of interest, the Town may wish to host a briefing of manufacturers once or twice a year to apprise them of municipal activities and to obtain input or a sense of economic issues from them. A continuing dialogue is important. **A continuing initiative.**

(2). Space is available and there are manufacturers identified who are would like to accommodate other company expansion or new companies. Already identified are six companies with a future need for over 50,000 sq.ft. A simple correlation of those respondents who have space with those who need it would be an excellent service to the community by Town administration. Companies seeking additional space in future months include:

- o Model-Tech Inc.
- o United Lens Company
- o APCO Machine Company
- o Degreasing Devices Company
- o JP Manufacturing, Inc.
- o ICM, Inc.
- o Henke Sass Wolf of America
- o D&D Welding & Salvage

- o Bermer Tool & Die (Benson Polymer)
- o Miller & Turner Machining
- o Noress Corp./New England Subcontractors
- o Laboratory Optical

***A short-term initiative.***

(3). Manufacturers are planning for growth. Respondents identify a need to fill 218 jobs in the next two years. This is a growth expectation of about 6.5%. This should be considered greater than recent, county-wide trends showing a resurgence in manufacturing since late 1993. Representatives of the MacKinnon Center should consider contacting the companies identified for growth in order to increase the likelihood that the jobs might go to Southbridge residents. Companies identifying employee growth over the next 24 months are:

- o Southbridge Sheet Metal (moving to Sturbridge)
- o Saga Corp. (Division of A&M Tool)
- o Stanco Tool & Die Company
- o Schott Fiber Optics Inc.
- o Designs Unlimited, Inc.
- o Myriad Engineering Company
- o Henke Sass Wolf of America
- o JP Manufacturing, Inc.
- o APCO Machine Company
- o United Lens Company
- o Fiber Tech, Inc.
- o Hyde Manufacturing Company
- o INCOM, Inc.
- o Model-Tech Inc.
- o Bermer Tool & Die (Benson Polymer)
- o Miller & Turner Machining
- o Noress Corp./New England Subcontractors
- o Laboratory Optical
- o Boniface Tool & Die
- o Dani & Soldani
- o LaserLite
- o Lavalley Machining

***A short-term initiative.***

(4). Over half of those responding to the question about more information said they would want to hear more. This is excellent and should not be overlooked. Furthermore, eight respondents would like a representative of the Town to call on them. Again, this is an excellent opportunity for the Town to forge a better relationship with its manufacturers. Given recent news about Southbridge manufacturers moving to suburban locations, it is a reason for the Town to develop a better dialogue with manufacturers in order to prevent any future exodus. ***A short-term initiative.***

(5). Southbridge manufacturers have listed target companies which could be sought out for relocation into Southbridge or the surrounding area. It could be assumed that these types of companies would already have some potential customers in Southbridge. Furthermore, if they would improve the business climate for existing companies, there would be a double economic benefit. ***a continuing initiative***

b. Mechanisms to Respond & Support Existing Business.

Manufacturers everywhere demand little from their local governments. In many cases, they tend to be independent people who would prefer little meddling from outside sources, particularly government. In the past few decades, government involvement in their business has typically been negative for them - OSHA requirements, DEP 21E and air quality regulations, ADA handicap access requirements and the inevitable burden of taxes.

However, Southbridge has seen many companies moving out of Town over the past few decades and, with two recent announcements of company moves elsewhere, the trend is continuing. If Southbridge desires to stop the exodus, it must continue to develop a positive relationship with its manufacturers. The timing is good and the actions required by the Town are relatively simple.

(1). 23 manufacturers responding to the Town survey have requested additional information. Mailing a package of various local, state and federal programs to these manufacturers is a relatively simple action, but it identifies the Town's responsiveness. The Town's Community Development Director recently attended a Massachusetts Municipal Association session on economic development. Many of the materials distributed at that session would be suitable to be submitted to Southbridge manufacturers. It should be augmented with a summary document prepared by the Town identifying the local officials and agencies through which the businesses can take advantage of the respective programs. ***A short-term initiative.***

(2). The Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce has a Economic Development Committee which is currently chaired by Mr. Paul Kolesnikovas of Charlton and on which the Town's Community Development Director is a member. Mr. Robert Chartier, Executive Director of the Tri-Community Chamber of Commerce, states that the Committee is "semi-active" and its current focus is the preparation of a Tri-Community brochure to be used to attract business and industry to the area. Town participation on this Committee should be continued; however, it is recommended that the Town lobby for at least as much effort directed toward improving conditions for existing business and industry as toward trying to attract new industry into the area. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

(3). The Town Council's Planning and Development Committee and Town administration should hold an annual forum for business owners in order that the Town have an opportunity to review its plans for the future and to better understand the state of the local economy as well as factors impacting Southbridge business which the Town might be able to improve. Sometimes the mere opportunity to have a dialogue will uncover issues which could easily be addressed and which could make the difference between a company staying or leaving. The Town Council and Administration recently held such a forum with the participation of Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) officials. Attendance by the business community was excellent. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

## 2. Economic Opportunity Areas

Efforts should be placed on reuse of vacant industrial properties town-wide. In addition to the incentives which Bermer Tool will receive, companies which agree to relocate to and operate within vacant buildings in the Ashland Ave. EOA area or other EOA's should be eligible to receive state tax incentives for the reuse of vacant buildings. The combination of incentives can be effectively marketed to companies. Again, a detailed inventory of vacant industrial property is found in appendix IV. ***A continuing initiative.***

Given its location in proximity to the Center for Advanced Fiber optics Applications (CAFA), the Ashland Avenue/Sandersdale Economic Opportunity Area should be considered as an expansion

area for fiberoptics manufacturing. The presence of this important technology innovation center coupled with the opportunities for EOA financial incentives provides Southbridge the opportunity to attract back the industry given birth in Town at the AO complex. **A continuing initiative**

*Potential New Economic Opportunity Areas (EOA) sites*

- Southbridge Airport Industrial Park
- American Optical / Southbridge Business Center
- Globe Village/Mill Street/ Route 131 West Corridor
- Downtown Southbridge
- Hamilton Street/Crane Street
- Route 169 Business Corridor
- Route 198 Industrial/Business Corridor

The top five (5) recommended Economic Opportunity Areas (EOA) and specific policies, programs and projects which the Town should identify as priorities, include:

(1). Ashland Avenue Industrial area and the Route 131 corridor in Sandersdale section of Town (approved by Town Council and Commonwealth)

- Land Development - Industrial zoned areas adjacent to sewage treatment facilities and along Dresser Hill Road and outer Ashland Avenue. - **A continuing initiative.**
- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - Bermer Tool expansion (approved) - **A short-term initiative.**
- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - Applied Fiberoptics building on Rte. 131 - **A short-term initiative.**

(2). Airport and the adjacent industrial park

Land Development - complete the infrastructure improvements and market sites to prospective users. - **A short-term and continuing initiative.**

(3). American Optical/Southbridge Business Center

- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - CAFA (see section on CAFA) - **A short-term and continuing initiative.**
- Land Development - development parcels at rear of site not impacted by steep slopes and exposed bedrock - **A continuing initiative.**

(4). Downtown Southbridge

- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - Open financial incentives to all property owners willing to participate in downtown improvement program (see discussion regarding a downtown Victorian theme) - **A short-term and continuing initiative.**
- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - The current Southbridge Police Station which will become surplus when the new station is complete. The Town can identify the building as a Certified Project as part of a downtown EOA in order to provide for financial incentives for a prospective purchaser. Discussions have been held with the Town Manager regarding the prospect of establishing a Southern Worcester County Registry of Deeds in the building. If such were to occur with the approval of County and State officials, it would act as an incentive for law offices to locate in downtown Southbridge- **A short-term and continuing initiative.**

(5). The Globe Village/Mill Street area adjacent to Route 131

- Building Redevelopment/Expansion - building to be vacated by Southbridge Sheet Metal - **A short-term initiative.**
- Land Development - the Hamilton Mill property - **A short-term and continuing initiative.**

Additional considerations as Economic Opportunity Areas are the industrial areas off Hamilton Street/Crane Street and the Route 169 corridor from Charlton to Sandersdale section of Town. Another potential site is the Route 198 corridor south of Town in commercial/industrial zones. The state's ETA/EOA/Certified Project program provides for local and state financial incentives for economic development. By certifying a project, a municipality implicitly agrees to provide one of two forms of property tax relief. Accordingly, it is important for the Town to be judicious in the manner in which it identifies Economic Opportunity Areas. **A continuing initiative.**

*Existing Buildings, Space and Land*

Within the suggested EOA areas of Southbridge and for any new EOAs, the Town should work towards utilizing its untapped inventory of vacant buildings and land, specifically the 21 targeted industrial buildings, targeted vacant space in Downtown, targeted vacant land ( industrial, commercial and residential) and the inventory of 21E sites. **A short-term and continuing initiative.**

3. Three (3) Case Development Projects ( Appendix VII )

In order to highlight the major types of development initiatives identified herein, three case development studies were selected. One addresses the redevelopment of a vacant downtown building. The second proposes the redevelopment of an under-used, previously developed property. The third addresses new development on industrially zoned vacant land. These 3 cases with development and operational budgets are found in Appendix VII.



**GOAL C: Regulatory Changes, Public Improvements  
and Grantsmanship**

1. Capital Improvement Programs and Grants

Promote development by upgrading public facilities and by creating new programs to support land development and building expansion. Pursue State resources to fund capital improvements and to fund employment and training programs.

2. New Emphasis - Site Plan/ Define New Standards for Review

The Local Partnership should recommend an amendment to the Southbridge Zoning By-Law to include a formalized site plan review process. This action would help insure quality development projects through clear and concise project submittals, while allowing the Town to better understand proposals.

3. New Organization to Promote/Lead Economic Development

Beyond changes to the By-Law and the Zoning Map, what other policy modifications / regulatory changes can Southbridge do to make it easier to do business in Southbridge? The development process could benefit from a new development organization to attract and promote growth. A development cabinet would be responsive to fluid business requests and market demands. The community should consider the following regulatory and organizational changes.

*New Organizations to Promote / Lead Economic Development*

- A Town of Southbridge Development Committee/Cabinet to include:  
Town Manager  
Building Inspector  
DPW Director  
Community Development Director  
Town Assessor
- Create New Local Public / Private Partnerships to Support New Business  
Tri-community Chamber of Commerce  
Downtown Merchants  
Southbridge Manufacturers
- Establish A New Southbridge CDC
  - Re-activate and empower the Southbridge Redevelopment Authority, create new "action/ implementation agency for the Town. For example : revive the Southbridge **Redevelopment Authority**, create a new **121A Corporations**, a new **Economic Development and/or Industrial Development Corporations**, re-focus and empower the existing **Community Development Department**, form a **Industrial Development Finance Corporations** or **Local Development Corporation**, establish a new **Private Non-Profit Economic Development Organization** to promote business growth, revive the Town's relationship with the **Chamber of Commerce** and create a new **Community Development Corporation**
- 
- Continue the Open Dialogue and Connection with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD)
- Work closely with the Central Mass. Legislative Caucus
- Streamline the Local Permitting Process/Remove Barriers to Development
- Amend Zoning By-Law and Map
- Make Site Plan Review the basis for development in Southbridge, not special permits
- Publish a Development Guide for the Town of Southbridge



**GOAL D: The Local Pride of Southbridge/Town Identity**

Build upon the strong sense of community that makes Southbridge unique. Retain the existing physical setting of Southbridge, while removing blighting influences, especially in the Central Core

1. Downtown Theme

As a product of past activities of the Town and the business community, Downtown Southbridge is attractive and generally vibrant. The vacant ground floor areas happen to be the most visible and, since the occupancy survey was completed during the Summer of 1995, some of the vacant areas have been filled. It is the consultant team's opinion that people in Southbridge are overly critical of their downtown and that the criticism is misplaced.

This does not mean that improvements cannot make it better. Downtown Southbridge will not again become the region's retail center in the foreseeable future. However, it plays an important role as a center for finance, professional services, government and community facilities. It has the potential for playing a stronger role in the area's tourism economy when the Defense Business Management University is complete and as part of a regional antique business economy which has grown significantly in areas surrounding Southbridge over the past few decades. The consultant team has discussed the prospects of a regional approach to maximizing the potential of the area becoming a major center for tourism-oriented antiques activity which could significantly enhance the economy of the downtown area.

Consistent with such a plan is one of the major priorities identified by community leaders during a brainstorming session in late September 1995. There was a consensus among the leaders that downtown Southbridge is attractive and has some exceedingly beautiful buildings. Members agreed that a "Victorian Theme" for downtown Southbridge would be a desirable and successful initiative and that it would help reverse negative community perceptions about the downtown area. It was agreed that there would be targeted public moneys in improvements consistent with the theme, but that there would need to be the participation by the private sector in implementing the plan. Components of the Victorian downtown could be street lighting systems, street signage, benches, trash receptacles, flower planters and other public improvements consistent with Victorian design. The private sector would be responsible for private property improvements consistent with the theme, building signage, flower boxes and other elements. It is recommended that a design consultant be retained, using public and private funding sources to develop an achievable design plan for the Victorian downtown theme. Identification of the downtown as an EOA could provide financial incentives for private property owners to accent the Victorian theme in building improvements. - **A short-term initiative.**

2. Festive Events

The Town of Southbridge has had excellent citizen response to festivals, concerts and other events which bring people together for fun and entertainment. Either downtown or at the new municipal (AO) park, there has been a strong community input that these events continue and expand. This was emphasized at the brainstorming session for community leaders held in late September 1995. It is therefore recommended that an incremental expansion of festive events occur from year to year with the end goal being a full program of annual community events which will not only bring people into Southbridge but also instill improved community pride and spirit. The Town should be a participant in this activity through its Recreation officials; however, a private/public partnership must be forged using the various business and community organizations already existing in Southbridge. The Quinebaug Valley Council for the Arts and Humanities should play a role, but should not be the sole participant. There has to be a broader community effort, including the Latino community, if the festive events programs are to be successful and are to be attractive to all community populations. **A short-term and continuing initiative.**

3. Signage

The recommended design concept for signage downtown is discussed above as part of the downtown Victorian theme. Functionally, however, improvements in signage are needed. A number of people, including members of the Planning Board, have identified parking as a problem in downtown Southbridge. It is the consultant's opinion that the quantity and availability of parking downtown is not a problem. Identification of parking, however, could be better. The Town did an excellent job in providing parking to the rear of Main Street properties a decade ago. These areas are very convenient, attractive and well-designed. Signage directing people to parking exists, but it could be more visible.

A downtown signage program is recommended which would be consistent with the design theme recommended but also would provide better directions for people entering the downtown. In addition to directing people to parking, the signage program would also direct people to destination facilities, such as municipal facilities, state services, community organizations, recreation activities and major private destinations such as CAFA/DOD, etc. If well designed, the signage program will identify Southbridge as a vibrant and diverse community of activity and movement. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

Southbridge is invisible to the interstate highway user. There is no exit on the Massachusetts Turnpike identified for Southbridge. This is not only a problem for people who actually have Southbridge as a destination; it is also a problem in how outsiders and Town residents perceive the community. Given that Southbridge is a regional center, the signage on the Massachusetts Turnpike should be changed immediately to include Southbridge in signage for Exit 9. ***A short-term initiative.***

#### **4. Gateway Improvements**

There are a variety of entrances into the Town; however, the most important one is Route 131 coming into Southbridge from the west. It is the most important in that it is currently the most direct numbered route to and from the interstate highway system (I-90 and I-84). The route through Sturbridge is rather attractive since it passes through the village green of Sturbridge and vibrant strip commercial areas along Route 131. From the Southbridge Town line to approximately Marcy Street, there is considerable commercial and residential blight. After Marcy Street, downtown Southbridge is a very attractive visual statement. Unfortunately, a first impression of blight could be identified with Southbridge in the viewer's mind by the time the downtown area is reached. The Hamilton Mill site along this route is recommended for revitalization as a commercial redevelopment along with river-way recreational improvements. The Town needs to target beautification, redevelopment and renovation programs along this route as the principal gateway to Southbridge. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

Another principal, but secondary, gateway is Route 169 entering Southbridge from the north. This route principally serves traffic between Southbridge and adjoining municipalities. It is predominantly rural up to the Town line and has mixed uses in Southbridge. The commercial uses are in good condition and many of the single-family residences are well kept. Near its intersection with Central Street, however, moderate blight is evident in some of the triple decker residential buildings and moderate blight in these buildings continues along Route 169 to the AO complex. These specific areas should be targeted by the Town for renovation activities, through active code enforcement and state/federal financial incentive programs. ***A short-term and continuing initiative.***

The third principal gateway to Southbridge is Route 131 from the east. A rural road in Dudley and Connecticut up to the Southbridge Town line, it is characterized by commercial development in Southbridge. The former Fair store is vacant but will soon be a new supermarket. Noted

elsewhere, vacant industrial buildings along Ashland Avenue need to be promoted for reuse. However, this gateway is generally vibrant and active. The new Southbridge Business Center (AO with DOD and CAFA) is very attractive, as is the entrance to downtown via Main Street.

Community leaders at the late September brainstorming session identified improvements to a new gateway - Mashapaug and South Street leading from I-84 and Route 15 from the west. This is addressed elsewhere in this report.



#### **GOAL E: The Planning Process**

Continue a local planning process with an eye towards regional cooperation and partnerships. Southbridge needs to become a planning partner with the CMRPC service region and the Commonwealth.

##### **1. Target Groups For Economic Development**

As part of the planning process, the Town should consider and shape local economic development policy, programs and projects towards a target group that was identified in the community profile. They are:

#### **Targeted Recipients of Town of Southbridge/107 Partnership Economic Development Activities**

- Employment, training and re-training for persons between the ages of 18 - 44 years;
- Job opportunities for persons 33.03 years of age;
- Targeted opportunities to households with children in Southbridge;
- Targeted job and training opportunities for female heads of households that in 1990 made up 322 families;
- Training and employment opportunities targeted to persons in poverty, which amounted to 2,020 Southbridge residents in 1990 and is no doubt greater in 1995;
- Targeted economic development activities that benefit low and moderate income persons that in 1990 comprised 3130 households within the community;
- New businesses who provide jobs that at a minimum seek to increase the Southbridge 1990 per capita income of \$12,924 and increase the median 1994 household income of \$27,834.

Based upon existing data and local trends, ComFacS and Cullinan Engineering Co. Inc. establish that the following demographic trends and findings must act as guide when formulating plans for Town of Southbridge economic development policy, programs and projects. These planning concepts include:

- To support local economic development, the Town Southbridge must remain a strong regional center for Southern Worcester County. A move towards establishing regional ties and alliances will benefit long term growth. The Town cannot do it alone;
- To see targeted economic growth, the Town of Southbridge must focus positive economic change towards female heads of households. Training and employment towards this group, most likely in the service ( local insurance) and health care industries (Harrington Hospital),

will be necessary to promote long term and community-wide economic growth. Education and job training from institutions such as the MacKinnon Center, Quinsigamond Community College and Southbridge High School must meet the needs of this group. Child care also becomes important to this target group. Southbridge must start early with effective and sustainable educational programs to train its work-force for the Year 2010;

- For larger community-wide/downtown planning and associated development strategies, Southbridge's minorities must not be excluded. Trends indicate that to see sustainable positive impacts, Latinos and other minorities need to be viewed as a target group for economic development activities. A "rainbow coalition" for economic development, one that makes all of Southbridge's diverse groups "stakeholders" in the planning process, should be created. The language barrier must be overcome to connect this group to training and jobs;
- Downtown and the central core of Southbridge should be the starting point and act as a springboard for economic growth. Blighting influences should be removed along the gateways leading to downtown ( Routes 131 and 169), while the existing physical structure of Downtown/Main Street should be preserved;
- Beyond downtown, Southbridge must help and support existing businesses. The firms that historically have helped shape the community ( Russell Harrington Co. Inc., J.I. Morris, Hyde Manufacturing Co., Bermer Tool and Die Co. ) are an intricate part of the vision and future of Southbridge. They need to play an active role in defining and pursuing the economic development vision. They must be part of new public/private partnerships initiatives fostered by the Town of Southbridge;
- To build upon its existing employment resources and to anticipate growth in the regional labor force, Southbridge must build upon it's manufacturing sector, while promoting it's service and retail sectors, especially in downtown. The community needs to help retain and offer incentives to major employers;
- The lack of public transportation makes it difficult for job seekers to access training and jobs. This deficiency needs correction either through greater participation in the Worcester Area Regional Transportation Authority (WRTA), inter / intra community Caravan Van Pool Programs sponsored by local businesses or other ride-sharing programs;

## **2. Local Economic Development Partnership - An Evaluation & Monitoring Plan; Economic Development Timetable**

To guide the vision of the local partnership, the Town of Southbridge needs a schedule and timeline to realize economic development activities. It makes the community accountable for attaining goals and programs. The monitoring plan sets a one (1) to ten (10) year window of opportunity for economic development activities. A timeline is applied to the five (5) established goals for economic development and suggested program actions/strategies. These goals are outlined in Appendix VIII The goals are:

- **GOAL A: A New Business Environment for Southbridge**
- **GOAL B: Aggressive Economic Development Policies and Programs**
- **GOAL C: Regulatory Changes, Public Improvements and Grantsmanship**
- **GOAL D: The Local Pride of Southbridge/Town Identity**
- **GOAL E: The Planning Process**

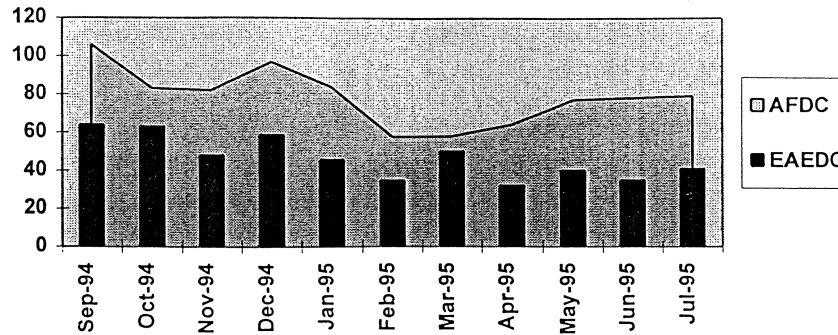
How does Southbridge fund this aggressive program, Appendix IX outlines existing funding sources to implement an economic development action plan

## **Appendices**

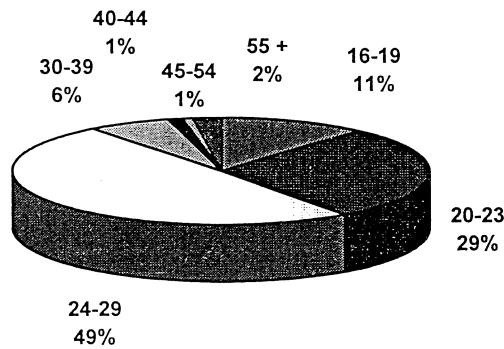
- I AFDC Survey of Clients
- II Town of Southbridge - List of Southbridge Manufacturers
- III Site Plan Review - Standards and Criteria
- IV Targeted Industrial Buildings
- V Downtown Space / Existing Inventory
- VI Vacant Land
- VII Town of Southbridge - Case Development
- VIII Southbridge Strategy Monitoring Plan
- IX Public Economic Development Funding Sources

## Appendix I Summary of AFDC Findings

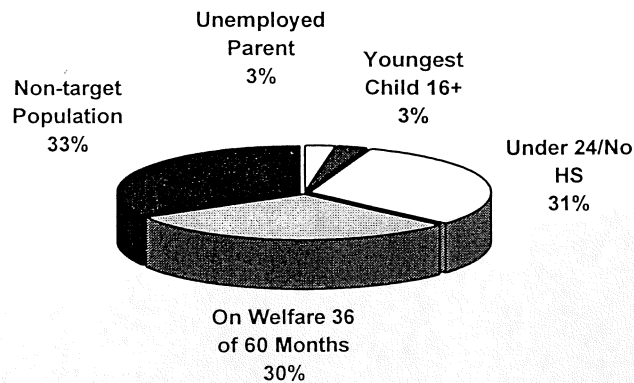
### AFDC Caseload Sept.1994 to July 1995



### AFDC Participation Age Distribution (Years of Age)



### AFDC Participation - Target Population



## **Appendix II**

### **Town of Southbridge**

#### **Local Manufacturers From 1994 Combined Directories**

ALSCO Industries, Inc.	100 Mechanic St.
American Micro-Optical Co.	East Main St.
American Optical Corp.	14 Mechanic Street
APCO Machine Co.	Route 131
Applied Fiber Optics Inc.	East Main Street
Atlas Welding Sheet Metal	79 Guelphwood St.
A&M Tool & Die Co.	64 Mill St., PO Box 400
A&W Metal Fabricators, Inc.	529 Ashland Ave.
Benson Polymer Tech.	96 Ashland Ave.
Bermer Tool & Die, Inc.	94 Ashland Ave.
Boniface Tool & Die Inc.	One North St.
Dani & Soldani, Inc	484 Worcester Street
Degreasing Devices Co.	105 Dresser St.
Economy Canvas Co.	372 Main St.
Hyde Manufacturing Co.	54 Eastford Road
ICM, Inc.	14 Curtis St.
Jl Morris Co.	394 Elm St.
Johnson Tool & Mfg. Co.	248 Worcester St.
Jolle Robert Co., Inc.	34 Durfee St.
JP Manufacturing, Inc.	13 Lovely St.
J&R Welding	116 Dudley river Rd.
Laboratory Optical Co.	64 Mill St.
L&M Machine Co.	817 Alpine Dr.
Metal Craft Machine Co.	31 Dupaul St.
Miller & Turner	One North St.
Model-Tech, Inc.	14 Mechanic St.
Myriad Engineering Co., Inc.	79 Golf St.
New England Subcontractor	14 Mechanic St.
Noress Corp.	100 Foster St.
Paul's Automotive Machine	30 Dupaul St.
Plasticom Co.	Ashland Ave.
Precision Products Div.	226 Elm St.
Randwal Instrument Co.	16 Park St.
Russell Harrington Cutlery	44 Green River St.
Saga Corp.	64 Mill St.
Schott Fiber Optics Inc.	122 Charlton St.
Scott Offset Printing Co.	5 Blanchard Court
Simonds, Inc.	248 Elm St.
Simsak Machine & Tool Co	28 Sandersdale Rd.
Southbridge Sheet Metal	76 Mill St.
Southbridge Steel Inc.	120 Dresser Hill Rd.
Spec-Electric Plating Corp.	100 Mechanic St.
Stanco Tool & Die Co.	23 Golf St.
T Tool	831 Main St.
The News	25 Elm St.
United Lens Co., Inc.	259 Worcester St.
Wachusett Cutter Co., Inc.	105 Dresser St.
Westwood Inc.	Mill St.
Wilden Machine Co.	100 Mechanic St.

## Appendix III

### Site Plan Review

### Administration and Standards

#### *A New Emphasis on Site Plan Review*

Application for site plan review shall be submitted in such form and numbers as required by the Planning Board's rules and regulations. Sufficient copies shall be filed with the Planning Board for distribution to the following departments, boards and commissions: Department of Health; Department of Public Works; Conservation Commission; Community Development Office; School Department; Fire Department; and any other departments, boards and commissions deemed appropriate by the Planning Board. Unless expressly excused in writing by the Planning Board, each application shall contain at least the following information:

- A. The applicant's name, address and interest in the subject property.
- B. The owner's name and address, if different than the applicant, and the owner's signed consent to the filing of the application.
- C. The street address and/or legal description of the property.
- D. The zoning classification and present use of the property.
- E. The proposed use or uses and a description of the proposed development, including as appropriate, descriptions of development, scheduling, operation upon completion and method of maintaining any designated open space.
- F. An Impact Statement analyzing how the proposed development impacts upon each of the standards for review provided herein, with particular reference to how the proposed development will impact upon the natural, built and operating systems of the Town including open space, housing, traffic and pedestrian movement, education, police and fire protection, water, sewer, roads, recreation and other similar amenities. (optional)
- G. A site plan drawn to a scale of not less than forty (40) feet to the inch, on one or more sheets, prepared by a registered engineer, illustrating the proposed development and use with appropriate title block information to identify location, applicant, owner and party responsible for preparing the plan and including the following:
  - (1) The boundary lines and dimensions of the subject property, existing subdivision lots, available utilities, easements, roadways, railroads, rail lines and public rights of way, crossing and adjacent to the subject property, a locus plan showing the site of the proposed development in relation to the immediate and general street network and such other features of the natural and/or built environment as are relevant to the review of the site plan and a summary of zoning classification and requirements.
  - (2) Any proposed regrading of the subject property and any significant natural, topographical or physical features of the property including, at least, watercourses, marshes, flood plain and wetlands, trees in excess of nine (9) inches in diameter, soil types and existing contours at two (2) feet in one hundred (100) feet.
  - (3) The location, size, use, attributes and arrangement, including height in stories and feet, floor area ratio, total floor area, total square feet of ground area coverage, number and size of dwelling units by number of bedrooms, exterior materials and elevations at appropriate scale, of proposed buildings and existing buildings which will remain, if any.
  - (4) Minimum yard dimensions and, where relevant, relation of yard dimensions to the height of any building or structure.
  - (5) Location, dimensions, number and construction materials of all vehicular and pedestrian circulation elements, including streets and roadways, driveways, entrances, curbs, curb cuts, parking spaces, loading spaces, access aisles, sidewalks, walkways and pathways.
  - (6) All existing and proposed surface and subsurface drainage facilities, including detention or retaining ponds. Drainage calculations with data on pre-development and post-development conditions to be provided.
  - (7) Location, size and arrangement of all signs and lighting.
  - (8) Proposed landscaping (noting how the existing vegetation is to be retained and used) including the type, location and quantity of all plant materials, location and height of fences or screen plantings and the type or kind of building materials or plantings to be used for fencing and screening.
  - (9) Location, designation and total area of all useable open space or common property and the extent to which it is to be improved.

- (10) Methods and locations of erosion and sedimentation control devices for controlling erosion and sedimentation during the construction process as well as after.
- (11) Such other and further information or documentation as the Planning Board may deem to be necessary and appropriate to a full and proper consideration and disposition of the particular application. As part of the rules and regulations the Planning Board shall identify, by development scale and lot characteristics, the type and form of such information or documentation.

Presently, the Building Inspector has no formal application process. These 11 items dictate what is necessary for all plans offered to the Town.

#### *Procedure*

The Planning Board shall examine the application for site plan review and all other pertinent information including that which is gathered in meeting(s) on the application and shall consider the recommendations and/or comments of Town departments, commissions and/or other agencies.

#### *Define New Standards For Review of Development Plans*

The following standards shall be used by the Planning Board in reviewing all applications for site plan review. These standards are intended to provide a frame of reference for the applicant in development of applications. These standards shall not be regarded as inflexible requirements. They are not intended to discourage creativity, invention or innovation. Applicants are encouraged to evaluate the extent to which the site plan, its immediate and general locus and the Town more generally can tolerate the development being proposed and adjust their proposals accordingly.

- A. Adequacy and arrangement of vehicular traffic access and circulation including intersections, road widths, pavement surfaces, dividers and traffic controls.
- B. Adequacy and arrangement of pedestrian traffic access and circulation, walkway structures, control of intersections with vehicular traffic and overall pedestrian convenience.
- C. Location, arrangement, appearance and sufficiency of off-street parking and loading.
- D. Location, arrangement, size, design and general site compatibility of buildings, lighting and signs.
- E. Adequacy of stormwater and drainage facilities.
- F. Adequacy of water supply and sewerage disposal facilities.
- G. Adequacy, type and arrangement of trees, shrubs and other landscaping constituting a visual and/or noise buffer between the applicant's land and adjoining lands, including the maximum retention of existing vegetation.
- H. In the case of an apartment complex or other multiple dwelling, the adequacy of useable common property or open space.
- I. Protection of adjacent or neighboring properties against noise, glare, unsightliness or other objectionable features.
- J. Adequacy of fire lanes and other emergency zones and the provisions of fire hydrants.
- K. Special attention to the adequacy of structures, roadways and landscaping in areas with susceptibility to ponding, flooding and/or erosion.
- L. Adequacy of erosion and sedimentation control measures to be utilized during and after construction.
- M. Conformance of the site plan with design requirements, together with all other applicable provisions of the By-Law.
- N. Conformance of the site design with the purposes and intent of the town of Southbridge Zoning By-Law.
- O. Conformance and compatibility of the site plan design with structures listed in the State Register of Historic Places.
- P. Adequacy of site safety and construction management plans.
- Q. Adequacy and impact on the regional transportation system.

These standards eliminate gray areas for developers.

#### *Clear Standards For Approval or Disapproval of Development Plans*

The Planning Board shall make a finding of approval, approval with conditions or disapproval. The Planning Board shall not disapprove an application for site plan review except on the basis of specific written findings directed to one (1) or more of the standards as provided above. To the maximum extent possible an applicant shall be provided an opportunity to supply corrections and/or additions on development proposal particulars, especially those which contain or reveal violations of this By-Law or other applicable regulations.

Any person aggrieved by any decision of the Planning Board made under the provisions of this may appeal that decision to the Zoning Board of Appeals.