

10. Implementation

Introduction

This chapter is arguably the most important in the entire Master Plan. The implementation chapter is based on the goals and objectives of this Master Plan and the data that was collected and analyzed. To ensure the implementation of these actions on a year-to-year basis, the Town of Sturbridge should clearly identify some entity comprised of representatives from Town staff and existing boards and commissions and other key stakeholders that will be charged with ensuring that this plan is used and followed. This entity will be responsible not only for coordinating overall implementation of the plan, but would also work to ensure that public outreach and education is achieved. Specifically, the best options are to either create a Town Administrator-appointed Master Plan Implementation Committee that would operate under the auspices of the Planning Board, which is already charged with official adoption of the Plan pursuant to M.G.L. c. 41 §81D, or to have the board itself play that role.

The implementation chapter is often the most difficult component of a Master Plan. Unlike the lofty goals and objectives of the previous sections, here is where the rubber meets the road, where the planning ideals are translated into concrete actions. The following recommendations can sometimes be difficult to commit to and problematic to review over time. Items that have been accomplished fade from view, while the more intractable problems linger for years. Financial and political trends may change, advancing some items while leaving others untouched. For these reasons alone, many communities are hesitant to put in writing the full scope of their intentions.

The following implementation plan intends to deliver on the promise of the goals and objectives expressed throughout this process, with a program of tangible steps for the Town to take over the next ten years and beyond. There is a high level of activity on these issues, based upon the input received during the planning process. These actions are targeted to address the physical as well as the organizational issues confronting the Town, as described and analyzed throughout this plan. The recommendations described below work to correct these “process” problems, while still maintaining a focus on the substantive issues of land use and community design; housing; economic development; open space and recreation; natural, cultural and historic resources; transportation; public services and facilities; and energy and sustainability.

It is important to recognize that the master plan recommendations are the first steps of the implementation program. Further study will be necessary before actions are taken on the specific recommendations, especially zoning, where consideration of environmental conditions, traffic and safety, and community character must be reviewed. In many cases, there will be additional opportunities for a public dialog and process.

In order to ensure follow-through on the recommendations of this plan and provide some “accountability” for plan implementation, the Town should consider some mechanism for reporting on progress on a regular basis. Regular communication is critical. This reporting should include updates on progress and achievements as well as information on barriers to implementation that have been identified. Some communities provide this information by reporting to the Planning Board and/or Town Meeting, as well as in the annual Town Report. Another community has developed a follow-up evaluation form that specifically lists each action item and asks for responses. It is important to note that planning is a dynamic process and priorities can shift over time. A consistent review process allows for these issues to be acknowledged while keeping each specific recommendation on the table unless a situation dictates that it be reconsidered. A regular evaluation or follow-up procedure will at least indicate how a particular action item was ultimately addressed or call out items that still need attention.

The table below summarizes the specific recommendations found at the end of each of the plan’s elements. However, they are organized by function (i.e. land use and zoning, data collection, transportation, etc.). Thus, recommendations from several plan elements may actually be listed under land use and zoning. The department, board or commission responsible for implementing each recommendation is identified. Multiple entities are listed by action items that require coordination or collaboration among different departments or boards. Levels of priority are also assigned to assist in determining the timeframe in which each item is to be considered. Note that short term is 1–3 years; medium term is 4–7 years; and long term is 8 years or more. If funding is required to achieve success, potential sources for the funds are listed.

Implementation Plan

Responsible Parties

- ▶ Assessor – Town Assessor
- ▶ BOS – Board of Selectmen
- ▶ Capital – Capital Planning Committee
- ▶ CPC – Community Preservation Committee
- ▶ Con. Comm. – Conservation Commission
- ▶ CC – Cultural Council
- ▶ DPW – Department of Public Works
- ▶ EAC – Energy Advisory Committee
- ▶ Finance – Finance Department
- ▶ His. Comm. – Historical Commission
- ▶ HP – Housing Partnership
- ▶ Library – Library Trustees
- ▶ OSC – Open Space Committee
- ▶ PB – Planning Board
- ▶ PLAC – Public Lands Advisory Committee
- ▶ Planning – Planning Department
- ▶ Rec. Comm. – Recreation Committee
- ▶ Recreation – Recreation Department
- ▶ SLAC – Sturbridge Lake Advisory Committee
- ▶ TC – Trails Committee
- ▶ TA – Town Administrator

Implementation Chart

Recommendation	Responsibility	Priority/Timing	Potential Funding Source*
Data Collection			
Update demographic and housing data once the U.S. Census data for 2010 is released	Planning	Short term	
Inventory town-owned land and tax title property to identify potential parcels for use as affordable housing sites	Planning, Assessor	Short term	
Continue to inventory the built environment, identify properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and pursue such listings	His. Comm.	Ongoing	
Consider the preparation of a community-wide archaeological inventory	His. Comm.	Medium term	
Land Use and Zoning			
Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning bylaw and consider including a provision whereby developers can give a cash payment in-lieu of affordable units	PB, HP	Medium term	
Allow (or allow by special permit) mixed-use developments in more zoning districts like the Commercial district	Planning, PB	Short term	
Consider amending the Multiple Dwelling Project chapter of the Zoning Bylaws	Planning, PB	Short term	
Provide incentives for new development to occur in areas where municipal services, roads and utilities are already available and maintain a protected edge around neighborhoods and natural resources	Planning, PB, EAC	Short term	
Ensure that there is an adequate supply of suitably zoned industrial land available to support future development	Planning, PB	Medium term	
Prepare a Corridor Improvement Plan for the Commercial-Tourist (CT) District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a scaled-base map showing parcel boundaries and other features • Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for all recommended infrastructure upgrades • Identify potential redevelopment sites • Revise zoning bylaws to allow more flexibility in types and scale of uses permitted in the CT District • Identify potential locations for centralized, shared parking facilities • Create conceptual plans for redevelopment on selected sites • Establish a façade improvement fund to assist property owners • Explore financing options for renovating or redeveloping the mill site at Holland Road and Route 20 	Planning, PB	Long term (short term planning)	
Consider establishing a new zoning district around the former motel known as The Lodges to serve as a gateway to the CT District	Planning, PB	Short term	
Consider expansion of Business/Industrial zoning on the east end of Route 20 from Route 84 interchange to the Charlton town line	Planning, PB	Short term	
Create a new mixed-use medical zone on Route 131	Planning, PB	Short term	
Revise the purpose and development requirements of the Special Use District to provide alternative development options	Planning, PB	Short term	
Consider revising the historic commercial zone along Route 15 to reflect existing hospitality related uses	Planning, PB	Short term	

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Recommendation	Responsibility	Priority/Timing	Potential Funding Source*
Overhaul nonresidential zoning regulations by updating and expanding permitted uses and revising boundaries of the General Industrial district	Planning, PB	Short term	
Land Use and Zoning			
Consider adopting a Low Impact Development (LID) bylaw to minimize post-development stormwater runoff and further protect the town's water resources	Planning, PB, Con. Comm.	Short term	
Consider enacting a lakes overlay district for areas surrounding the lakes of specific concern	Planning, PB, SLAC	Short term	
Adopt zoning bylaws which address and reduce regulatory barriers to low energy homes, energy efficiency retrofits and renewable energy installations	Planning, PB, EAC	Short term	
Ensure that any zoning revisions consider and incorporate best practices for such environmental protections as stream buffers or shoreline setbacks	Planning, PB, Con. Comm.	Ongoing	
Initiate and support local bylaws that will encourage preservation of /historic assets	PB, Hist. Comm.	Medium term	
Consider modifying the demolition delay bylaw to include buildings more than 50 years of age and extend the delay period to one year	PB, Hist. Comm.	Medium term	
Develop access management and traffic impact study guidelines and incorporate them into the Zoning Bylaws and subdivision regulations	Planning, PB, DPW	Medium term	
Consider zoning amendments that would encourage mixed-use and compact/ clustered development in areas served by transportation infrastructure	Planning, PB	Medium term	
Encourage the use of green building standards	Planning, PB, EAC	Medium Term	
Amend the Zoning Bylaws to further regulate the number, size, style and location of signage throughout town	Planning, PB	Short term	
Inventory town-owned land and tax title property to identify potential parcels for use as affordable housing sites	Planning, Assessor	Short term	
Create a table of uses in the Zoning Bylaws to replace the existing narrative listing of uses in each zoning district	Planning, PB	Short term	
Consolidate all of the definitions in the Zoning Bylaws into one section	Planning, PB	Short term	
Create a separate section for parking in the Zoning Bylaws, and consider updating the parking regulations and putting them into a table	Planning, PB	Short term	
Consider encouraging future development along Routes 20 and 131 into nodes at key locations, preserving natural areas between the nodes using tools such as transfer of development rights	Planning, PB	Medium term	
Establish a form-based code to encourage better building layout and design	Planning, PB	Medium term	
Consider the costs and benefits of establishing zoning incentives to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of existing properties	Planning, PB	Medium term	
Use appropriately-scaled gateway landscape treatments and pedestrian-scaled "places" within the CT District	Planning, PB	Short term	
Encourage streetscape improvements that create gateways to Sturbridge along Route 131 near the Town Common	Planning, PB, DPW	Ongoing	

10

Implementation

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Recommendation	Responsibility	Priority/Timing	Potential Funding Source*
Housing			
Consider a buydown program whereby the Town buys down market-rate homes, deed restricts them as affordable and sells them to income-qualified, first-time homebuyers	HP, CPC	Medium term	CPA
Create a policy whereby projects with a certain amount of on-site affordable housing receive priority within the sewer allocation process.	HP, Planning, CPC	Medium term	
Create a home improvement program whereby the Town provides zero- or low-interest loans to qualified residents	HP, Planning, CPC	Short term	CPA, Community Development Block Grant (if for low/mod income)
Create a downpayment/closing cost assistance program whereby the Town provides grants or loans to income-eligible, first-time homebuyers	HP, CPC	Short term	CPA
Provide incentives to rehabilitate older housing or subdivide residential properties to create opportunities to allow senior citizens to stay in their homes	Planning, PB	Short term	CPA
Economic Development			
Create a more integrated approach to economic development within the town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives/directives to bring economic development and tourism-related oversight groups together • Create a database of town businesses and available development sites • Encourage closer cooperation of marketing and events with Old Sturbridge Village 	TA, Planning	Medium term	
Consider creating a business incubator to support the establishment and growth of small businesses both within Sturbridge and on a cooperative basis with neighboring towns	TA, BOS	Long term	Massachusetts Economic Development Fund
Maintain a "pro-business" environment within Town government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key position on town staff (or create a new position) responsible for economic/business coordination, monitoring and outreach • Establish a program that provides recognition of excellence for existing businesses 	TA, BOS, Planning	Medium term	
Consider making additional tax or financing incentives available to existing businesses or as tools for attracting future development	Finance	Long term	
Examine Town-owned vacant or underutilized land for possible "highest and best use" as future economic development sites	PLAC, Planning	Medium term	
Identify priority development sites for inclusion in the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	PB, Planning	Medium term	
Encourage growth in the town's hospitality, entertainment and recreation businesses by supporting regional efforts to promote tourism	BOS	Ongoing	
Continue to participate in the Southern Worcester County Community Development Corporation's efforts to foster regional cooperation	TA	Short term	
Open Space and Recreation			
Incorporate existing reports and plans on fields into the new Open Space and Recreation Plan and prioritize recommendations	OSC	Short term	
Continue to identify, prioritize and preserve open space and recreation resources based upon pre-determined criteria for prioritizing acquisitions	OSC, Rec. Comm., CPC	Ongoing	CPA, Massachusetts Land and Conservation Fund, Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Program

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Recommendation	Responsibility	Priority/Timing	Potential Funding Source*
Research and monitor funding opportunities for the creation or preservation of open spaces	OSC	Short term (ongoing monitoring)	
Expand public access to open spaces, particularly around the lakes and along the Quinebaug River	Con. Comm., OSC, TC	Medium term	
Maintain and enhance existing open spaces and recreational facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a maintenance plan for Town-owned properties and incorporate any major improvements into the Town’s larger Capital Improvement Plan • Examine whether additional staff or staff hours are needed to oversee open spaces, parks and recreational facilities 	Recreation, DPW, Capital, TA	Medium term (ongoing maintenance)	CPA
Provide recreational opportunities for all ages, and consider developing a community center, football field and multi-use sports field	Rec. Comm., Recreation	Ongoing (long term development)	CPA, Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Program
Continue developing trails	TC, Con. Comm.	Ongoing	CPA, Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Program
Capitalize on small vacant properties to create pocket parks and other open spaces	OSC, Con. Comm., CPC	Long term	CPA, Massachusetts Land and Conservation Fund
Increase public awareness of open space and recreational facilities	Recreation, Rec. Comm., OSC	Ongoing	
Support the Sturbridge Trails Committee and the development of the Trails Master Plan	TC	Ongoing	
Educate the public about existing walking trails	TC	Ongoing	
Natural Resources			
Continue monitoring the water quality of the lakes to determine which are in need of cleanup or protection	SLAC	Ongoing	
Ensure that any new access points to the Quinebaug River protect water quality and shoreline vegetation	Con. Comm., SLAC	Ongoing	
Identify critical resource areas encompassing streams, ponds and other water bodies for conservation and preservation	Con. Comm., OSC	Short term	
Evaluate opportunities and locations that could be used to facilitate wildlife crossings and connect habitat areas within the town	Con. Comm., OSC	Medium term	
Seek funding to fully evaluate and document the wildlife habitat values and natural communities in town	Con. Comm., OSC, CPC	Medium term	
Educate agricultural landowners about the state’s voluntary Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program	Ag. Comm.	Ongoing	
Continue working to meet the criteria to be designated a Green Community	Planning, EAC	Short term	
Natural Resources			
Evaluate the costs and benefits associated with wind and solar energy for municipal use and private development	EAC	Long term	
Promote recycling, composting and water collection by distributing educational material to households and businesses	DPW	Short term	
Establish goals for increasing recycling at the Town’s Recycling Center	DPW	Short term	

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Cultural and Historical Resources			
Educate residents of the importance of maintaining the historic character of Sturbridge	His. Comm.	Ongoing	
Continue developing more in-depth regional partnerships and programs with organizations with similar preservation and educational goals	His. Comm.	Ongoing	
Continue the preservation and improved access to important Town documents by seeking additional funds	His. Comm.	Ongoing	CPA
Continue to support the Town's implementation of the CPA for historical preservation	His. Comm., CPC	Ongoing	
Use arts to create a local identity for residents and capitalize on tourist attractions to make the town a destination for annual cultural events	CC	Short term	
Transportation			
Develop distinct gateways, particularly at each end of the Main Street section of Route 20	Planning, DPW	Medium term	
Develop scenic streetscapes by landscaping, medians, undergrounding utilities, using period lighting in the CTD and replacing faded crosswalks	Planning, DPW	Medium term	
Consider traffic calming measures such as curb extensions, narrowed travel lanes, rumble strips, raised crosswalks and roundabouts	Planning, DPW	Short term	Chap. 90
Prioritize bridge repairs along Holland, Champeaux and Farquahar roads	DPW, TA	Long term	
Consider making improvements to intersections along Route 20 and Route 131	DPW, TA	Long term	Chap. 90, TIP funds
Provide a more safe and walkable environment through new/upgraded sidewalks, crosswalks, countdown pedestrian signal heads and other measures	BOS, Planning, DPW	Medium term	Chap. 90
Make Sturbridge more bikeable through the development of a Bicycle Master Plan, installation of bicycle racks and bicycle lanes, and other measures	PB, Planning	Medium term	
Transportation			
Increase public transportation options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review CMRPC research for fixed bus route to connect Sturbridge with Southbridge and Webster through WRTA • Expand paratransit service • Research the possibility of creating a Sturbridge tie-in with tour buses between Boston and New York City • Explore feasibility of a seasonal shuttle trolley to points of interest • Assure that Sturbridge has a representative on the WRTA Advisory Council • Launch an educational campaign to inform residents of public transportation options • Advertise the Park and Ride lot at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church with signage on I-84 and I-90 	BOS, Planning	Long term (short term research and education)	

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Create two consolidated public parking areas, one on each end of Route 20	BOS, Planning	Long term	
Work collaboratively with MassDOT to remove existing sign clutter along Route 20	DPW	Ongoing	
Commission a "Way-finding Program" to assist visitors	PB	Medium term	
Improve consistency of traffic signage throughout Town with Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices guidelines	Planning	Short term	
Enhance entry of visitors approaching from Connecticut at Route 15 through informational signage	DPW	Short term	
Public Services and Facilities			
Revise wastewater management plan to reflect capacity required for future economic development initiatives	DPW	Short term	
Upgrade and expand the Public Safety Building and the DPW Garage and Maintenance Facility	BOS, Capital	Long term (short term planning)	
Consider projecting the level of staffing required for Town departments over the next five to ten years	TA	Short term	
Encourage Town departments to develop long range plans modeled after the one prepared by the Library Trustees	TA	Medium term	
Establish a Sustainability Task Force that is charged with developing sustainability principles or guidelines for the Town and future projects	TA, BOS	Short term	
Conduct a parking study at the library	Library	Medium term	
Explore options for consolidating/streamlining local boards and committees	TA, BOS	Short term	
Explore options for digitizing records/files to address storage issues	TA	Medium term	
Encourage Department heads to utilize and keep current the Town's Virtual Town Hall website	TA	Ongoing	
Develop a long-range plan for energy efficiency	EAC	Short term	
Conduct an energy audit for Town and Regional School District properties	EAC	Short term	Utility programs
Establish goals to reduce municipal energy use to meet Green Communities criteria	EAC	Medium term	Utility programs
Establish a dedicated staff position for energy efficiency and sustainability	TA	Short term	
Conduct a study to look into solid waste management alternatives	DPW, TA	Short term	