

Sturbridge, MA

Town Administrator

Community & Position Profile



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The Community

The Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, is a vibrant and inclusive community of approximately 10,100 residents located at the crossroads of New England. It has a tradition of highly responsive government service, has strong citizen engagement, and is known as a destination for tourists who come to visit its charming downtown, Old Sturbridge Village, and numerous historic sites. The Town is seeking a seasoned municipal management professional with exceptional leadership and communication skills to serve as Sturbridge's next Town Administrator.

History: Identified by the English as early as 1640 as a place where valuable graphite could be mined, the General Court was convinced by the early landowners – after two unsuccessful requests – that the land could be farmed and [Sturbridge](#) was incorporated in 1738. The first settlers built sawmills and



gristmills along the Quinebaug River and, soon after the industrial revolution began, larger factories were built in the Fiskdale and Westville villages of Sturbridge. The industrial growth away from Sturbridge Center has preserved the area much as it appeared in 1840. The Common area has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Sturbridge strives to preserve and protect it.

Tourism is a critical part of Sturbridge's economy. [Old Sturbridge Village](#), a large outdoor living museum that recreates life in rural New England during the 1790s to 1830s, is a popular attraction in Sturbridge. The historic Publick House, which opened in 1771, remains a focal point of the Sturbridge Common, and there are numerous antiques and craft shops, inns, and bed and breakfast establishments. While the textile mills have long since left New England, Sturbridge has attracted numerous industries over the years which help to maintain its stable tax rate and provides employment opportunities for residents.

Geography: Sturbridge is 39.0 square miles in size, including 37.4 square miles of land and 1.5 square miles of water. There are five major lakes and waterways in Town, nine dedicated trail areas, and approximately 6,000 acres of preserved open space land. There are 86 miles of public roads in Town.

Part of Worcester County, Sturbridge is bordered by Charlton and Southbridge to the east, Brimfield and Holland to the west, Brookfield and East Brookfield to the north, and Union, Conn., and Woodstock, Conn., to the south. Sturbridge is about 16 miles southwest of Worcester, 29 miles east of Springfield, and 55 miles west of Boston. Sturbridge has easy access to the Mass Pike, Route 84, Route 20, and Route 131. Airport access is available in Boston; Providence, RI; Hartford, CT; and Manchester, NH.

The community consists primarily of residential properties with various business and retail districts located near the Town Center and along major thoroughfares. The Town is interested in thoughtful economic development that will not detract from the community's charm and historic character.

Assessed Values: Sturbridge's total assessed value is approximately \$2.19 billion in FY2019. Residential properties account for 81.48% of the Town's total assessed value, while commercial and industrial properties account for 14.51% and personal property for 3.99%. The average residential property assessment in Sturbridge for FY2019 is \$294,597. While the Town's population is primarily middle-income, according to the 2010 U.S. Census statistics, there are 3.6% of residents with annual incomes below the poverty level.



Census Data: According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town of Sturbridge's racial makeup is 96.3% white, 2.6% Hispanic or Latino, 1.3% Asian, 0.9% two or more races, 0.3% Black or African American, and 0.2% American Indian or Alaskan Native. The median household annual income is \$85,000, which is about 20% higher than the state median household annual income of \$70,954. The Town is demographically somewhat dissimilar to the state regarding resident age cohorts with differences in, for example, the under-18 years cohort with Sturbridge at 24.6% in the 2010 U.S. Census versus 20.0% for the state. In the under-5 years cohort, Sturbridge has 5.0% of its population which is similar to the state's 5.3%. Additionally, in the 65 years and over cohort Sturbridge has 18.9% of its population compared to the state's 16.2%. The median age of Sturbridge's residents is 43.1 years, only slightly older than the state's 39.1 years.

Government and Finance

Board of Selectmen: Sturbridge's government includes a five-member [Board of Selectmen](#) that serves as the governing body of the Town. Board of Selectmen members are elected to staggered three-year terms to oversee all matters impacting the interest and welfare of the community and are responsible for ensuring that Town government is responsive to and reflective of community needs and values. The [2017 Annual Town Report](#) is located on Sturbridge's municipal website. The Board would like a Town Administrator to work collaboratively with members on creating joint goals and objectives and routinely reporting on the metrics of those goals.

Committees: There is also an elected five-member School Committee that oversees the policies and budget of the Town's public elementary school system. The elementary school's [FY2019 budget](#) is approximately \$11.3 million. Sturbridge sends students in grades 7-12 to the Tantasqua Regional School District, which is overseen by the Tantasqua Regional School Committee. The FY2019 budget for public education is \$18.3 million. Other elected positions in Town include: Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Zoning Board of Appeals, Recreation Commission, Board of Assessors, Town Clerk, Moderator, and Constable. In addition, the Town utilizes many other appointed boards and commissions to conduct municipal operations. A nine-member Finance Committee is appointed by the Town Moderator. Its recommendations on warrant articles at Town Meeting is the main motion voted upon by representatives.

Town Meeting: Sturbridge has an Open Town Meeting form of government. Town Meeting is the legislative body of the Town and typically meets for the Annual Town Meeting on the first Monday in June for the transaction of all business for the Town, other than matters to be determined by ballot. The [Town of Sturbridge Charter](#) and the Town's [General Bylaws](#), as amended in 2018, can be viewed on Sturbridge's municipal website.

Town Administrator: The [Board of Selectmen](#) appoints the position of Town Administrator to serve as chief administrative officer of the Town. The [Town Administrator](#) is responsible for executing the policy directives of the Board of Selectmen and for managing the operations and activities of the Town.

The [Town Administrator](#) is specifically responsible for providing support to the Board of Selectmen, supervising all departments under his/her jurisdiction, financial management and budgeting, handling personnel and benefits administration, hiring and firing of personnel, collective bargaining, procurement, preparing the warrant for the annual and all special Town Meetings, attending Board of Selectmen meetings, maintaining all records of the Board of Selectmen meetings, responding to written and verbal inquiries from the public, inventory of all Town property, and coordination of the Annual Town Report. Sturbridge seeks a Town Administrator interested in a tenure of at least five to eight years.

Financial Snapshot: Sturbridge holds a Standard & Poor's rating of AA+, with a stable outlook, as stated in a rating action of November 2017. The rating was based upon the community's conservative financial management policies and practices, balanced budget, strong debt position, and prudent conduct of operations. Local property taxes generate about 74% of revenue, demonstrating a lack of dependence on central government revenue. Additional revenue is obtained from state aid (14%) and local receipts (12%).

In FY2019, the Town has a [\\$32.58 million budget](#), which includes general government, education, public safety, public works, health/human services, and debt. The [Finance Committee Report](#) for FY2019 details its recommendations for the annual budget and Town Meeting articles.



As of November 2018, Sturbridge had a general stabilization balance of \$2,238,036, a capital stabilization balance of \$628,050, a fire apparatus stabilization balance of \$201,628, and an ambulance stabilization balance of \$65,496. Sturbridge's OPEB trust fund balance is \$694,172. As of June 30, 2018, the Town's OPEB liability is approximately \$18.87 million and its net pension liability is about \$18.31 million. As of July 1, 2018, Sturbridge had \$4,738,011 in certified free cash. Sturbridge has excess levy capacity of \$884,164. The [FY2019 tax rate](#) for all properties is \$19.15 per thousand of the property's assessed value.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Finances**

Sturbridge has a Standard & Poor's rating of AA+ with a stable outlook, according to a November 2017 rating action. The Town's goal is to manage its finances in a manner that will maintain or improve its high rating. Sturbridge's [FY2019 budget](#) is approximately \$32.58 million. The FY2019 budget represents a 3.3% increase over the prior year. The FY2019 general government budget increased 3% over FY2018, health insurance increased 7.5% and pension costs rose 9%. Standard & Poor's highlighted Sturbridge's conservative financial management policies and practices, balanced budget, strong position, and prudent conduct of operations as strengths.

- **Economic Development**

Sturbridge has numerous businesses, including corporate, retail and professional services establishments. Currently, 81.48% of the tax base is residential and additional businesses, which are appropriate for the character of the Town, would be welcome. The Town's [Master Plan](#) goals include the potential expansion of business/industrial zoning on the east end of Route 20, encouraging future development along Route 20 and Route 131 at key locations, and possibly creating a business incubator to support the growth of small businesses. There are a number of ongoing or recently completed projects in Town, including a 40,000-square-foot office building, a new Holiday Inn Express, a Panera Bread restaurant, and a large expansion of the Publick House. A medical marijuana dispensary has permit approvals to locate at the Sturbridge Business Park on Route 20. A commercial tourist district revitalization plan, which includes streetscaping, new sidewalks, bike lanes, and landscaping, would benefit from a Town Administrator's support. A former mill site at the corner of Route 20 and Holland Road could be developed into such projects as housing, office space, and a café, with thoughtful and creative guidance. Sturbridge has an Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator to assist with such projects. Approximately 48% of the Town has municipal sewers and about 50% has Town water. Traffic congestion on Route 20 poses challenges for future development and residents traveling the roadway.

- **Education**

Sturbridge highly values education. Sturbridge's School Committee has jurisdiction over elementary education and operates [Burgess Elementary School](#) for students in grades PreK-6. Sturbridge – along with Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, and Wales – is a member of the Tantasqua Regional School District, which operates a [junior high school](#), a [high school](#), and a high school [technical division](#). Sturbridge currently has 914 students receiving services from Burgess Elementary School and 780 students being served by the Tantasqua Regional School District. Illustrative of the Town's strong support of education is the fact that 95% of Sturbridge's residents age 25 years and older have a high school diploma and about 49% of the population age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. The Town owns and operates 16 school buses.

- **Capital Needs**

Like many communities, Sturbridge is facing a number of significant capital projects as infrastructure ages and programmatic needs change with time. Renovating or replacing the current Senior Center, or constructing a Community Center to encourage interaction for all age groups, is a priority mentioned by numerous Town officials and residents. Additional large capital projects that are expected to be considered in the coming years include additional recreation fields, a new or renovated Public Safety building, a Department of Public Works facility, and the possible need to upgrade aging water pipes. These multi-million-dollar projects will require creative financing, state and federal funding advocacy, and strong community support.



- **Housing**

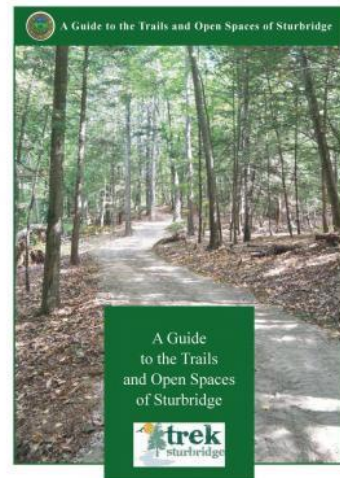
Sturbridge's Master Plan notes that [housing](#) is the most prevalent land use in Sturbridge. The Town's listed housing goals include: providing high-quality affordable housing via flexible zoning bylaws, regulations, and programs; ensuring that needed housing choices are available; providing opportunities for residents to make home improvements; and developing a plan to meet the 10% housing affordability goal. Currently, Sturbridge is at 5.6% for affordable housing. A 97-unit 40B development was recently approved and, if completed, will bring the Town to nearly 10%. Approximately 82% of the housing units in Sturbridge are owner occupied with a median value of \$290,600, according to U.S. Census data. There are 3,025 single-family homes in Sturbridge as well as 250 condominiums, 73 two-family houses, seven three-family homes, 28 mobile homes, 27 apartment buildings, and 650 vacant parcels.

- **Tourism**

Sturbridge is a popular community for day-trippers and tourists visiting the Commonwealth. Visitors can spend their days touring Old Sturbridge Village, which is a recreation of colonial Massachusetts, hiking miles of trails through the New England countryside, stopping into dozens of merchant shops, and enjoying cuisine from around the world at the Town's many highly rated restaurants. Sturbridge has more than 800 hotel rooms and one-third of the Town's 6% room tax is earmarked for the [Sturbridge Tourist Association](#) and Betterment Committee. The remaining two-thirds is put into the Town's general fund. The Town also has a Special Events Committee to assist with its many community activities.

- **Open Space and Recreation**

Sturbridge was one of the first communities in the Commonwealth to adopt the Community Preservation Act. Approximately 20% (6,000 acres) of Sturbridge's land is dedicated open space, consisting of land owned by the town, state, federal, and conservation organizations as well as lands protected by conservation easements or the purchase of development rights. Sturbridge is fortunate to have numerous parks, recreation areas, conservation lands, ponds, forestlands, open fields, and rocky crags as well as Big Alum, Westville, and Leadmine lakes, Quinebaug River, and Leadmine Mountain. A [Guide to the Trails and Open Spaces of Sturbridge](#) is on the municipal website. There are miles of trails for hiking. Sturbridge also offers several playing fields, sports programs for adults and children, and playgrounds. The Town hosts summer Concerts on the Common.



- **Green Energy**

In June 2018, Town Meeting approved the adoption of a "stretch energy code" for new construction, to begin in January, which is a prerequisite for Green Community designation by the state. Such designation would qualify Sturbridge for state funding for energy efficiency items up to \$140,000 and make the Town eligible to compete for future energy grants.

- **Water Resources**

Protecting the Town's fresh water system to preserve high quality drinking water and maintaining or improving the health of their lakes and ponds are critical for Sturbridge. There are five major lakes and waterways in Town. The Sturbridge Water Department is operated and maintained by Veolia. The [2017 Drinking Water Quality Report](#) can be located on the Town's website.

- **Public Safety**

The Sturbridge [Police Department](#) has 12 full-time officers, three sergeants, two lieutenants, chief, two school resource officers, one K9 officer, one part-time officer. and one administrative assistant. Its annual budget is about \$2.6 million. Dispatch

is handled by 11 dispatchers and one supervisor. The Sturbridge [Fire Department](#) has 14 full-time firefighters and 10 on-call firefighters. It has an annual budget of approximately \$1.4 million and responds to about 2,000 calls per year. The Fire Department also runs the Town's ambulance service and operates two ambulances. Both departments are operated from a public safety complex on Main Street.



- **Citizen Engagement**

The Town embraces civic engagement and appreciates the high levels of participation and discourse residents provide. The next Town Administrator must be a skilled communicator with a strong belief in transparency. Citizens serve on a significant number of elected and appointed boards and committees as well as in other volunteer capacities. Maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship between residents, employees, and volunteers is vital to the success of the community. Ideas and recommendations regarding improved methods of communicating with and engaging citizens, including new technologies and use of social media, would be welcome.



Photo Credit: John Phelan



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Candidate Qualifications

Competencies: The Sturbridge Board of Selectmen seeks a Town Administrator with strong leadership abilities, municipal management experience, and an interest in a tenure of at least five to eight years in Sturbridge.

The successful candidate:

- must be able to demonstrate prior success in leading a complex municipal organization.
- should be competent in all areas of municipal management and operations, but especially in finance and budgeting, personnel administration, economic and community development, and project management.
- should have experience in sustainable economic development.
- must be a visionary and decisive leader who can work well with various interests of the Town.
- is expected to work cooperatively and collaboratively with staff, citizens, volunteers, and the business community. He or she should make customer service a priority.
- must recognize the value of technology and strive to implement systems integration, reduce redundancies, and increase efficiencies via the use of technology. He or she should utilize Sturbridge's many assets to bring the Town to the next level.
- should be highly approachable, a skilled and effective communicator, and have an open-door management style.
- should be knowledgeable of municipal management best practices.
- must be fair, inclusive, collaborative, ethical, and committed to transparency in government.
- must be able to delegate effectively, mentor department heads, and provide support and motivation to ensure continued high performance and professional growth for Sturbridge employees.
- must be a strategic and dynamic leader who employs a teamwork approach.
- should be highly motivated, enthusiastic, strive to build morale, and have a sense of humor.
- must be dedicated, organized, patient, have a strong work ethic, and inspire trust and confidence.
- must have the ability to effectively explain complex issues to individuals, committees, and the citizenry.
- must have strong finance skills and be a strategic thinker, particularly in regard to budgeting, project management, and economic and community development.
- must be able to develop and sustain credible relations with residents, staff, and union representatives.
- should have proven experience working with state officials and state government, particularly related to funding and grants.
- should have proven experience in all phases of grant management, from acquisition to completion.
- should be skilled in team building, and in developing and maintaining relationships.
- should be a creative problem-solver and active listener who is accessible, open to new ideas, and a consensus-builder.
- must lead by example, have conflict resolution skills, inspire respect, and be respectful.
- must be a community unifier who manages projects in a participatory manner.
- should embrace participation in community events and enjoy being part of the community.

Education and Experience:

- The successful candidate should possess a bachelor's degree in a field related to municipal management, with a master's degree in public administration, business management, or a related field preferred.
- A minimum of 3-5 years of progressive experience as a municipal city/town manager or administrator, as an assistant city/town manager or administrator, or education and experience in or relatable to municipal government that is equivalent is required.
- Massachusetts experience is preferred.

Compensation Package

The Town of Sturbridge will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable area communities, with a salary of \$145,000+/-, commensurate upon qualifications. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Administrator's total compensation. Residency is not required.

How To Apply

Interested applicants should send cover letters and résumés, in confidence, by December 9, 2018, 5:00 p.m., via email to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Sturbridge Town Administrator Search

Please submit a single PDF containing both cover letter and résumé.

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. The Sturbridge Town Administrator Search Committee will interview the most qualified candidates in confidence. Based upon these interviews, a selection of finalists will be chosen for further evaluation and reference checks and then forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is advanced to the Board of Selectmen. The Sturbridge Board of Selectmen will select the Town Administrator.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal
Community Paradigm Associates
Blynch@communityparadigm.com
978-621-6733

The Town of Sturbridge, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



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