

# Southbridge, MA – Town Manager



## Position Statement

Southbridge, MA (16,700 pop.), is a unique community in that it is a relatively small town, yet it provides amenities and public services that are more akin to a city. Located just north of the Connecticut border in the Quinebaug River Valley of south-central Massachusetts, the Town is an eclectic blend of hilly and flat, farmland and developed land, industry and downtown, and suburban, urban, and rural neighborhoods. Southbridge's history as a manufacturing hub helped shape the development pattern, building stock, employment base, and public services. The Town, which embraces its diversity, has a significant (31%) Latino population that proudly shares its rich and varied cultures with the community. Southbridge has an AA- rating and an FY20 budget of approximately \$61.8 million. The Town's challenges – such as the need for additional economic development, particularly in its downtown – provides tremendous opportunity for the next Town Manager to have a positive impact. Southbridge's local government is led by a nine-member Town Council.

To serve as its next Town Manager, Southbridge is seeking an experienced, knowledgeable, and strong leader with excellent financial acumen as well as strong budgeting, economic development, project management, procurement, and communications skills. Preferred candidates should have a Bachelor's degree (Master's preferred) in public administration or a related field and experience as a city/town manager or assistant city/town manager or an equivalent public or private sector level of experience. Candidates should have a proven record of leadership, be proactive and a strategic thinker, instill confidence and trust, and be able to build collaborative relationships with appointed/elected officials, business owners, residents, and employees. The next Town Manager should be innovative, enthusiastic, and a forward thinker. Southbridge has experienced department heads who will assist the Town Manager in moving the Town toward a stronger future.

**Annual salary: \$155K+/-.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Southbridge is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

### Important Links:

- [Town of Southbridge](#)
- [Home Rule Charter](#)
- [Code of By-Laws](#)
- [Annual Town Report](#)
- [FY20 Budget](#)
- [FY20 Capital Improvement Budget](#)
- [Master Plan](#)
- [Economic Development Plan](#)
- [Facilities Management Plan](#)
- [Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)



# Challenges and Opportunities

## Government

Southbridge's Home Rule Charter provides for a Town Council-Town Manager form of government. The nine-member [Town Council](#) serves as the legislative and policy-making body of the Town. The Council appoints the [Town Manager](#) as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town. Subject to confirmation by the Town Council, the Town Manager appoints the Fire Chief and, upon recommendation by the Chief, a fire department; Police Chief, and upon recommendation by the Chief, a police department; Director of Public Works, and upon recommendation of the director, a department of public works; Finance Director; Town Accountant; Town Treasurer; Town Collector; Veterans Agent; Director of Inspection Services and all inspectors; a full-time Assessor; and upon recommendation of the Trustees of the library, a Head Librarian. Other elected bodies include: School Committee, Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School Committee, Town Clerk, four members of the Housing Authority, four members of the Redevelopment Authority, and two part-time members to the Board of Assessors. The next Town Manager must exhibit a willingness to engage and collaborate with Southbridge's boards and committees.

## Finances

Southbridge has an FY20 budget of approximately \$61.8 million and a Standard and Poor's rating of AA- with a



stable outlook. The next Town Manager must have strong financial acumen. Southbridge, like most municipalities, is facing revenue constraints as well as the pressure of increasing costs and infrastructure needs. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated this financial stress. The community has significant projects that require review and implementation, including improvements to roads and sidewalks and the potential construction of a new fire station. The next Town Manager needs to be decisive and forward-thinking regarding finances and all aspects of municipal management. Improving Southbridge's financial strength and bond rating while keeping tax increases to a minimum are priorities. The FY20 tax rate is \$19.48 for all properties. The average single-family tax bill in FY20 is \$3,925. Approximately 40% of the Town's revenue comes from state aid. There is a clear need for economic development to help fund town services, support infrastructure, and provide employment for residents. New growth in FY20 was \$270,728. To help fund community needs, a Town Manager with successful grant-writing and grant management skills would be a plus. The Town Manager must

develop and maintain strong relationships with state and regional officials to improve opportunities for securing grants and increasing operational efficacy. Collective bargaining experience would be beneficial in this position. The Town Manager is expected to develop, with input from department heads, a detailed and well thought out six-year [Capital Improvement Plan](#) that balances the needs of the community with the realities of the budget. This plan must be reviewed and updated annually to address infrastructure needs.

## Education

The [Southbridge Public School](#) district was placed in receivership by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in January 2016 after it was declared to be a "chronically underperforming" Level 5 district. Southbridge schools are currently scheduled to remain under state control until the end of 2022. The Town Council is supportive of the state-appointed receiver and the next Town Manager is expected to be collaborative regarding the implementation of the education turnaround plan. Southbridge is optimistic that its public schools are working toward a brighter future for students, educators, and the community.

## Economic and Community Development

Southbridge has a beautifully proportioned, historic, and walkable downtown that is poised for redevelopment with prime storefront spaces awaiting the right tenants. This provides tremendous [economic development](#) opportunity for the next Town Manager. A decline in manufacturing, and in particular the closing of the American Optical Company, created a hole in Southbridge's economy that has yet to be filled. At its height, American Optical had been the world's largest manufacturer of ophthalmic products and employed more than 6,000 people around the world. Opportunities exist for improving the current business climate beyond the Downtown, including vacant buildings on the American Optical campus that could be filled by manufacturing/industrial, offices, or mixed-uses that involve housing as well as retail and offices. The campus is located close to both Downtown Southbridge and the [Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center](#). Additionally, there are several other older industrial mill buildings in Town that can be repositioned for a multitude of uses, such as the Globe Village area which has been designated as a CDBG target zone.



Today, many of the jobs in Southbridge have shifted from manufacturing to the education/healthcare/social assistance industry sectors, although manufacturing jobs still comprise approximately 18 percent of the employment base. There are more than a dozen advanced manufacturers, many of them producing optics-related products, in the Town.

Southbridge is a regional health services center, with high-quality health care at Harrington Hospital and its Healthcare System & Services. The Town also has 18 financial establishments located within its borders. The active [Southbridge Business Partnership](#) is a group of business owners that has the common goal of enhancing the economic growth and opportunities for local businesses. The [Chamber of Central Mass South](#) is an active regional business organization that supports Southbridge businesses.

Southbridge has five reservoirs that provide municipal water to 95 percent of residents and sells water to the neighboring town of Charlton. The Town's sewer treatment facility accepts some sewerage from the town of Sturbridge. Southbridge is in close proximity to Routes 90, 20, 84, and 395 with convenient access to employment centers in Hartford, Springfield, Providence, Boston, and Worcester.

### Projects

- The Southbridge Fire Station was constructed in 1899 with an addition in the 1940s. The community is considering construction of a modern station. The conceptual design of a new, downtown fire station estimates the cost to be as much as \$26 million. Developing an innovative financing plan for this project could be a challenge the next Town Manager faces.
- Improving Southbridge's roads and sidewalks is a high priority for the Town. A [State of the Roads & Pavement Management](#) report, which recommends the implementation of a pavement management program, is being updated. A program is currently being prepared and the next Town Manager will need to develop funding options.
- The Town's curbside trash collection contract will end in four years. A committee has been established to research this issue and the Town Manager should be highly involved in developing a solution.
- The Town is currently working with developers to create 55 units of housing at the former Wells Middle School and 44 units, in a first phase, at the former site of the American Optical Company.
- The redevelopment of Downtown Southbridge is ongoing, complete with streetscaping, traffic signals, and improved parking.

The next Town Manager needs strong project management skills and should be adept at managing multiple complex projects.





## The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree, preferably in a field related to public or business administration; Master's degree preferred.
- Minimum of three years of full-time, compensated, supervisory experience in municipal administration or related administrative activity.
- Skilled in financial management, budgeting, economic development, project management, collective bargaining, and communications.
- Strong knowledge of municipal law and procurement.
- Experience in setting goals and priorities.
- Excellent follow-through; strong work ethic.
- Strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Skilled in long-term planning; organized.
- Exhibits excellent attention to detail.
- Creative problem solver; proactive.
- Recognizes and embraces the diversity of the community. Bilingual in Spanish is a plus.
- A strong communicator, both internally and externally.
- Ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- Forward thinking; proactive; strategic.
- Able to develop a vision and gain buy-in.
- Confident, assertive, able to build morale.
- Analytical, enthusiastic, and collaborative.
- Team-oriented, innovative, and decisive.
- Knowledgeable of best practices.
- Treat others fairly and respectfully.



## How To Apply

Send cover letters and résumés via email, in a single PDF, by June 4, 2020, 5:00 p.m. EST to:

[Apply@communityparadigm.com](mailto:Apply@communityparadigm.com)

**Subject: Southbridge  
Town Manager Search**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal  
Community Paradigm Associates  
[Blynch@communityparadigm.com](mailto:Blynch@communityparadigm.com)

978-621-6733

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

