

Southbridge has hit upon hard times, and is one of the poorest communities in the state of Massachusetts. Well over half of our households are considered low to moderate income. Our high school is one of the oldest, and one considered being in the worst condition in the state. In 1999, our dropout rate was 9.9% and our teen birth rate is 5th highest in the State. Southbridge is considered an urban community due to the ethnic background of the population and financial demographics. Southbridge needs to provide more open space, we need to improve and develop recreational facilities. With a great deal of our housing being urban, being multi-family buildings, there is little green space available. Organizations like the Little League, the Soccer Association, Softball League and Pop Warner Football must compete throughout the year for use of the limited fields. With the state of the economy and the financial condition of the town of Southbridge, this problem of lack of fields and green space is not going to be soon addressed in the near future. For our kids, and their youthful years, not 'in the near future' means never. The ability to light any field obviously would be a great benefit anywhere. Lights on a Little League field could add 3 –4 more hours of available time every day. This would really help to alleviate some of the pressures created by lack of fields. Lights help also to make the open space available year round. Think of the fun created in the winter to be able to go somewhere after dark to continue to play outside in the snow. In the winter, we may also be able to create a piece of this facility where you could also skate.

Southbridge is a community of approximately 18,000 people located in central southern Worcester County. It is a working class mill town ranked 329 of 351 communities in Massachusetts for income per capita. Over 50 percent of 827 middle school students are on a reduced or free lunch program. We do not have a recreation budget. All community recreation services run on private donations and registration fees (pay as you go). We have very active and caring youth baseball, softball, soccer and football leagues, but we desperately need funds to continue our efforts. The lighting is a growing demand for practice and game fields for all participants.

Like many urban areas, our 0-17 year old population has greatly increased since 1990 however our community has not kept up with the ever increasing need for recreational space. Lighting would help our recreational needs in so many ways. In addition to adding 3-4 more hours of availability every day, lighting increases security and safety for all our sport or activity participants and other watching. Providing lighting would attract even more participants to our programs. It would help us to continue giving equal opportunities for girls as well as boys to play ball. Remember in the Field of Dreams movie, 'If you build it, they will come'. Our organization is the Southbridge Little League, and we want to show how to do wonders with a little land and with your help. The recreation facility where we would like to have lighting is owned by the town of Southbridge, it is the Henry Street Playground - 6.6 acres. Lighting and improvements to this recreation facility will add to the community's quality of life. Each organization in town, Little League, Girls Softball, Soccer and the football program have several hundred participants each year. They as well as everyone else in our town of approximately 18,000 people would benefit. Thanks to a local contract we were able to get money donated to do one of our fields over we are almost finished with it as you can see we received a donation of \$60,000 to do one of are fields over Little league only have two fields to play on in our town. We would like to finish off our field this year and it our dream to have lighting in our fields so we can have more games and not have worry about loosing daylight. If you are interested in seeing what we have done please call me at 58-864-1240 or email me at lamica18@msn.com. thank you for your time.



