

Somersworth Historic and Cultural Resources

Chapter

Planning Board Workshop 1 | Draft Goals

What We Heard

- Somersworth's identity is rooted in its historic neighborhoods and landmarks, which residents value for their character and cultural significance.
- People would like to see more events and activities that promote social connection within the community.
- There are mixed opinions about the Historic District Boundaries, Regulations and their application by the Historic District Commission.
- There is an overwhelming desire for education about historic design and preservation techniques for owners of historic properties.
- While some historic buildings have been successfully repurposed, others face neglect, underscoring the need for preservation and revitalization.
- The community wants to see vacant and underutilized historic buildings redeveloped using appropriate context but allowing for modern materials.

Theme 1 – Celebrate Somersworth's Rich History and Community

What does it mean?

The community values the historic area of the Hilltop neighborhood and feels its integrity should be maintained. There is a desire for more education about the City's history and culture. Current festivals and other community events are highly valued, and people would like to see more activities centered around food, history, music and other performing arts.

Proposed Goals –

- Historic 1A.** Promote Somersworth's historic resources by offering engaging educational activities, such as walking tours and other events in partnership with the Historical Museum, schools and other organizations.
- Historic 1B.** Expand and modernize the Historical Museum.
- Historic 1C.** Support additional community activity programming offered through the Library, Historical Museum and other cultural organizations.
- Historic 1D.** Expand opportunities for food trucks, markets and vendor-type offerings.
- Historic 1E.** Use digital platforms to promote historic and cultural resources, including maps and virtual tours to showcase historic landmarks and stories.

Other proposed goals:

Relevant Goals from Other Chapters

- Housing #4. Allow for mixed-use development nodes in more locations around the city.
- Housing #5. Revitalize downtown as a place to live, visit, and do business.
- Land Use #1. Maintain balanced, sustainable development and smart growth.
- Land Use #2. Maintain equitable and inclusive development that engages residents and ensures that projects meet community needs and reflect local values.

Theme 2 – Review the Historic District Boundaries and Regulations

What does this mean?

While there generally is a positive opinion about historic resources, people perceive that the Historic District Regulations are applied inconsistently. There is an overwhelming desire for education to create a common understanding of historic resources and what can be done to preserve them. People largely agree that the integrity of the Hilltop District should be maintained, while there is mixed opinion about the Commercial/Industrial Historic District. People support reviewing and amending the boundaries and regulations of the Historic Districts. People want to see the City encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Historic 2A. Review and amend the Historic District Boundaries and Regulations.

Historic 2B. Develop regular communication and education by the Historic District Commission about historic districts, regulations and resources.

Historic 2C. Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings - Encourage adaptive reuse projects that maintain architectural integrity while supporting economic development.

Other proposed goals:

Relevant Goals from Other Chapters

- Housing#1. Encourage development of diverse and accessible housing types.
- Housing #2. Maintain existing housing stock.
- Housing #4. Allow for mixed-use development nodes in more locations around the city.
- Housing #5. Revitalize downtown as a place to live, visit, and do business.
- Land Use #1. Maintain balanced, sustainable development and smart growth.
- Land Use #2. Maintain equitable and inclusive development that engages residents and ensures that projects meet community needs and reflect local values.