

2026 - 2029

Plan of Conservation and Development



Town of Somers, Connecticut
January 1, 2026

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Acknowledgements

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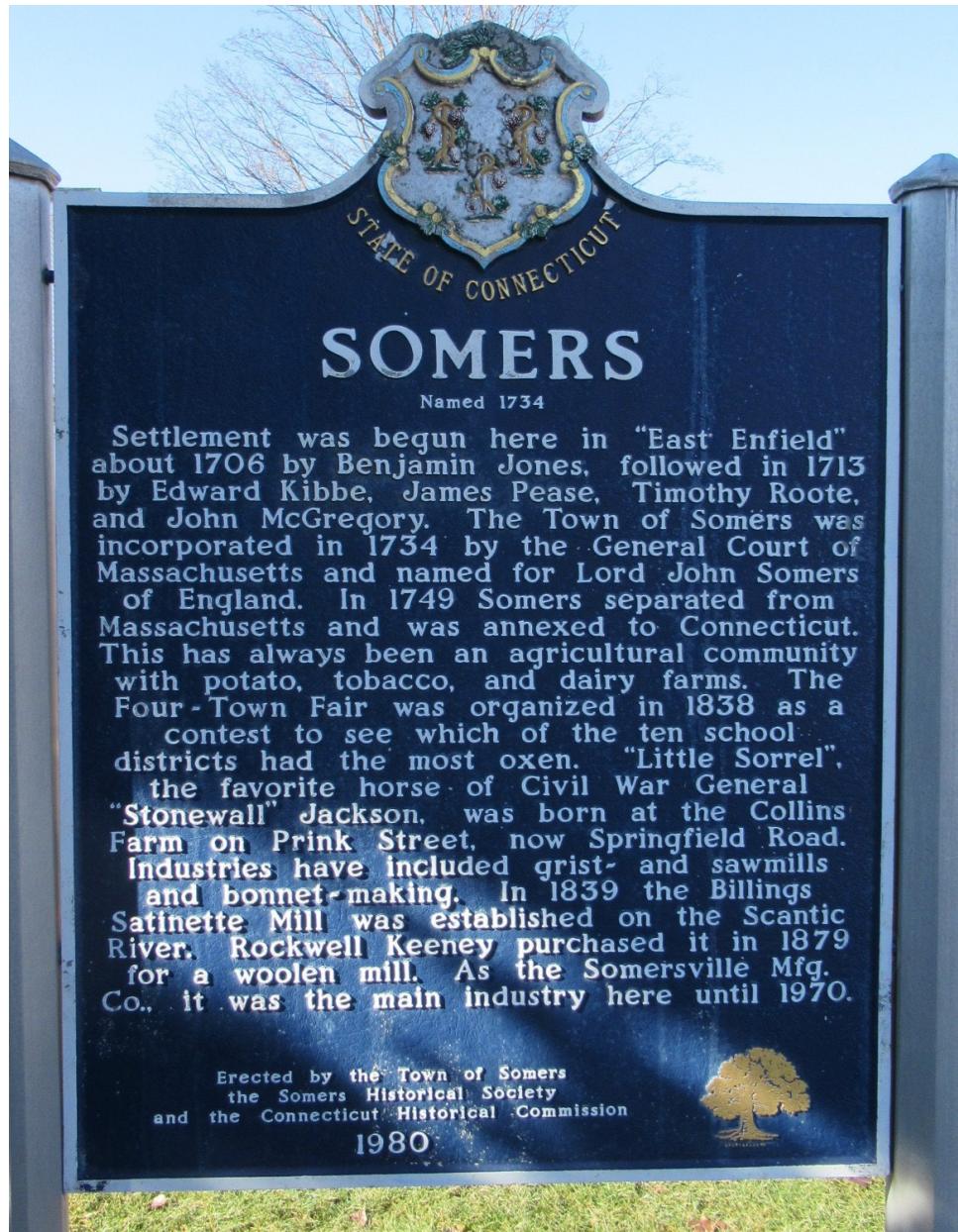
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FORWARD

The Somers Planning Commission is proud to present this 2026 Plan of Conservation and Development as its last official act prior to its dissolution with the creation of a joint Planning and Zoning Commission effective, January 1, 2026. This Plan is an update of the Plan which was adopted in 2015, and readers of this PoCD may recognize much of its content and many of its goals as being similar to the 2015 Plan.

When the Town of Somers began the process of combining its Planning Commission and Zoning Commission into a joint commission, it was determined that the best course of action for the necessary update to the Plan, which would come due in mid-2026, would be to complete a simple update, reflecting the accomplishments that had been achieved over the last decade, and setting short term goals with a short planning horizon.

As noted in the introduction chapter which follows, this Plan will sunset at the end of 2029 giving the new combined Planning and Zoning Commission time to establish itself, and begin to set its own goals and priorities, leading into a more robust planning process, set to begin in late 2027, to create a new Plan of Conservation and Development to lead the Town for the following 10 years as it heads toward its tricentennial in 2034.



1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

A Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD, the “Plan”) is an advisory document that serves as a municipality’s official action plan for its future land use, development, and conservation goals. The Plan outlines a town’s physical, social, economic, and governmental conditions and trends to formulate a community’s vision for its future. PoCDs contain information on a municipality’s housing supply, recreation, transportation, social services and public utilities which assist in identifying community needs pertaining to these areas. The Plan is not a mandate, but instead acts as a comprehensive set of goals and implementation strategies that guide the physical and economic development of a municipality. The execution of the PoCD is carried out by the town’s staff, boards and commissions, community groups, and private development.

Goals - Broad and overarching vision and core themes for the Town. Goals can span across sectors.

Implementation Strategies - The process for transforming plans into actions and actions into desired outcomes. Implementation may involve specific prescribed steps and assign designated bodies for completion and monitoring.

This Plan for Somers is intended to:

- Organize and state the community’s vision for its future,
- Recognize strategies which will make Somers an even better place, and
- Identify action steps that, when implemented, will help attain that vision.

As Somers residents and officials implement this Plan, those efforts will help protect important resources, guide appropriate development, address community needs, protect community character, and enhance the quality of life of current and future residents.

Statutory Basis and State Plan

Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Chapter 126, Section 8-23, requires every municipality’s Planning Commission to prepare, amend, and adopt a Plan of Conservation and Development once every ten years. To ensure that municipal development is in alignment with that of neighboring cities and communities, local PoCDs shall be cohesive with state and regional Plans.

Each Plan of Conservation and Development must consider:

1. The need for housing, health, education, recreation, social services, utilities, safety, transportation, and communications;
2. The need for affordable housing;
3. The protection of drinking water supplies;
4. The use of clustered and other housing development patterns instead of conventional development patterns;
5. The state and regional Plans of Conservation and Development;
6. The need for energy-efficiency and energy conservation;
7. The protection and preservation of agriculture; and
8. The physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends, in general.

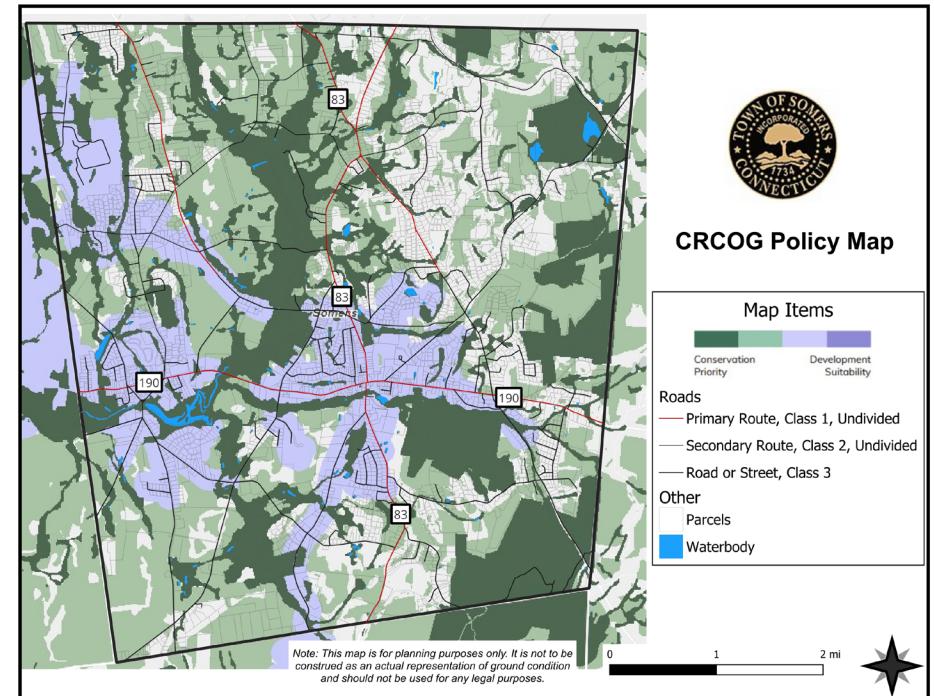
The Town adopted its most recent PoCD in 2015. The current Plan outlines three overarching goals: Protecting Important Resources, Guiding Appropriate Development, and Addressing Community Needs.

Consistency with the Capitol Region Council of Governments

Somers is one of thirty-eight towns within the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) planning region, and as such, this Plan was developed to be consistent with the CRCOG Plan. The most recent CRCOG Plan titled *Connect Capitol Region*, was adopted on November 20, 2024, and has been analyzed for the creation of this Plan.

Major themes found within the CRCOG Plan include cultivating a green and resilient future, developing a competitive and inclusive regional economy, reforming outdated “Steady Habits” in the region’s institutions and governance, investing in transportation options for every journey, and expanding and diversifying the region’s housing stock. These themes are comparable to those found within the State Plan and are consistent with those found within this Plan. Overall, the Plan is consistent with the CRCOG Plan as outlined below.

This Plan outlines a number of strategies the Town believes will achieve the appropriate balance between conservation and development efforts over the next ten years, ensuring an excellent quality of life for the Town’s residents. The Plan promotes sustainability and resilience through the support of farms and agricultural activities along with promoting the repositioning of old mill buildings. This Plan also encourages increased walkability in Town paired with efforts to improve residential patterns by supporting the placement of housing near Somers Center in response to changing housing needs in Town. Several other relevant community needs are discussed including the importance of economic development opportunities, and the preservation of historic and natural resources that shape the Town’s character. Overall, this Plan addresses the themes outlined in the regional Plan and displays Somers’ commitment to applying best local planning practices.



Consistency with the 2025 State Conservation and Development Policies Plan

The 2025-2030 State Conservation and Development Policies Plan was adopted March 5, 2025 and therefore is the State Plan that was consulted during the process of developing this PoCD

The 2025 State C&D Plan takes a different approach from those of years past. It places more emphasis on the written document and the policies found within than on the Locational Guide Map (LGM). Historically, state agencies were required to confirm consistency between the local PoCDs and the LGM when considering state funding for local projects. Prior LGMs noted Priority Funding Areas which relied on existing infrastructure availability and were based on census blocks. Census blocks are formed around population density rather than land area and they vary greatly in size. As such,

the former LGM often included whole census blocks in priority funding areas that may have only partly included infrastructure, and therefore could be eligible to receive state funding when ground conditions may not align with the policies within the Plan. The updated LGM is based on activity centers which consider downtown areas, transit stations and corridors, infrastructure, and other public facilities. The map creates a circumference around these activity centers which is based on the considerations for realistic growth around existing built-up areas. This model lends itself to prioritizing development in and around already dense areas. This model is also less likely to create conflict areas where natural conditions may call for conservation priorities, but the census block is noted as a priority funding area for development.

In reviewing the 2025 LGM, there are significant portions of prime farmland soils on the western half of Town and large tracts of Protected Open Space towards the eastern and southeastern

portions of town. Somers Center and Somersville, (located along the Scantic River), are indicated as centrally located suburban centers on the LGM and serve as important civic hubs that should be prioritized for business development. The Plan recommends strategies to enhance the village area through repurposing the mill building and developing strengthened connections between the two business zones in town through improvements to the Route 190 corridor roadway and streetscape. Additionally, the Plan encourages low impact development, further supporting sustainable development efforts that restrict development near critical habitat areas, and encouraging infill development in the Town center.

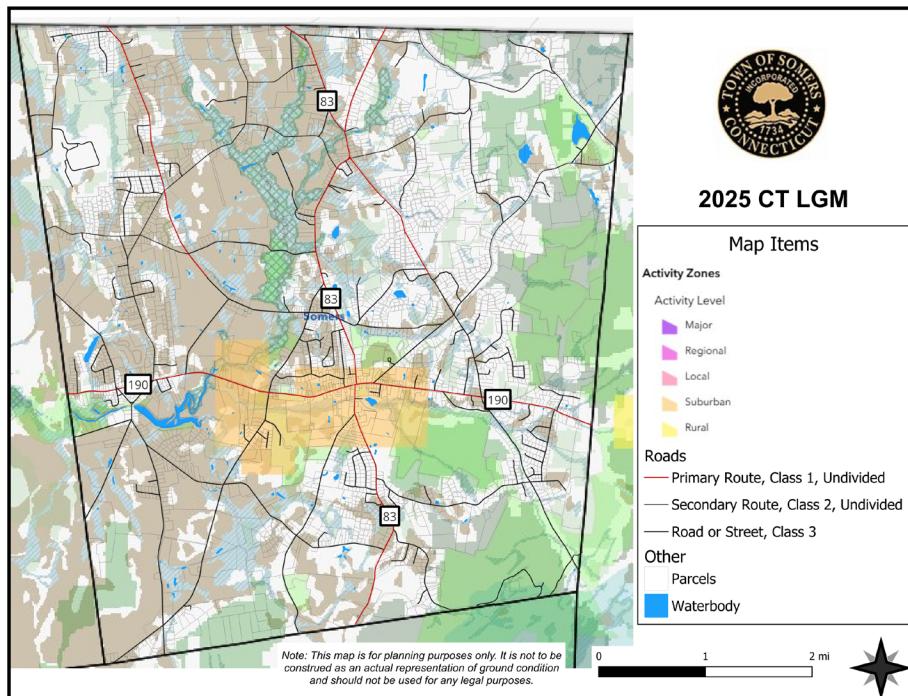
Overall Plan Direction

Based on the limited effective duration of this Plan and the impending combination of the Planning and Zoning Commissions into one, the Planning Commission has chosen to use the same overall guiding philosophy of the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development and to allow the new Planning and Zoning Commission to develop its own philosophy for a new PoCD in 2029. The overall philosophy of this Plan is:

Balance conservation and development to protect and enhance community character and improve Somers' quality of life.

To help demonstrate how this overriding philosophy will be applied, the plan has been organized around the following strategic themes:

- Protecting Important Resources
- Guiding Appropriate Development
- Addressing Community Needs



Preparation of the Plan

Due to the Statutory requirement of updating the Town's PoCD, this Plan was developed over a short period and is intended to serve the Town for a shorter than usual duration, only four years, while the newly created Planning and Zoning Commission is established and begins to set its own priorities for the years ahead. A new Plan will be developed using significant public and stakeholder input to guide the town beginning in 2029. The Planning Commission worked to prepare this update by reviewing the 2015 Plan and using the policies and strategies within to shape the recommendations outlined in this Plan. Then, with the assistance of a planning consultant, this Plan document was prepared. Before adopting the Plan, the Planning Commission referred the Plan to the Board of Selectmen for its review and comment before holding a public hearing of their own for its adoption.



Maintenance of the Plan

This Plan is intended to be a dynamic document. As circumstances change in Somers and as strategies are implemented and evaluated, the Plan should be refined to address new issues, adjust a course of action, or refine strategies.

The challenge for the Planning Commission will be to keep the Plan up-to-date and implementation on-course in the face of changing community priorities.

***This Plan was adopted on
December 16, 2025 with an
effective date of January 1, 2026.***



2. CONTEXT

Overview

This chapter of the Plan of Conservation and Development summarizes conditions and trends affecting Somers at the time the Plan was being prepared.

Historical Context

European settlement of New England began in 1620 at Plymouth Rock and in 1634 along the Connecticut River near present day Hartford. European settlement did not reach the area we now know as Somers until about 1706.

Due to the fertile lands here, settlement grew quickly. In 1724, residents formed their own parish so that they would not need to travel to Enfield for religious services each week. In 1734, the Town of Somers was carved off from Enfield. In 1749, Somers was separated from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and annexed by the Colony of Connecticut.

Until the last few decades, Somers was primarily an agricultural community. Residents worked the land as subsistence farmers and traded with their neighbors. Various gristmills and sawmills were established to meet community needs. In 1839, the Billings Mill was constructed on the Scantic River, effectively creating the village of Somersville. The mill grew over time and attracted immigrants from other areas to the jobs located there.

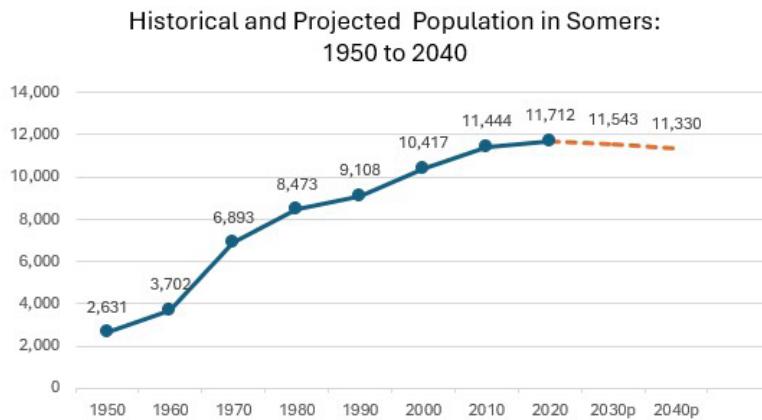
Eventually, a trolley line connected Somers to Enfield broadening the education, shopping, and recreation opportunities for residents.

Following World War II, the proliferation of the automobile and a desire for suburban living brought changes to Somers. People could live in Somers and commute to jobs in Enfield, Springfield, and other areas. Population grew and farms were turned into subdivisions and horse estates.

Today, Somers is primarily a residential community with fewer jobs in the community than residents who are in the work force. While the establishment of a Connecticut prison in the 1960s brought more jobs to Somers, most residents still travel elsewhere for employment.

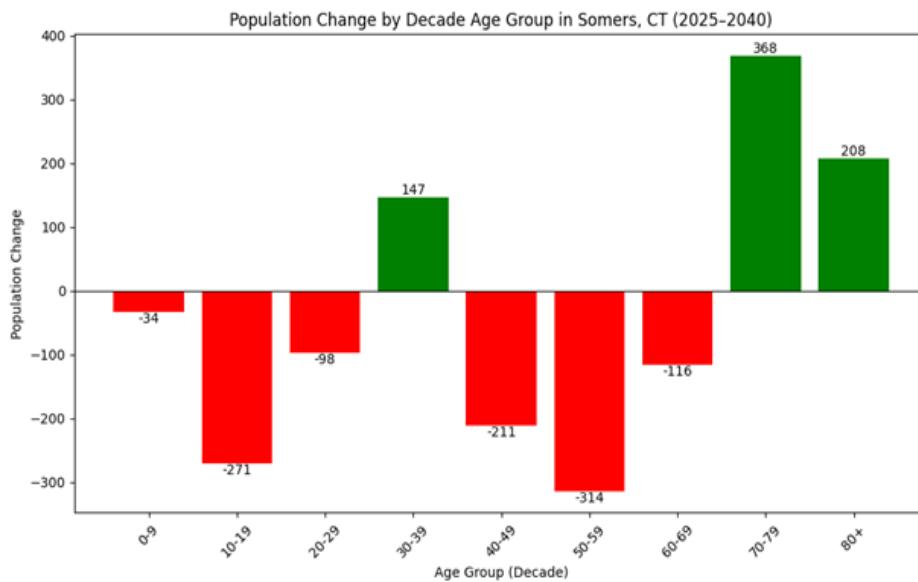
Demographics

According to the 2019- 2023 American Community Survey via the Advance CT 2025 Town Profile, Somers had a population of 10,164 people in the year 2023. This includes about 1,188 persons living in group quarters at the Osborn State correctional institution (Source: CT Department of Correction).



Sources: CT SoTS 1950- 2010. Projected population (denoted by "p") by CT Data Center.

Over the next twenty to thirty years, the major demographic trend in Somers is expected to be an increase in the number of older residents. Notably, the 70- 79 age group and residents aged 80 and above are expected to have the largest increase over the next twenty years. It is important to note that the US Census includes the prison population with the overall population for the Town of Somers. As of December 1, 2025, the population of Osborn Correctional institute was 1,222.



Source: CT Data Center. statistics analyzed by Microsoft Copilot AI

Since different age groups have different needs and desires, the changing age composition of Somers will likely be an important consideration. Somers might anticipate increased interest in housing options, tax relief and programs for older persons (adult education, passive recreation, social programs, etc.) over the next 20 to 30 years.

Additional Demographic Data

The following demographic information was provided to the Town based on the Advance CT 2025 Town Profile, 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, and Partnership for Strong Communities 2024 Housing Data Profile.

- The median age (half the population was older, and half was younger) was 45.3 years (2021 ACS- S0101)
- About 19 percent of Somers residents were age 65 or older (2021 ACS- S0101)
- About 2 percent of Somers residents were age 85 and older(2021 ACS- S0101)
- The average household size in Somers was 2.65 people (2021 ACS- S1101)
- The average family size was 3.04 people (2021 ACS- S1101)
- Of the 65 and older population, about 10 percent were living alone (2021 ACS- S1101)
- On average, about 7 percent of households included single mothers and children and about 2 percent of households with children were led by single fathers (2021 ACS- S1101)
- Somers is a family-oriented town, with about 77 percent of its households identifying themselves as families (2021 ACS-S1101). About 67 percent of families include married couples, and about 36 percent of that group has children younger than the age of 18. (2021 ACS- S1101)
- About 90 percent of people 25 years and older had graduated from high school or higher (2021 ACS- S1501)
- About 39 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (2021 ACS- S1501)
- About 94 percent of the people living in Somers were born in the United States (2021 ACS- B05001)

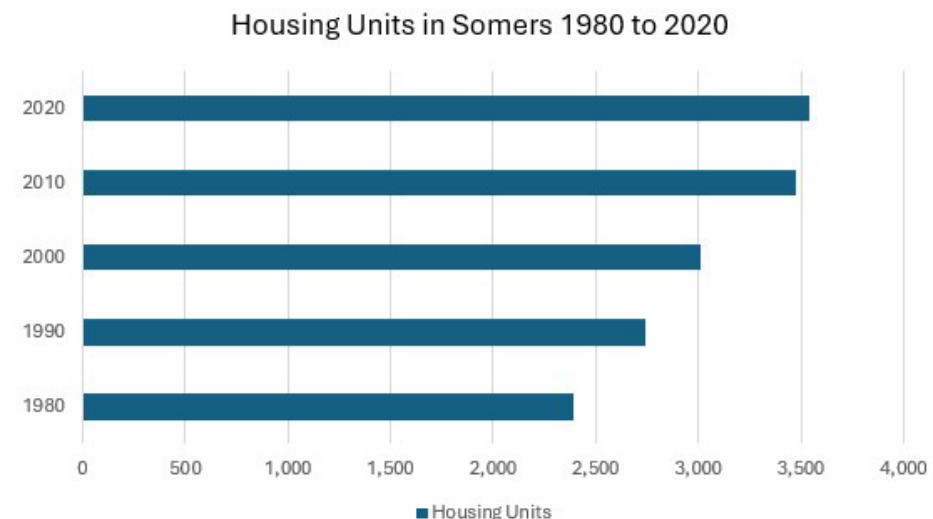
Town of Somers

- About 52 percent of the people living in Somers were born in Connecticut (2021 ACS- B05002)
- About 3 percent of the people living in Somers were foreign born (2021 ACS- B05002)
- About 94 percent of all households in Somers speak English at home (2021 ACS- S1601)
- About 6 percent of all households spoke a language other than English at home (2021 ACS- S1601)
- About 4 percent spoke Spanish (2021 ACS- S1601)
- About 2 percent spoke another language (for example other Indo-European languages or Asian and Pacific Island language)
- About 85 percent of the population indicated they were white (2021 ACS- S0601)
- About 6 percent were black or African-American (2021 ACS- S0601)
- About 0.2 percent were Asian (2021 ACS- S0601)
- About 6 percent were some other race (2021 ACS- S0601)
- About 3 percent of the population reported two or more races (2021 ACS- S0601)

Housing

Even though economic conditions slowed housing production in many communities over the last decade, housing growth continued in Somers. As of 2023, there were 3,558 housing units in Somers (Source: 2025 Town Profile).

Most housing in Somers consists of owner-occupied, detached



Source: 1980-2010 Census; 2020 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Housing Structures by Unit Count

	Single-family detached	Single-family attached (townhouse)	Two family	3-4 family	5-9 family	10-19 family	20-49 family	50+ family
Units	3,263	47	78	66	27	40	8	11
Percentage of units	92.2%	1.3%	2.2%	1.9%	0.8%	1.1%	0.2%	0.3%

Source: 2024-2029 Somers Affordable Housing plan

units. Somers has less multi-family housing (which might be of interest to an older household) than surrounding communities. Since less than 10 percent of the housing in Somers is governmentally assisted or deed-restricted to be affordable to persons earning up to 80 percent of the area median income, Somers is subject to the “affordable housing appeals process” (CGS Section 8-30g) whereby an affordable housing development may be proposed in almost any location, regardless of current zoning.

Additional Housing Data

The following information was reported to the Town based on the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates:

- About 34 percent of owner-occupied homes were valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999 by their owners (2021 ACS- DP04)
- About 52 percent of owner-occupied homes were valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 by their owners (2021 ACS- DP04)
- About 9 percent of owner-occupied homes were valued between \$500,000 to \$999,999 by their owners (2021 ACS- DP04)
- There were 38 homes in Somers estimated to be worth more than \$1 million (2021 ACS- DP04)
- About 79 percent of homes in Somers were heated by fuel oil (2021 ACS- B25040)
- About 3 percent of homes in Somers were heated by electricity (2021 ACS- B25040)
- About 12 percent of homes in Somers were heated by bottles, tanks or liquid propane (2021 ACS- B25040)
- About 2 percent of homes in Somers were heated by wood or other fuel (2021 ACS- B25040)



Economy

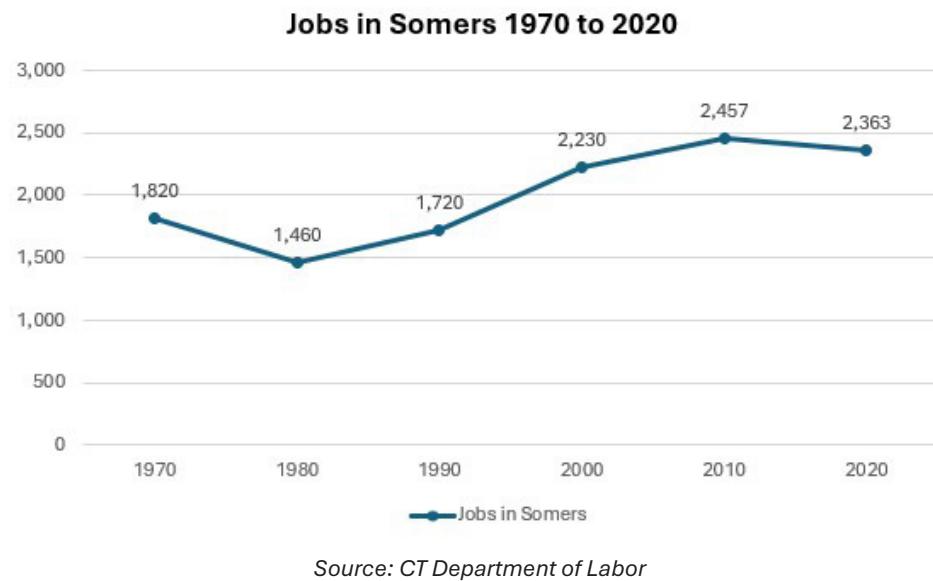
While Somers is not a major employment center, there were approximately 3,613 jobs in Somers in 2023 (up from 2,457 jobs in 2010). Many of these jobs are located at the State of Connecticut Department of Corrections Osborn Correctional Institution. This facility serves as the top employer in town with other major employers including the New England Tractor Trailer Training School, Grower Direct Farms, Geissler's Supermarket, and Sonny's Place. Top industries include local government, crop production, accommodation and food services, specialty trade contractors, and ambulatory health care services. The median household income in Somers is \$115,119, a reflection of the high-paying jobs that are within reach of Somers' residents.

Additional Economic Data

The following information was reported to the Town based on the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.

- About 19 percent of the households in Somers earned \$200,000 per year or more (2021 ACS- S1901)
- Nearly 36 percent of Somers households received some Social Security income (2021 ACS- DP03)
- The average income from Social Security was \$27,637 (2021 ACS- DP03)
- About 31 percent of all Somers households received retirement income other than Social Security (2021 ACS- DP03)
- 82% of workers report using a private vehicle to commute to work (2025 Town Profile)
- About 3 percent of Somers residents car-pooled to work (2021 ACS- S0801)
- About 15 percent worked at home (2025 Town Profile)

- About 2 percent of Somers workers walked or took public transportation to work (Source: 2026 Town Profile)
- For those Somers residents who commuted to work, it took them an average of approximately 29 minutes to get to work (Source: 2025 Town Profile)



Top Industries		Jobs	Share of Industry
Lightcast, 2023 (2 and 3 digit NAICS)			
1	Government <i>Local Government</i>	1,126	53%
2	Agriculture, Forestry & Hunting <i>Crop Production</i>	373	99%
3	Accommodation and Food Services <i>Food Services and Drinking Places</i>	283	98%
4	Construction <i>Specialty Trade Contractors</i>	274	81%
5	Health Care and Social Assistance <i>Ambulatory Health Care Services</i>	271	49%
Total Jobs, All Industries		3,613	

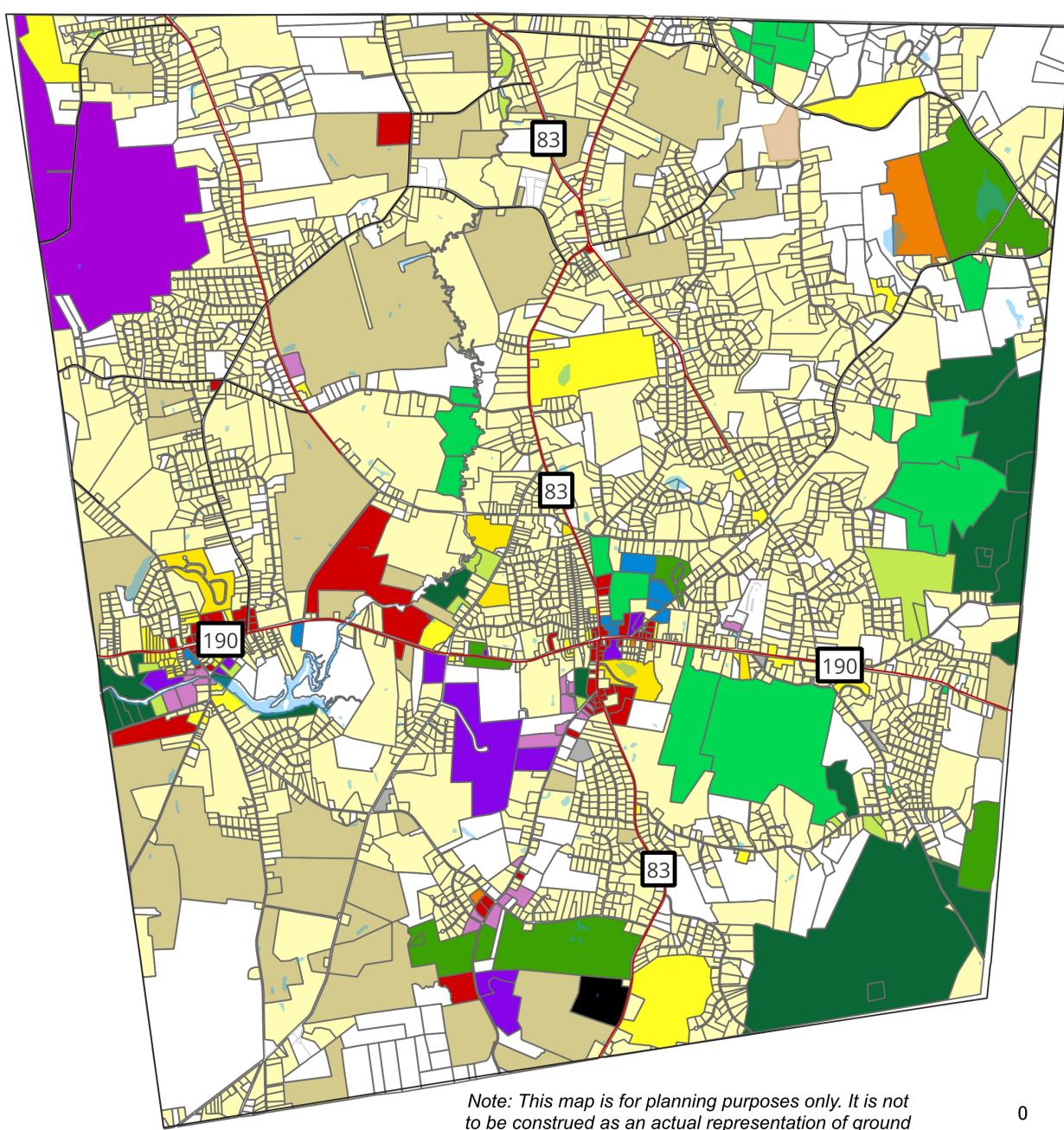


Existing Use

Map Items

Land Use

- RESIDENTIAL
- 2-4 FAMILY
- MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- BUSINESS
- MIXED USE
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- FARM
- DEDICATED OPEN SPACE
- EARTH EXCAVATION
- MANAGED OPEN SPACE
- MUNICIPAL FACILITY
- MUNICIPAL LAND
- SOLAR FARM
- STATE FACILITY
- STATE LAND
- UTILITY
- VACANT



Note: This map is for planning purposes only. It is not to be construed as an actual representation of ground condition and should not be used for any legal purposes.

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Land Use in Somers

As can be seen on the current land use map, much of the land in Somers is already established with a specific land use such as single-family homes, agricultural uses, and open space. However, there are several parcels that are vacant or over-sized which may have the potential to support additional development in the future.

Zoning in Somers

Somers has six zoning districts at present:

- three residential districts (about 98 percent of the land area),
- two commercial districts (about 0.7 percent of the land area), and
- one industrial district (about 1.3 percent of the land area).

The key difference between the residential zones is that the Residential A District allows only single family homes, while both Residential zones allow two-family residences, age-restricted housing, and open space subdivisions. In addition, the Residential A-1 districts (the largest in town by far) allows for commercial horse farming and greenhouse and nursery operations.



Business/ Industry Development



Multi-Family Residential Community



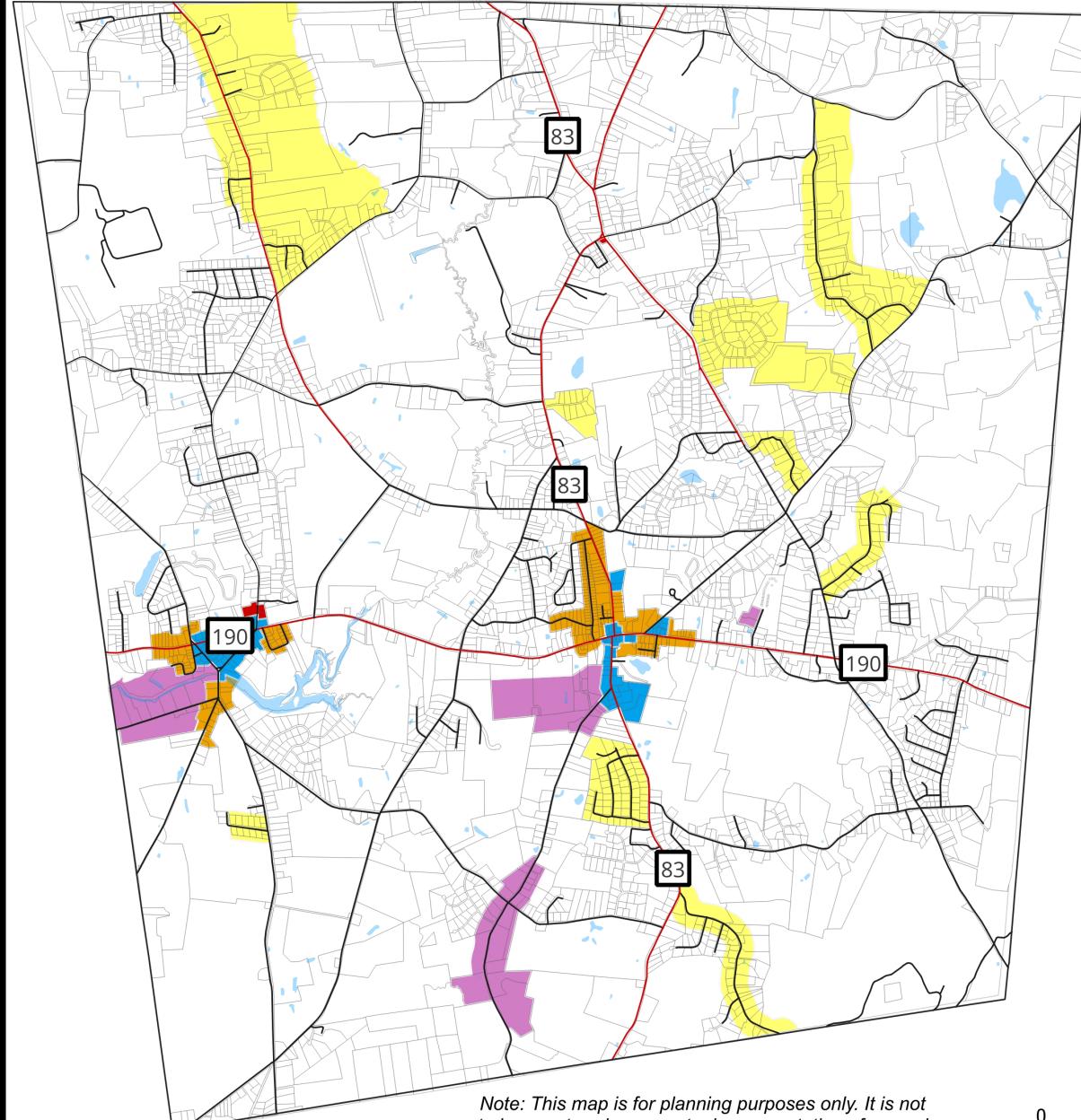
Single-Family Residential Community



Community Facility/ School



Farms



Zoning

Map Items

Category	Symbol	Description
Zones	Yellow, Light Gray, Orange, Red, Purple, Blue	Residential A, Residential A1, Residential A2, B - Business, I - Industrial, VB - Village Business
Other	White, Blue	Parcels, Waterbody



3. PROTECTING IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Overview

Somers derives much of its character and quality of life from both its historic pattern of development and unique combination of natural, historic, and scenic resources.

By protecting these important resources and guiding future development, Somers can maintain and enhance community character and quality of life for generations to come.

Protecting important resources is a critical element in maintaining community character and ensuring quality of life for current and future generations.

Protect Natural Resources

Conservation of natural resources in Somers is important for preserving environmental functions, maintaining biodiversity and preventing damage to the environment.

Protecting water quality is the Town's highest natural resource protection priority. Somers' surface and groundwater resources provide potable water, contribute to biological diversity, and enhance quality of life for residents.

Somers can accomplish this by:

- incorporating "low impact development" (LID) strategies into local regulations to reduce the water quality of impacts of new development,
- enhancing regulations to protect aquifer areas,
- preserving riparian buffers along wetlands and watercourses, and
- ensuring that local septic systems function effectively.

Protect Natural Resources

Goals

1. Continue to protect water quality in Somers.
2. Maintain upland review areas and vegetated buffers adjacent to wetlands and watercourses in order to protect these resources.
3. Continue to protect other natural resources in Somers.
4. Discourage the introduction of non-native species in Somers.

Action Items

1. Consider establishing a septic management program to identify possible septic problems and avoid potential pollution.
2. Conduct public education about protecting water quality (including reducing fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide use).

Preserve Open Space

Preserving open space in Somers will help conserve important natural resources, protect community character, provide fiscal benefits, and enhance the quality of life for residents.

In 2014, the Town established an Open Space and Trails Committee to help plan for additional open space preservation in Somers and over the past ten years has continued to preserve open space wherever possible.

Somers should effectively utilize provisions in State statutes that allow for the preservation of open space at the time of development. Even though Somers has a regulation requiring the set-aside of 20 percent of the land, they often waive this in favor of payment of a fee by the developer. While this may be advantageous if there is no desirable open space area on the parcel, it can result in more houses and less open space in the long run. Somers should acquire the land when it contributes to an overall open space system (such as a greenway) but accept the fee if there is little prospect of an open space system being established or an important open space area (such as ridgelines) is being preserved.



Scantic River State Park

Source: CT DEEP

Preserving open space is important to maintaining community character and the overall quality of life.

Another approach would be to more strongly encourage “open space development patterns” to further encourage developments which result in the preservation of meaningful amounts of open space. While Open Space Subdivisions are allowed by the Zoning Regulations, the development style is not required.

Somers should consider making Open Space Subdivisions required instead of allowing conventional subdivisions for parcels over a certain size. While not all parcels and developments will be suitable for an open space design, larger developments almost certainly are.

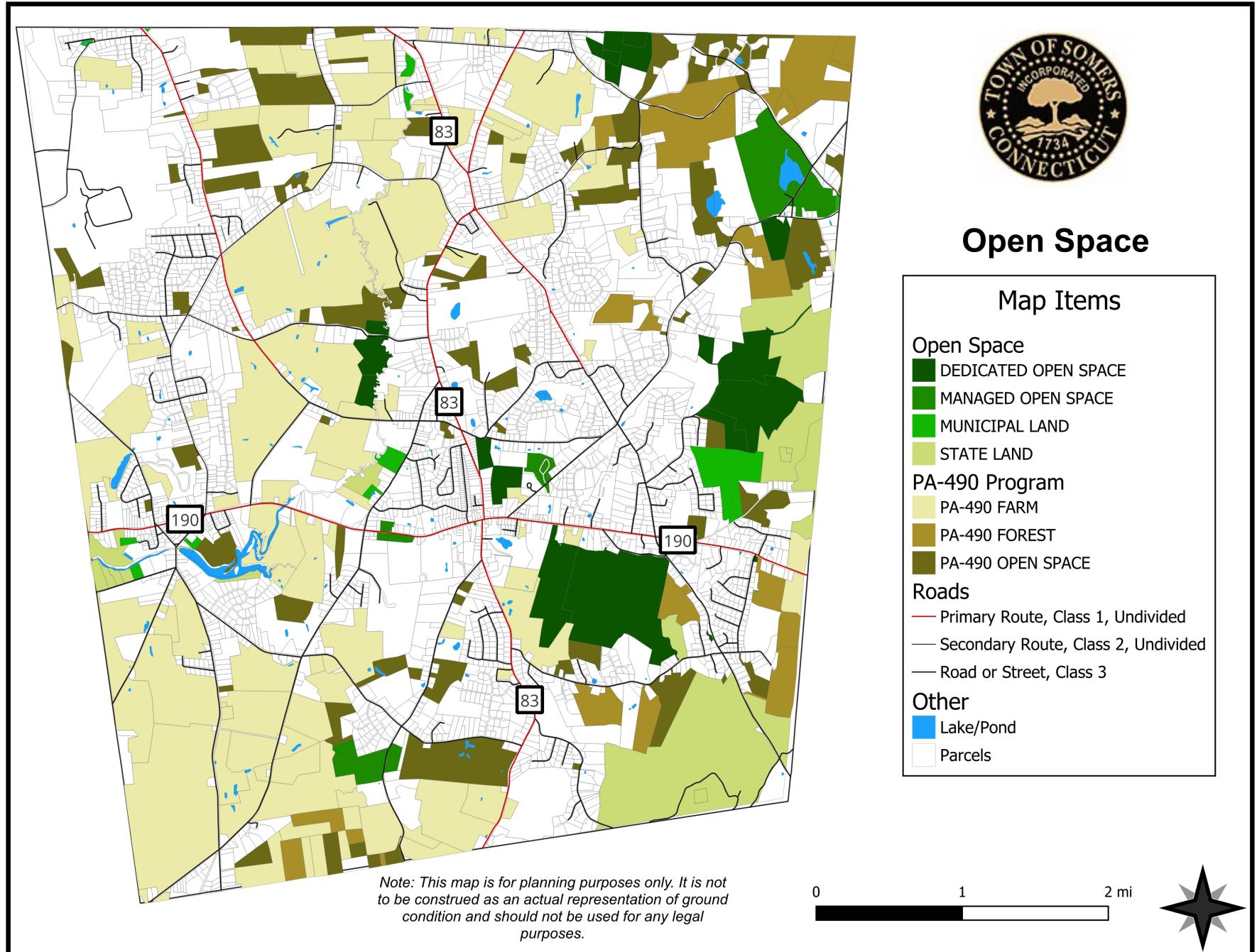
Preserve Open Space

Goals

1. Continue efforts to preserve open space in Somers.
2. Continue efforts to interconnect open space areas into greenways accessible to the public.
3. Seek to maximize the preservation of open space as part of new development.
4. Encourage “open space developments” as opposed to conventional subdivisions.
5. Continue to enhance the open space acquisition fund through annual contributions in the budget and other means.
6. Pursue the state and/or federal open space grants.
7. Continue to identify and prioritize open space parcels for acquisition.
8. Encourage other organizations to allow for public access and use.

Action Items

1. Adopt regulations to allow off-site dedication and/or banking of open space.



Support Farms and Farming

Somers has been an agricultural community for nearly 300 years. Farms and farming are an important part of the local economy, reflect the Town's agricultural heritage, and enhance the overall character of Somers.

Somers has been fortunate that local landowners have participated in the State's "purchase of development rights" program for farmland. To date, thousands of acres in Somers have been preserved in this way.

Somers should continue to support farms and farming and allow for agritourism uses to help sustain existing farms.

Solar Farm along Route 83



Source: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce Website

Preserve Character Resources

The "character" of Somers is something that is commonly mentioned by residents and visitors as one of the defining attributes of the community. Preserving and enhancing the things that contribute to this sense of character is a key recommendation of the Plan.

Historic Resources

Residents are appreciative and protective of historic buildings in Somers since they contribute to the overall character of the community.

Somers contains two historic districts listed on the National Register, the Somers Historic District which encompasses the area surrounding Somers Center and the Somersville Historic District which encompasses the Somersville area. However, there is no local historic designation for either of these districts and therefore the national designation is essentially an honorary designation and does not restrict or control the development within. While a property owner could be cited for "unreasonable destruction" of a designated property, this may not prevent the loss of the resource.

Community Events

Community events contribute to the overall character of the community and these events should be continued and maintained.

Undeveloped Land

The amount of land in Somers that is undeveloped forest and fields certainly contributes to community appeal. As a result, being mindful of how to retain undeveloped land will help preserve the characteristics of the community that residents value. .

Somers participates in the State-established Public Act-490 property assessment program where land that is farm, forest, or “open space” receives a reduced assessment while such land remains in an undeveloped state. (as opposed to being assessed at fair market value). The PA-490 program makes large parcels of land more affordable to retain and this helps preserve the overall character of the community.

Under this program, the designation of land as “Farm” or as “Forest” is determined by statutory criteria (CGS Section 12-107). On the other hand, the designation of land as “Open Space” is can be defined locally. Somers has chosen to make this portion of the program available to residentially zoned parcels of land which are more than twice the minimum lot size required (i.e. – more than 1.84 acres in area). The reduced assessment is available for that portion of the lot after the first acres.

The PA-490 program and the PA-490 Open Space policy should be continued.

Design Review

In order to help preserve and enhance the character of the community, Somers should expand the use the design review process in the community.

Residents have indicated they care about the design of new commercial, industrial, multi-family, and institutional development and experience in many communities demonstrates that a design review process is an effective way to accomplish this.

Somers has adopted a Village District which governs zoning and design within the Somers Center and Somersville areas, which include design standards and a mandatory review by the Design Advisory Board (DAB).

In addition, the DAB advises the Planning and Zoning Commission



Four Town Fair Parade, 2021

Source: 4townfair.com

on matters of site and building design in all commercial and industrial areas. The Commission should adopt design guidelines to ensure that development are meeting the expectations of residents and the community overall.

Scenic Resources

Scenic character plays a significant role in the overall attractiveness of the community and efforts should continue to be devoted to protecting scenic features and resources.

Hilltops and hillsides are among Somers’ most prominent scenic features, offering long views and defining the town’s landscape. Equally significant are the open fields, which not only contribute to the community’s agricultural character but also provide a sense of openness and rural charm.

Undeveloped lands (farms, forests, and other undeveloped lands) make a significant contribution to the overall character of Somers. Since the 1960s, when the Connecticut legislature realized that increasing taxes were forcing land into development, Somers has participated in the Public Act 490 program whereby large landowners can receive a reduced assessment. If the land is developed within 10 years of its enrollment in the program, the Town recoups a prorated share of the taxes that would have otherwise been paid without the tax reduction. Somers should continue to participate in this program and consider ways to enhance this program to help preserve the rural character of the community.

Somers also has many scenic roads (i.e. narrow, winding, tree lined, etc.). The Scenic Road Ordinance offers a degree of protection for designated roads by limiting road improvements that might alter a road's scenic character. More roads should be considered for designation.



As development occurs, consideration should be given to protecting scenic elements through conservation easements, the reduction of curb cuts, open space acquisition, or other means to limit the disturbance of stone walls, street trees, and other scenic features. Utility maintenance is also a threat to scenic roads. Utility companies and their contractors often trim street trees for utility reliability without consideration of the overall impact on the character of the community.

Preserve Character Resources

Goals

1. Continue to encourage “sensitive stewardship” (pride in ownership) as the most effective means of preserving historic resources.
2. Continue efforts to protect scenic features and resources.
3. Continue efforts to promote property maintenance and discourage “blighting” influences on adjacent properties.

Actions Items

1. Endorse design guidelines to help guide applicants and the Design Review Board.
2. Inventory scenic resources and establish policies and regulations to protect them.
3. Consider expanding the P.A. 490 open space program.
4. Work with utility companies to preserve scenic streetscapes.

Promote Sustainability/Resiliency

For the purposes of this Plan, “sustainability” refers to the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The term “resiliency” refers to the community’s ability to readily recover from sudden changes or adversity.

Much of Somers was built during a time when resources to support growth and development patterns were unconstrained, and it was assumed that major changes were unlikely to occur and that the environment would continue to support such growth. While this may still be the case, it seems prudent to evaluate alternative scenarios and the possible implications of those scenarios. If we are to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations, being a sustainable and resilient community – able to adapt to possible future changes – may be especially important.

Solar Farm along Route 83



Promote Sustainability

Promote Energy Conservation/Sustainability

Energy availability and cost are likely to be more significant issues in Somers in the future. This has financial implications for the Town and for all its residents and businesses.

To help be a leader in this effort, the Town should evaluate alternative approaches to conventional grid scale systems and make recommendations to reduce energy usage, increase reliability, and save residents money:

- Reducing operating / lifecycle costs
- Lowering the “carbon footprint”
- Reducing energy use and cost
- Generating energy (solar, wind, fuel cell, etc.)
- Transitioning to renewable energy for town vehicles (natural gas, electric, biofuels, and hybrids)
- Educate residents on the financial benefits of transitioning to renewable energy sources

Promote Water Conservation

Simple changes to some everyday activities can reduce most people’s domestic water use by 10% or more. Somers should encourage and promote water conservation especially since most areas of the community rely on groundwater from individual wells for domestic use.

Promote Waste Reduction/Recycling

The overall waste stream and recycling is another potential area for investigation and education in Somers. Reducing the waste stream and promoting recycling will be promoted.

Educate Residents About Sustainability Concepts

Efforts will be devoted towards educating residents and schoolchildren about sustainability concepts.

Promote Resiliency

One of the lessons learned for Somers from the recent major storms the region has experienced was the value of the Town's emergency response capability and emergency preparedness planning. Following some of these events, electrical power was lost to sections of the community for an extended period leaving some residents without heat or water. Because Somers has focused heavily on emergency preparedness planning, the Town was able to activate its emergency response procedures to quickly provide access to emergency shelters, bottled water, and other supposed and services needed by the community.

Somers will continue to review and improve emergency preparedness plans (single events) in order to be able to respond to these events in the future. Evaluating possible scenarios and preparing for unknown events before they occur is a useful exercise for a community. Such approaches help the community respond in a timely manner with the appropriate tools and resources.

Somers will also continue to review and improve hazard mitigation plans for recurring events, such as flooding. Somers participated in the preparation of the Capitol Region Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan Update 2024 – 2029 in order to help identify and mitigate potential impacts from natural events. Somers will continue efforts to assess the vulnerability of public and private infrastructure (e.g., utilities, transportation, structures) to such events, prepare for recurring events, and respond to such events when they occur.

Promote Sustainability/Resiliency
Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote energy conservation/ sustainability. 2. Promote water conservation. 3. Promote waste reduction/ recycling. 4. Educate residents about sustainability concepts. 5. Continue to review and improve hazard mitigation plans for recurring events, such as flooding. 6. Continue to review and improve emergency preparedness plans.
Actions Items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure (e.g. utilities, transportation, structures) to natural events, prepare for recurring events, and respond to such events when they occur.



4. GUIDING APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Somers is a desirable community which means the demand and pressure for growth is expected to continue. How this growth is managed will have a significant impact on Somers community and the quality of life for its current and future residents.



Somers seeks to guide development in ways that will address community needs and contribute to our character and quality of life.



Enhance Somers Center

Somers Center has been the focus of community life for almost 300 years. Churches, civic functions, shops, and a variety of other uses central to the daily life of the community are all located here. It is a major goal of the Plan to ensure that Somers Center continues to be the focal point of the community in the future.

Create Walkable Villages

At the present time, the function of the village is challenged by the automobile focus that has emerged. While Somers Center has some sidewalks, they are narrow in places and do not serve the full extent of the village.

Enhancing pedestrian access throughout Somers Center will improve overall quality of life by reducing dependence on motor vehicles, easing traffic congestion, and lessening parking demand. Expanded walkability will also create a safer, healthier, and more convenient environment for residents and visitors, while encouraging people to spend more time in the Center and better connect with local destinations, shops, and services.

In order to make Somers Center a more walkable village, Somers should encourage:

- buildings that are oriented to the street in ways that invite and support pedestrians more than automobiles,
- sidewalks throughout the area that are appropriately sized for their use,
- safe pedestrian street crossings,
- streetscape amenities such as shade trees, seating areas, and pedestrian scaled lighting, and
- pedestrian oriented business signage such as on windows and awnings.

Aerial View of Somers Center



Many of these improvements can and should be installed as improvements are made to Routes 190 and 83 or required as properties within the villages are redeveloped. Grants are also available to support these types of programs.

Monitor the Village Districts

Many of these improvements can and should be installed as improvements are made to Routes 190 and 83 or required as properties within the villages are redeveloped. Grants are also available to support these types of programs.

A “village district” allows the Zoning Commission to have greater control over the design of future development in an area and to regulate:

- the design and placement of buildings,
- the maintenance of public views,
- the design, paving materials and placement of public roadways, and
- other elements that the Commission deems appropriate to maintain and protect the character of the village district.

Colonial Flower Shoppe



Geissler's Supermarket Plaza



A “village district” has been established for both Somers Center and Somersville in order to preserve the distinctive character of this area and enhance its appearance as a traditional New England village.

Encourage Housing in and Near Somers Center

Housing is a critical element of a successful and vibrant village center. Residents living in or near villages are less dependent on automobiles, patronize village businesses, and contribute to the vitality and sense of place that makes villages attractive.

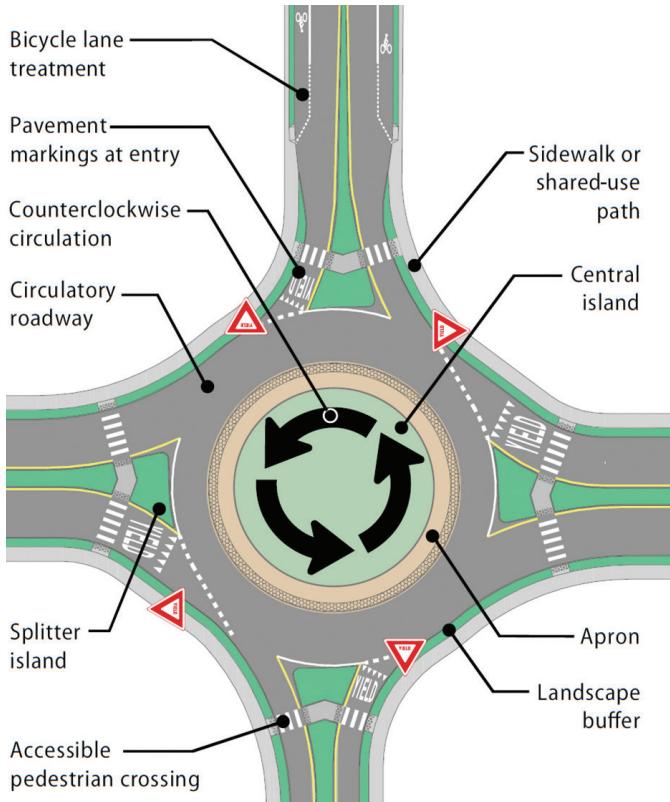
Higher density housing (multi-family, assisted living facilities, etc.) should be focused in or near the villages not only because of their symbiotic relationship with businesses and other village functions but also because of the availability of utilities to serve them.

Mixed-use development is another way of adding to the vitality of a village. By allowing housing in combination with commercial businesses, business owners can live and work on the same premises or create rental opportunities within walking distance of village services.

Make Roadway Improvements

In the late 1990s, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) undertook a special study of the Route 190 corridor in Enfield and Somers with the goal of solving transportation problems while maintaining and enhancing the unique characteristics of the corridor and its village centers.

Overall, the study found that the existing roadway could accommodate traffic growth in the corridor if improvements were made to some key intersections and short sections of roadway to address the safety and congestion problems that existed or were expected in the future.



Modern Roundabout

Modern roundabouts guide traffic through the intersection using marked lanes, and can increase capacity, slow traffic, and dramatically improves safety for all users.

Photo Source: ASCE

The study felt that the improvements in Somers Center should be designed and constructed in a way to preserve and enhance the village character. Proposed improvements include traffic calming in the villages, and provisions for bicyclists and pedestrians. The POCD supports the implementation of roadway improvements in ways that preserve and enhance the character of Somers Center.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation has announced that it is developing plans to improve the intersection of Route 190 and 83 in Somers Center by aligning the intersection and installing a modern roundabout. It is anticipated that this project could begin in the spring of 2029.

Guide Development

The Zoning Commission should discourage retail, restaurant, and personal service uses in the I-Zone on Egypt Road and Field Road) in order to help focus commercial activity in Somers Center.

Enhance Streetscape

The Town should devote efforts to improving the streetscape in Somers Center. Coordinated streetscape elements such as lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and tree grates, can create an attractive, comfortable pedestrian environment and add significantly to community character and sense of place. Burial of overhead utilities can also greatly enhance the streetscape by eliminating overhead wires and allowing the unimpeded growth of street trees.

During the planning period, the Town will pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements and other programs to help promote development and redevelopment in Somers Center.



Enhance Somers Center

Goals

1. Seek to make Somers Center a walkable, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use area with a sense of place.
2. Enhance pedestrian access throughout Somers Center.
3. Seek to create streetscape amenities such as shade trees, seating areas, and pedestrian scaled lighting to enhance Somers Center.
4. Encourage housing within and near Somers Center.
5. Encourage mixed-use development (business on lower floors with apartments on upper floors) within Somers Center.
6. Seek to make Somers Center a walkable, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use area with a sense of place.

Action Items

1. Undertake a special study of land use, zoning, transportation, and other issues affecting Somers Center.
2. Seek to require pedestrian oriented business signage such as on windows and awnings.
3. Pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements in Somers Center.



Enhance Somersville Center

Overview

Somersville, a secondary village within Somers, came into existence in the mid- to late-1800s when a textile mill was established along the Scantic River. As the business grew and flourished in the following years, housing was built nearby for employees. Businesses to serve this population were established and the village emerged.

However, there were a number of setbacks in recent years that affected Somersville. First, the mill closed in the 1969 due to changes in the textile industry. For a number of years, the building was rented to a variety of small business operations but the employment levels never returned to the levels provided by the mill.

In the late 1980s, there was a proposal to redevelop the mill building for housing but issues related to how the floodplain elevation had been established stalled development. Then, in 2005, there was a significant flood on the Scantic River, which severely impacted the property and the adjacent roads.

Although the Town worked to have the floodplain elevations revised to allow development of the property and to establish sewage capacity for such development, the property owners did not proceed. Then in June 2012, there was a fire caused by vandalism that destroyed the mill building.

While this sequence of events changed the short-term outlook for the property, it has not changed the long-term vision for the village of Somersville.

The photographs on the next page depict the previous and current conditions of the mill site.

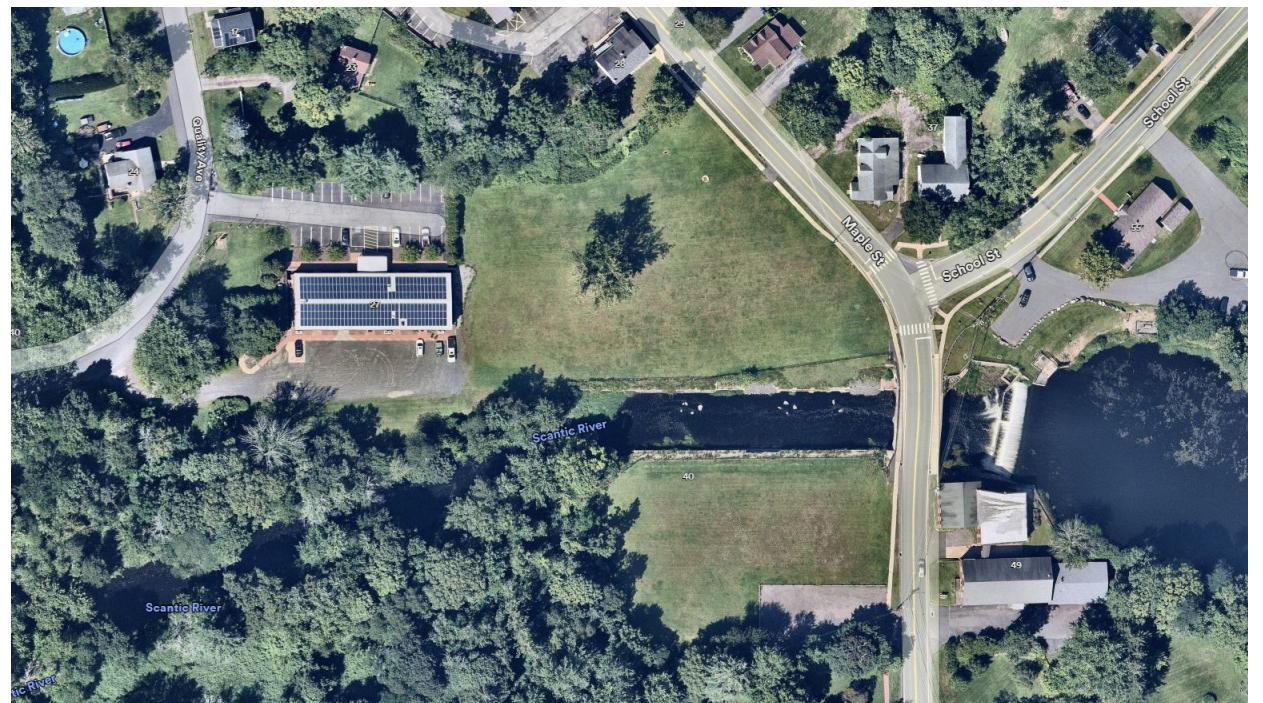


Somersville Mill Site

Top Left: Historic image of the mill when it was operational

Top Right: Image of the mill from around 2010, before the fire.

Right: Aerial image of the mill site as it exists today.



Make Roadway Improvements

As previously indicated, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) undertook a special study of the Route 190 corridor in Enfield and Somers in the late 1990s. As for Somers Center, the study felt that improvements in Somersville Center should be designed and constructed in a way to preserve and enhance the village character.

The POCD supports the implementation of roadway improvements in ways that preserve and enhance the character of Somersville Center.

Encourage Repurposing of the Mill Property

The Plan of Conservation and Development recommends that the mill property be re-purposed and that efforts continue to be devoted to promoting the development and redevelopment of Somersville Center. This includes the mill area and areas of Somersville along Route 190 and adjacent streets.

In 2007, the Zoning Commission established the Somersville Center Overlay District (Section 214-86 of the Zoning Regulations) to help guide redevelopment of the mill site. In 2016, the Zoning Commission adopted the “planned development district.”

The location and character of the mill property make it ideal for a number of alternative uses. In addition to contributing to the overall economic base of the community, this redevelopment will also provide an “anchor” for the village of Somersville.

Establish a Riverway

Concepts for re-purposing the mill property should consider the possibility for establishing a “riverway” along the Scantic River.

Enhance the Streetscape

Coordinated streetscape elements such as lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and tree grates, can create an attractive, comfortable pedestrian environment and add significantly to community character and sense of place. The Town will continue to pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements and other programs to help promote development and redevelopment in Somersville. The Town has received various State and Federal grants for bridge improvements, streetscape improvements (sidewalks, lighting, street trees, etc.) and environmental testing and should continue to seek additional funding for future projects. Burial of overhead utilities can also greatly enhance the streetscape by eliminating overhead wires and allowing the unimpeded growth of street trees.

Somersville Center Aerial View





Somersville Congregational Church

Enhance Somersville Center

Goals

1. Seek to make Somersville Center a walkable, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use area with a sense of place.
2. Promote appropriate development and redevelopment within Somersville Center.
3. Encourage and promote re-purposing of the Mill site.
4. Promote development of a pedestrian-friendly streetscape in Somersville.
5. Seek opportunities to enhance the natural beauty of the Scantic River corridor and create opportunities for public access along the river corridor.

Action Items

1. Continue to pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements in Somersville.

Promote Economic Development

Business development is important to Somers residents for a number of reasons:

- making goods and services available,
- providing jobs, and
- growing the tax base in order to support local services.

While Somers may not become a major business destination, it still has economic development potential and needs to make the most of the opportunities it does have to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses. Overall, there is enough demand in Somers to support more local businesses provided:

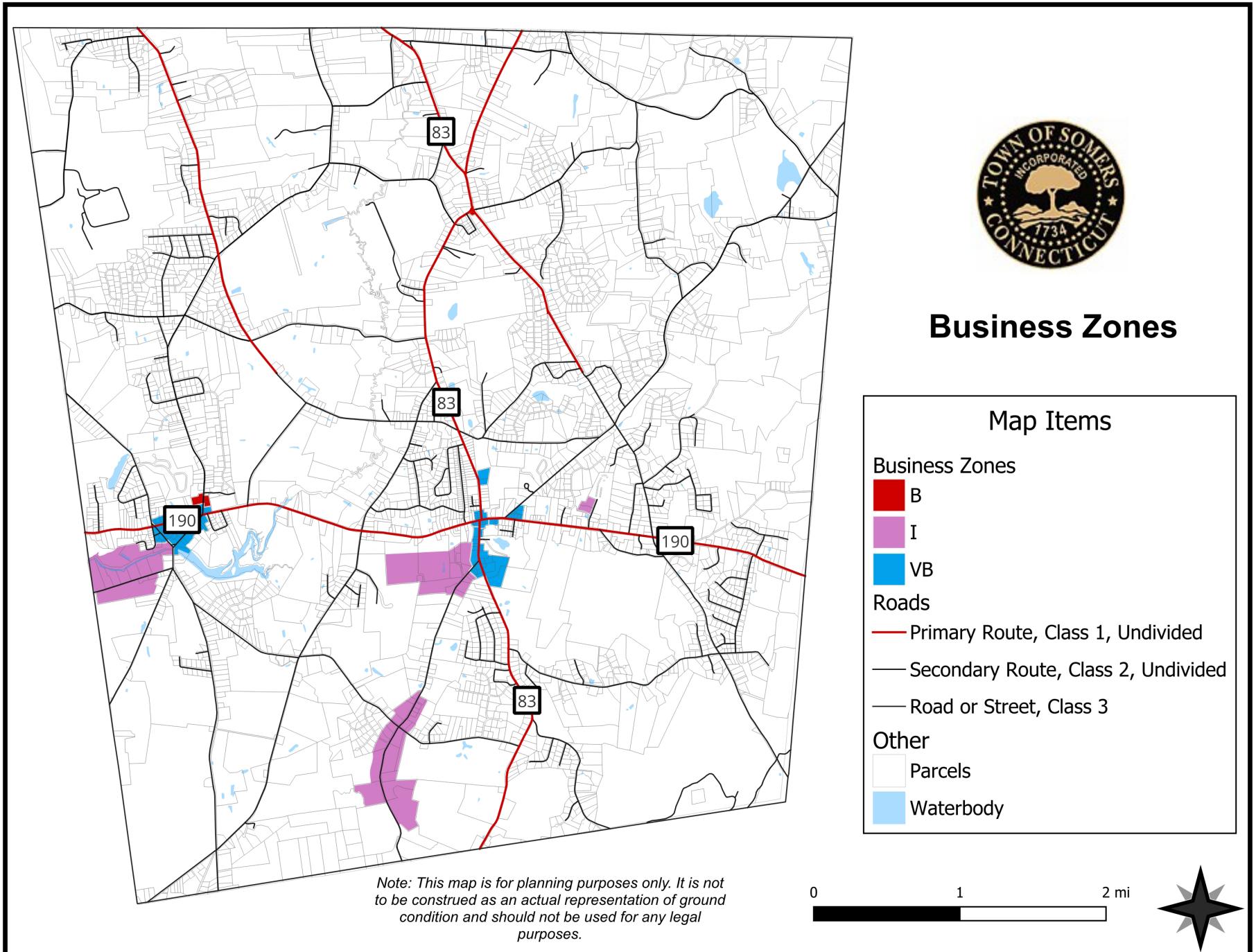
- local businesses provide what people want and need (especially the basic necessities of daily living), and
- residents shop locally rather than travel to other places.

Somers can seek to maintain and grow the local economy through:

- supporting start-ups and home-based businesses,
- seeking to develop destinations attractive to tourists and visitors,
- providing for “fiscal positive” types of housing, and
- retaining State PILOT payments (for the correctional institutions and other State facilities).

Guide Building and Site Design

Residents have indicated they care about the appearance of such development. As noted, the Town has established “village districts” in Somers and Somersville Centers and this plan recommends the establishment of strong design guidelines.



Improve Development Standards

Somers should also review other development standards that guide business and industrial development to ensure that appropriate standards are in place for such things as parking, landscaping, buffers, lighting, waste disposal, and signage.

Encourage Property Improvements

Community character and appearance can also be enhanced by encouraging and supporting the improvement and renovation of existing properties. For example, some towns have established facade improvement programs funded by State grants. Other towns have adopted a tax abatement program under CGS Section 12-65 to reduce the tax increase that could otherwise result from building improvements.



Promote Economic Development

Goals

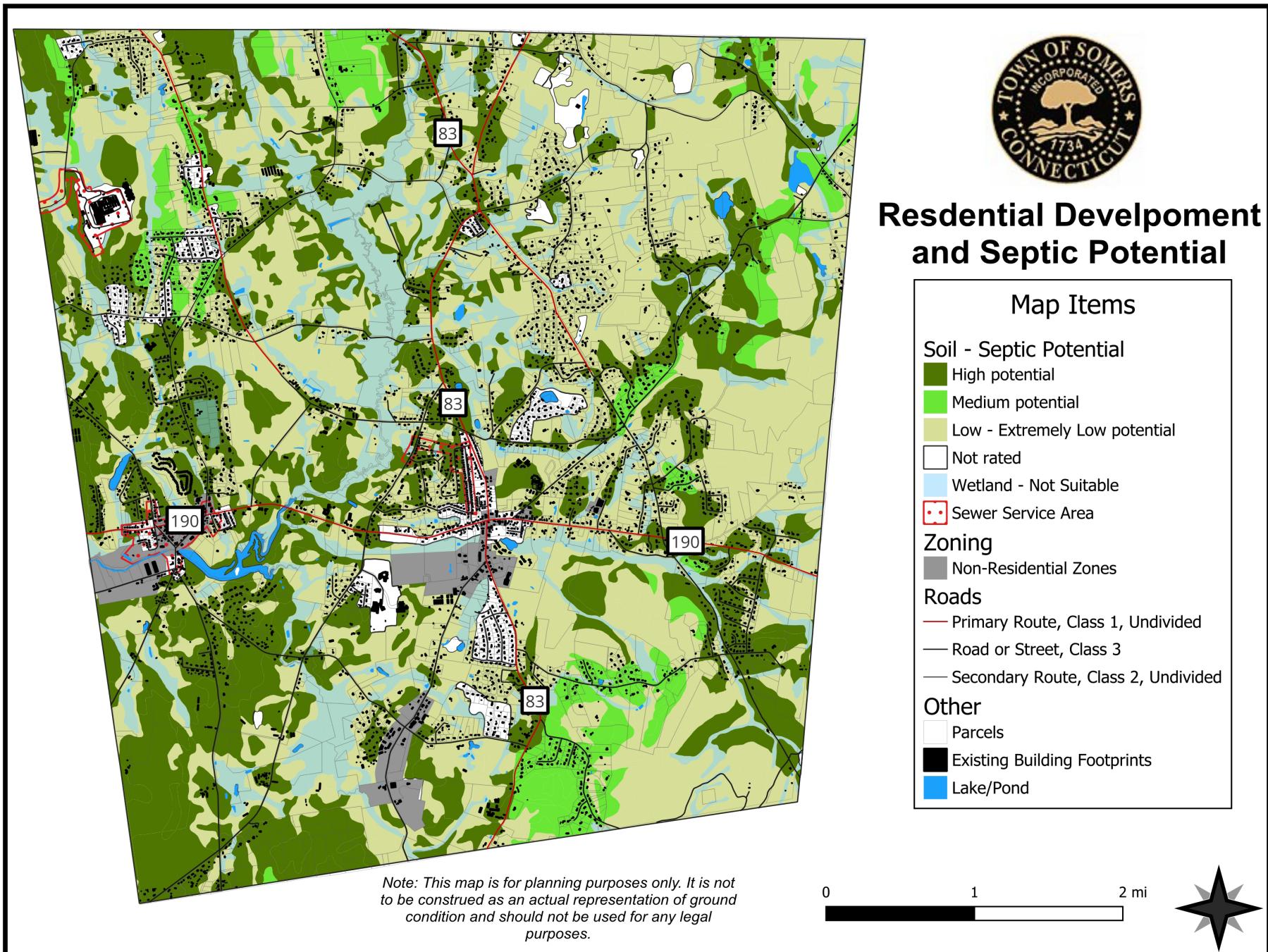
1. Seek to attract and encourage businesses that meet residents everyday needs.
2. Seek to diversify the tax base.
3. Encourage tourist-based businesses.
4. Pursue restoration of statutory PILOT payment funding levels.
5. Guide business development in ways that will enhance overall character of the community.
6. Encourage property improvements.

Action Items

1. Revise, as necessary, the development standards located in the Zoning Regulations to ensure that future development is compatible with the character of the community.
2. Consider establishing programs to support and encourage property improvements.

Northfield Commons Business Park

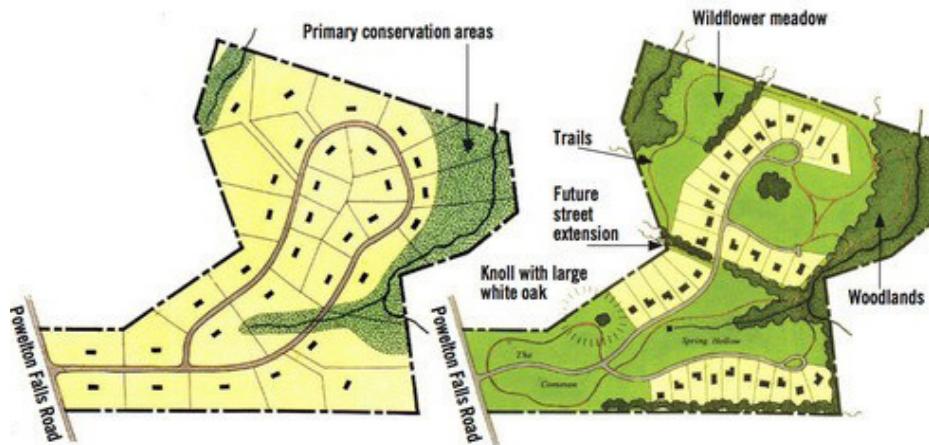




Improve Residential Patterns

If Somers wishes to preserve its overall character, it should consider encouraging or requiring “open space development” patterns as previously discussed.

Some towns have made “open space development” patterns the default approach and required a special permit for a “conventional” type development. Somers may wish to consider doing the same. During the planning period, Somers may wish to revisit its residential zones and determine what changes could be made in order to better prepare Somers for new housing needs.



Open Space Subdivisions provide the same number of housing units, while using less land and providing more open space.

Image Source: Bruce Firestone website

Improve Residential Patterns

Goals

1. Promote residential development patterns that preserve Somers' rural character.

Address Changing Housing Needs

There are two housing needs that should be considered in Somers:

- Housing units suitable for an aging population, and
- Housing for moderate-income households and first-time buyers.

Housing For An Aging Population

As Somers' age composition changes and as the number of households comprised of older residents increases, experience in other communities suggests that there will be increasing interest in alternative forms of housing.

During the planning period, Somers should consider ways to provide for some housing diversity (condominiums, apartments, congregate care, etc.) designed to meet the needs and desires of older residents. This can include such features as first floor master bedrooms, no threshold entries, “universal design”, and similar features. Accessory apartments are currently allowed by Zoning Permit in the A-1 and A-2 zones.

There may also be increased interest in accessory apartments and housing for income-limited elderly households.

For those people who choose to remain in their existing home, Somers might anticipate increased demand for elderly programs such as meals-on-wheels, dial-a-ride, and other services which allow these residents to maintain their relative independence.

There may also be increased interest and demand for elderly tax relief programs for age- and income-eligible residents.

Housing for a Diversity of Incomes

Somers may also have a need during the planning period

for housing for moderate-income households and first-time homebuyers.

Some communities have addressed this need by the following types of programs:

- Requiring all new residential developments to address housing affordability by creating units or paying a fee (“inclusionary zoning”)
- Charging an affordable housing fee as part of any zoning permit
- Establishing a “housing fund”
- Establishing an “incentive housing zone” as authorized by CGS Section 8-13m
- Working with Habitat for Humanity, churches or other organizations to construct small-scale projects.

Somers may wish to consider similar or other approaches.

Woodcrest Elderly Housing



Address Changing Housing Needs

Goals

1. Recognize the need for housing options for an aging population.
2. Recognize the need for housing options for a diversity of incomes.
3. Monitor the availability of adequate housing options for seniors.

Actions Items

1. Explore ways to diversify Somers' housing portfolio.

5. ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

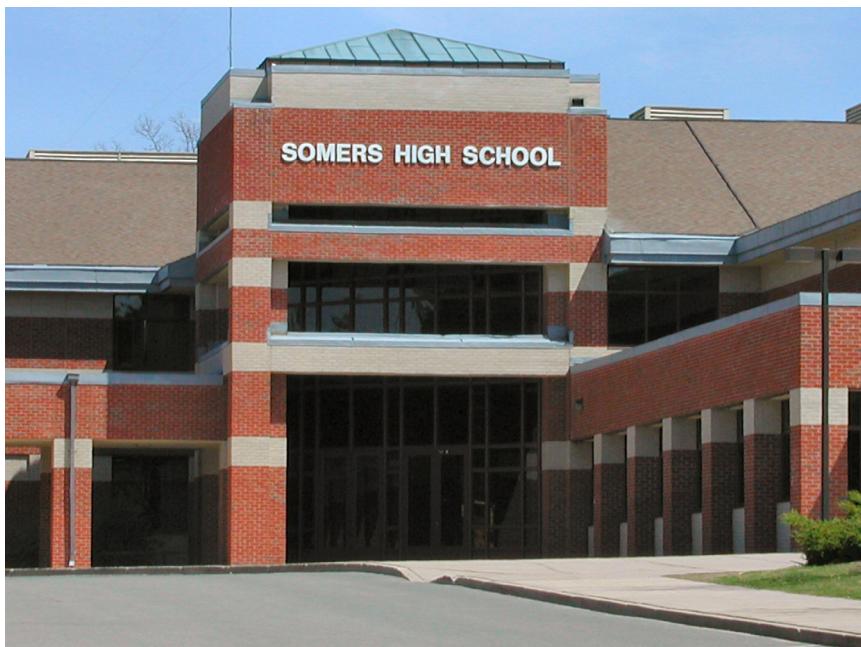
Overview

Services and facilities such as municipal buildings, roadways, and utilities help support the type of community that Somers has indicated it wants to be. Such services and facilities also affect residents' quality of life.

Address Community Facility Needs

Community facilities support important community functions such as education, public safety, and recreation and contribute significantly to the quality of life in Somers.

Somers has addressed a number of community facility needs in recent years and these efforts should continue.

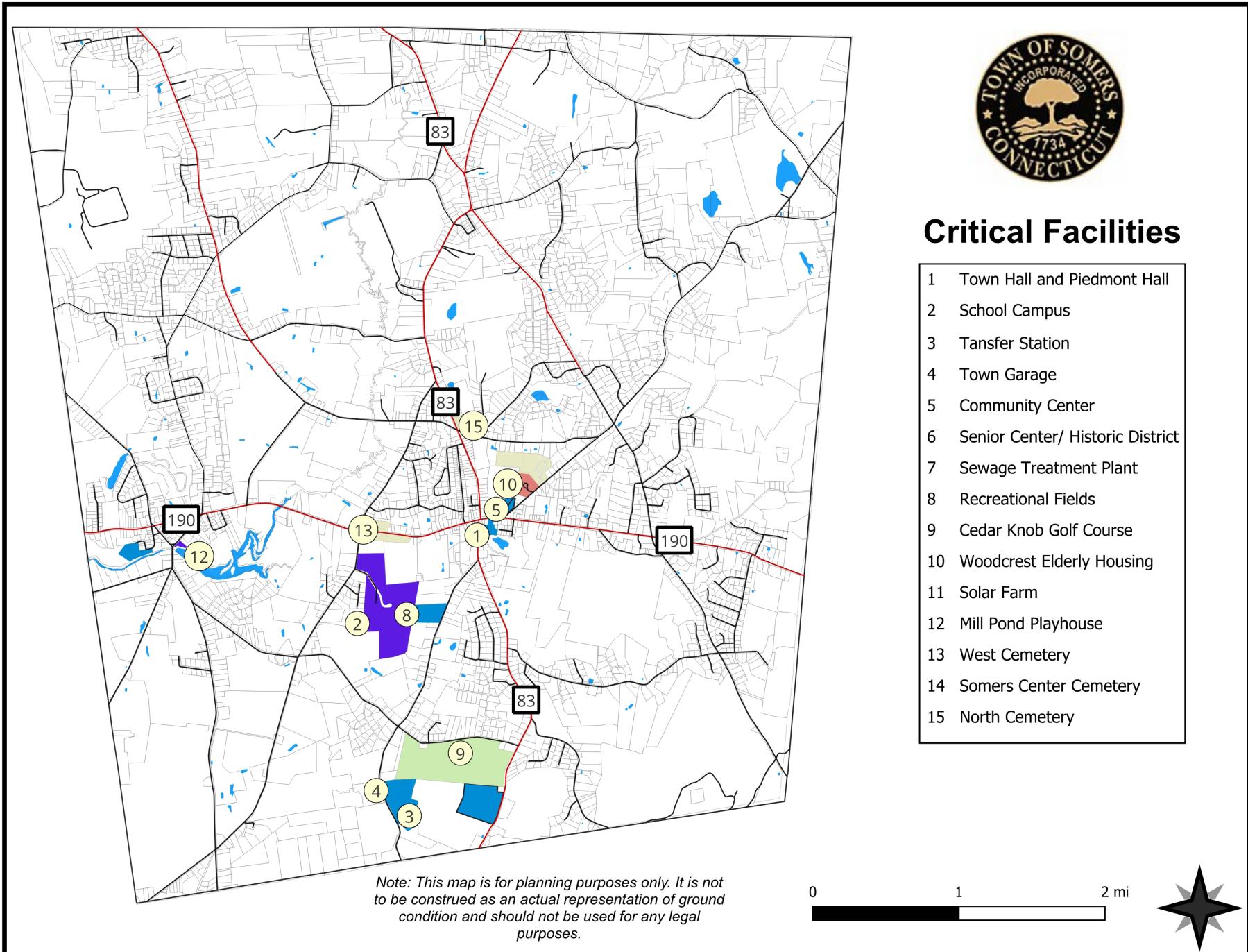


By providing for adequate facilities and services, Somers can maintain and enhance residents' quality of life.

Some community facility issues may warrant consideration during the planning period:

- maintaining existing buildings and facilities
- providing adequate storage space for Town records
- providing adequate storage space for Town equipment
- providing adequate sports fields
- monitoring the need for a firehouse to better serve northern Somers
- anticipating staff and space needs at the Senior Center due to the growing senior population
- maintaining adequate staffing for fire and emergency medical services (EMS)
- monitoring school enrollment trends and projections

For all municipal facilities, consideration should be given to acquiring additional land adjacent to each facility as it becomes available in order to be able to provide for possible future expansion.



Address Community Facility Needs	
Goals	
1. Anticipate staff and space needs at the Senior Center due to the growing senior population.	
2. Monitor school enrollment trends and projections.	
3. For all municipal facilities, consider acquiring additional land adjacent to each facility as it becomes available in order to be able to provide for possible future expansion.	
4. Update municipal facilities to meet anticipated needs.	

Address Vehicular Transportation

Overall, Somers has a well-connected road network allowing relatively easy north-south and east-west travel.

Roads primarily intended to carry regional traffic and serve major activity centers are called arterial roads. In Somers, these roadways include:

- Main Street (RT 190)
- Springfield/South Roads (RT 83)
- Hall Hill Road (RT 186)
- Turnpike Road (SR 528)

Roads intended to serve business areas and/or distribute traffic between arterial roads and neighborhoods are called collector roads. In Somers, these roadways include:

Avery Road	Mountain Road
Battle Street	Mountain View Road
Billings Road	Ninth District Road
Bilton Road	Pinney Road
Bradway Road	Pioneer Heights
Egypt Road	Root Road
Field Road	School Street
Four Bridges Road	Shaker Road

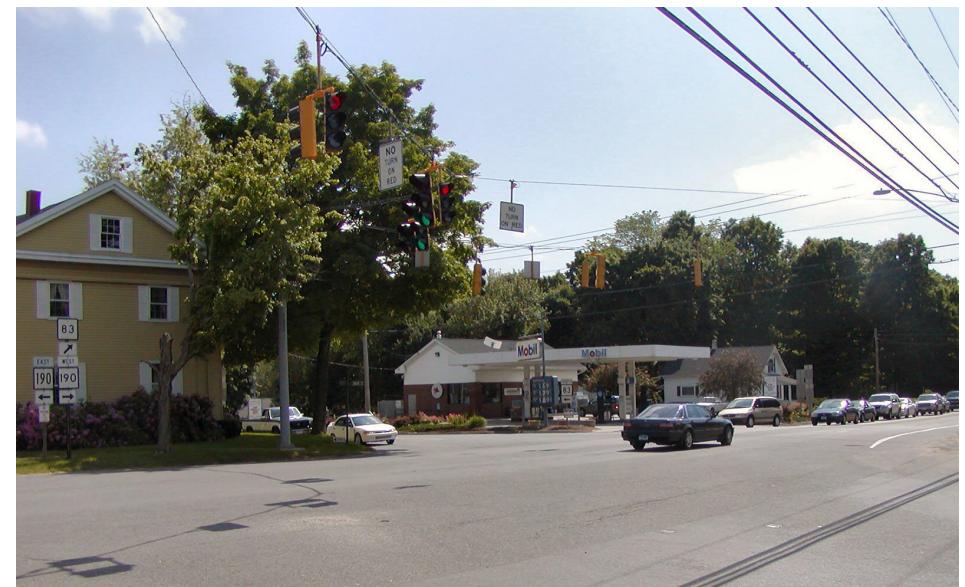
George Wood Road	Sokol Road
Gulf Road	Stafford Road
Hampden Road	Stebbins Road
King Road	Watchaug Road (east end)
Maple Street	Woods Road

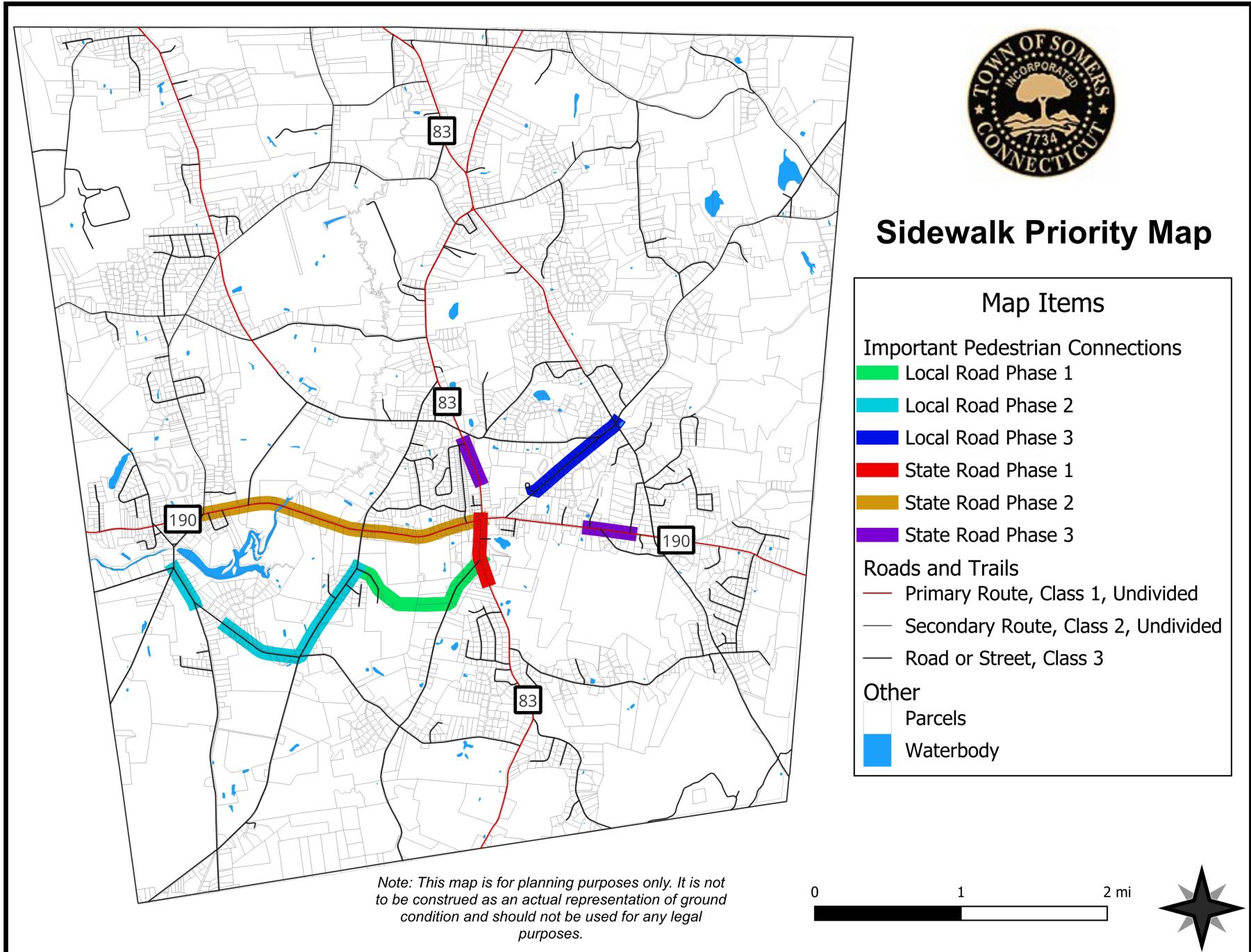
Other roads in Somers (local roads) are primarily intended to provide access to abutting properties and not serve major through traffic.

Road network issues facing Somers include:

- Somers and Somersville are in need of transportation improvements to calm traffic, enhance walkability and create/maintain a sense of place;
- promoting access management along major roadways;
- maintaining pavement quality; and
- changes in road design and parking standards (including lighting) may be desirable to reduce stormwater runoff and enhance community character.

Routes 190 and 83





Promote Transportation Alternatives

Sidewalks/ Trails/ Multi-Use Paths

Somers intends to provide for sidewalks (surfaced walkways located along streets) primarily in the village areas of Somers and Somersville. These areas will benefit from encouraging a pedestrian-friendly environment and from providing sidewalks and crosswalks. Sidewalks should be required on both sides of the street as part of new developments in these areas and gaps in the sidewalk network in these areas should be addressed when possible. Sidewalks should be of adequate width to enhance the pedestrian experience (such as 5 feet in width).

Somers seeks to establish a system of off-road trails and multi-use paths to interconnect open space areas and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the landscape of Somers. These trails could also be used to connect the villages to each other and connect each village to other activity nodes such as the Recreation Park or School/Library Campus.

These efforts will help to make Somers a “heart healthy” community by encouraging people to walk more and be more active.

Bicycle Routes

Due to scenery, terrain and lower traffic volumes, Somers has significant potential to be recognized as a bicycle-friendly community. The types of bicycle facilities that may be appropriate in Somers include:

- shared roadway,
- wide curb lane,
- shoulder bikeway, or
- multi-use trails.

Whenever practical, road improvement projects should consider bicycle circulation by providing such measures as wide paved shoulders (even by narrowing lane widths for cars).

Transit Services

As a rural community, Somers has very little in the way of transit services for residents. However, there is a “dial-a-ride” service for elderly or disabled residents that allows them to shop, visit doctors and perform other activities. Somers should monitor usage of this service due to the anticipated growth in the senior population

Address Transportation Needs

Goals

1. Require or provide for sidewalks in Somers Center and Somersville Center (including crosswalks and other safety enhancements).
2. Provide multi-use trails between villages and activity nodes.
3. Enhance and protect the existing hiking trail system throughout Town.
4. Accommodate bicycles whenever practical in road and site development projects.
5. Monitor the dial-a-ride service to anticipate future demand.
6. Require or provide for sidewalks in Somers Center and Somersville Center (including crosswalks and other safety enhancements).

Action Items

1. Review and revise sidewalk standards as appropriate.

Provide For Utility Services

Water Service

While most properties in Somers rely on private wells, public water service is available in Somers Center, Somersville and some adjacent areas from the Connecticut Water Company and the Hazardville Water Company.

Both water systems have adequate capacity to meet demand over the next decade and beyond. Efforts are being dedicated to providing fire hydrants in the villages and water supplies for fire response in outlying parts of the community. Interconnection of the two water systems is also recommended for possible future emergency use.

Typical Water Tower



Somers Sewage Treatment Plant

Source: Bing Maps

Sewer Service

While most properties in Somers rely on private septic systems, sewer service exists in three areas in Somers:

- Somersville (managed by the Somers Water Pollution Control Authority),
- State correctional facilities in the northwest corner of Somers (through an independent arrangement with Enfield), and
- the Maple Ridge Road area in Somers Center (served by a community septic system managed by the Somers Water Pollution Control Authority).

The treatment plant on the Scantic River in Somersville has been expanded to accommodate future development in this area and the repurposing of the Somersville Mill property. These arrangements are expected to be adequate for the planning period.



Public Utilities

Map Items

Water Service

 Water Service Area

 Water Lines

 Municipal Wells

 Fire Hydrant

Sewer Service

 Existing Sewer Service

 Future Sewer Service Area

Roads

 Primary Route, Class 1, Undivided

 Secondary Route, Class 2, Undivided

Other

 Parcels

 Waterbody

Note: This map is for planning purposes only. It is not to be construed as an actual representation of ground condition and should not be used for any legal purposes.

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Stormwater Drainage

Storm drainage in most areas of Somers is accomplished by structural systems (catch basins, pipes, and culverts) or by sheet flow off impervious surfaces such as roads, roofs and parking areas.

During the planning period, it is anticipated that Somers will transition to “low impact development” (LID) approaches where storm water quality and quantity is managed more by non-structural systems. By addressing stormwater runoff closer to where the raindrop falls, LID approaches can help promote groundwater recharge, reduce the frequency or severity of flooding, and address water quality.

Natural Gas

While natural gas service is not presently available in Somers, there are plans to extend natural gas from Enfield to Stafford along Route 190. Somers should support this project since it will make natural gas service available within Somers in the future.

Electrical Service

Electricity is delivered locally by Eversource Energy. Electric service in Somers is reported to be reliable town-wide and should be able to meet both current and anticipated future needs. The main threat to electrical reliability in Somers is downed power lines due to storm events. Electrical lines can be protected by placing them underground as opportunities present themselves although this can be very expensive. Finding an appropriate balance between tree-lined streets and electrical reliability will be an on-going issue.

Wired Communication

Wired communication services (telephone, cable, internet) are available town-wide to meet current and anticipated future needs. As the use of digital communication devices grows, Somers should seek ways to enhance the capacity and speed of wired communication services.

Wireless Communication

More and more communications are happening on wireless devices and Somers should seek to enhance the coverage, capacity and speed of wireless communication services. As people have migrated away from “wired” communications to wireless devices, Somers should evaluate the best ways to ensure comprehensive cellular coverage throughout town. Areas without good cellular service can pose a safety risk, especially for those that rely solely on wireless phones.

Provide for Utility Service

Goals

1. Continue efforts to providing fire hydrants in the villages and water supplies for fire response in outlying parts of the community.
2. Encourage interconnection of the water systems for possible future emergency use.
3. Maintain sewage capacity to address community needs.
4. Transition to “low impact development” (LID) approaches.
5. Support the extension of natural gas from Enfield to Stafford along Route 190.
6. Seek to find an appropriate balance between tree-lined streets and electrical reliability.

6. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Overview

The recommendations of each of the preceding chapters can be combined to present an overall Future Land Use Plan for Somers. The Future Land Use Plan is a reflection of the stated goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Plan.

In essence, the Future Land Use Plan is a statement of what the Somers of tomorrow should look like.



The Future Land Use Plan depicts the Plan's recommendations for the future conservation and development of Somers.

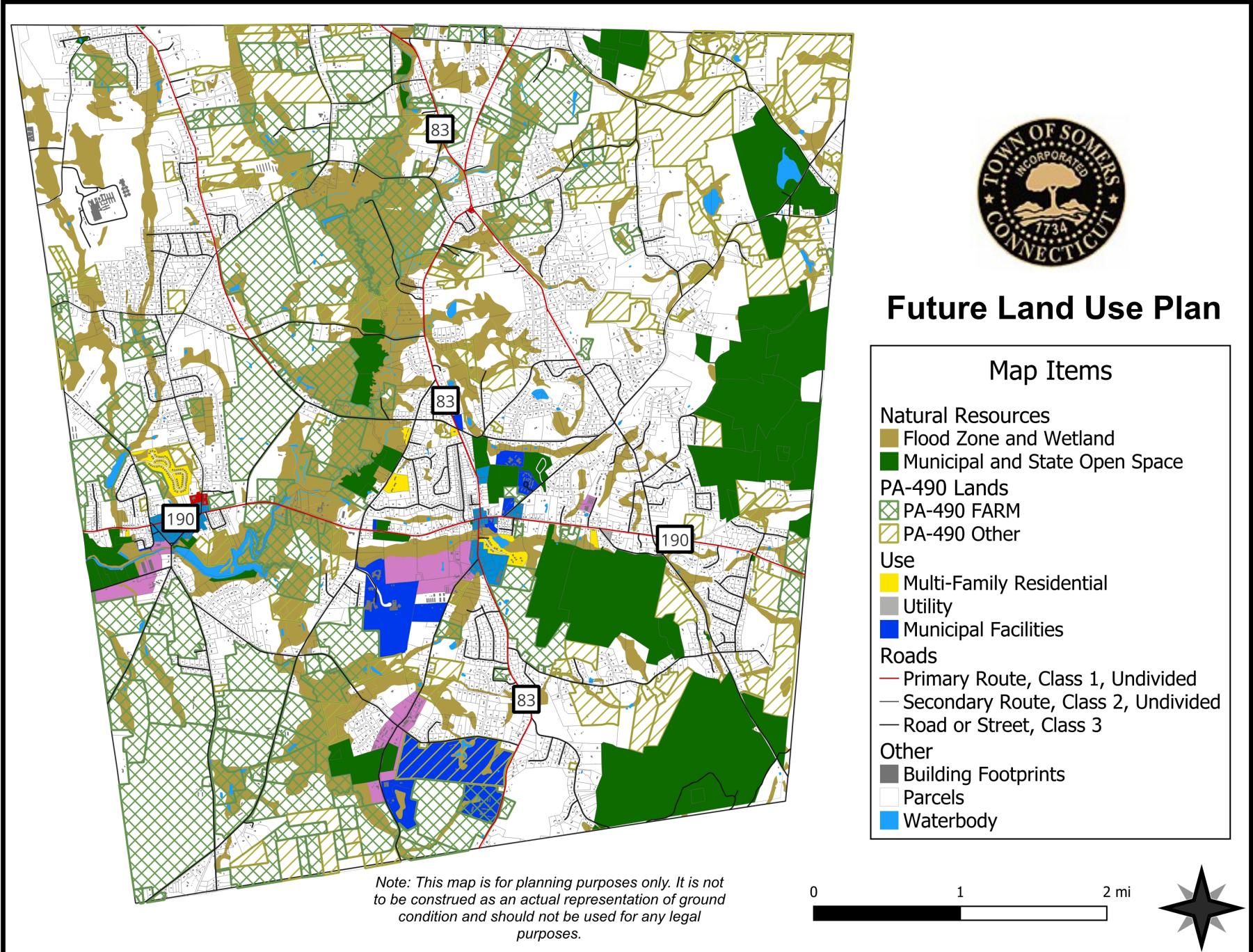
Plan Consistency

State Plan – Locational Guide Map

In accordance with CGS Section 8-23, this POCD was compared with the 2025-30 State Conservation and Development Policies Plan and found to be generally consistent with that Plan and its Locational Guide Map (LGM) except that the “priority funding areas” do not reflect Town desires.

Unlike past locational guide maps, the most recent does not rely on priority funding areas, but instead relies on the existence of “activity zones” which should be focused on for future growth and development. These activity centers are based on existing conditions including employment hubs, educational and medical institutions, transportation assets, and infrastructure. These are generally areas that could be easily developed due to existing conditions and could be expanded.

In the case of Somers, the State plan Somers center and the commercial area along Route 190 to the west as a suburban



activity center. Focusing growth on Somers Center is consistent with the plan.

Somersville is not within an activity zone according to the State LGM; however, redevelopment of this historic center is consistent with the overall State plan in several ways. The Plan emphasizes the need for additional housing. The historic Somersville Mill Site continues to be the focus of attention for redevelopment which could include high density housing.

Additionally, goals for Somersville Center include creating a walkable downtown area, which aligns with the State's goal of reducing car dependence and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Regional Plan

In addition, this plan was compared to the Capitol Region Council Of Government's (CRCOG) 2024 Plan of Conservation and Development for consistency in overall plan direction and policy. This Somers Plan is found to be consistent with the regional plan in many ways. Overall policies for the region include expanding and diversifying the housing stock, developing a more inclusive economy, and protecting natural resources; all of which are included as broad goals within this Somers Plan.

The CRCOG Plan includes a land use policy map, which includes areas suitable for development and areas that are high conservation priority areas. As can be seen, the areas around both Somers Center and Somersville are highly suitable for additional development.



7. IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

Implementation of the Plan, which is the main goal of the planning process, should be an ongoing priority.

While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may only be realized by the end of the planning period or beyond. Since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages.

The Planning and Zoning Commission can implement many of the recommendations of the Plan of Conservation and Development through regulation amendments, application reviews, and other means and has the primary responsibility of overseeing the implementation of all of the Plan's recommendations.

Other recommendations may require cooperation with and action by other local boards, commissions, and Staff such as the Board of Selectmen, Public Works, and similar agencies.

However, if the Plan is to be realized, it must serve as a guide to all residents, businesses, builders, developers, applicants, owners, agencies, and individuals interested in the orderly conservation and development of Somers.

Tools

The following tools have been shown to be effective at implementing POCD recommendations and are recommended for Somers.



Plan Implementation Committee

A Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) is an effective way to help implement the Plan. An "ad hoc" committee made up of residents and representatives of local boards would be a significant step towards including a variety of Town agencies in implementing the Plan and monitoring progress. This Committee could provide status reports to the Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen, and others.

The PIC could meet two to four times a year to establish priorities and guide implementation of the Plan's recommendations. In addition, the Committee could assess the status of specific recommendations, establish new priorities, and suggest new implementation techniques.

The PIC can prepare implementation schedules and/or develop an annual implementation program of issues to be addressed by boards and commissions.

As the ultimate responsible agency, the Planning Commission can also assume the responsibility for coordinating implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

Using the Plan For Land Use Decisions

Using the Plan of Conservation and Development as a basis for land use decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission will help accomplish the goals and objectives of the Plan. All land use proposals should be measured and evaluated in terms of the Plan and its various elements.

Updating Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Many of the recommendations in the Plan of Conservation and Development can be implemented by the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission through application reviews. However, this is only true if the regulations reflect the recommendations of the Plan.

In the near future, the Planning Commission should undertake a comprehensive review of the subdivision regulations and the Zoning Commission should similarly review the zoning regulations and zoning map, making whatever revisions are necessary to:

- implement Plan recommendations, and
- promote consistency between the Plan and the regulations.



The importance of updating local regulations as soon as possible cannot be over-emphasized.

Compared to a number of other communities, the regulations in Somers lack some of the basic land use tools that will serve to promote the best possible conservation and development of the community.

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvement Program or CIP is a tool for planning major capital expenditures of a municipality so that local needs can be identified and prioritized within local fiscal constraints that may exist.

The Plan contains several proposals whose implementation may require the expenditure of Town funds. The Plan recommends that these and other items be included in the Town's CIP and that funding for them be included as part of the Capital Budget.

Referral of Municipal Improvements

Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that municipal improvements (defined in the statute) be referred to the Planning Commission for a report before any local action is taken. A proposal disapproved by the Commission can only be implemented after a two-thirds vote by Town Meeting. All local boards and agencies should be notified of Section 8-24 and its mandatory nature so that proposals can be considered and prepared in compliance with its requirements and in a timely manner.

Inter-Municipal and Regional Cooperation

Somers can continue to work with other towns in the region, the



Capitol Region Council of Governments, the State of Connecticut, and other agencies to explore opportunities where common interests coincide.

Implementation Schedules

As was done for the 2015 POCD, implementation tables were prepared to organize POCD recommendations by the entity responsible and desired completion date. These tables can be used by the Plan Implementation Committee to promote implementation of Plan recommendations. Recommendations in each section of the POCD have been broken into “policies” and “action items.”

Policies are long-term guidelines that do not readily lend themselves to a specific schedule or measurement. Policies might be used by the Planning Commission or other agency to determine if a proposed activity is consistent with the POCD.

Action Items on the other hand, are specific actions that can typically be scheduled, completed, and evaluated. These are discrete work items, which can and should be completed to implement the strategies recommended in this POCD.

Implement the Plan

1. Make implementation of the Plan an ongoing priority.
2. Use the POCD as a basis for land use decisions by the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission.
3. Use the POCD as a guide when preparing the Capital Improvement Program.
4. Use the POCD as a guide when reviewing referrals of municipal improvements under CGS Section 8-24.
5. Continue to work with other towns in the region, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, the State of Connecticut, and other agencies to explore opportunities where common interests coincide.

Initial Action Items

1. Establish a Plan Implementation Committee to help implement the Plan.
2. Prepare implementation schedules and/or an annual implementation program of issues to be addressed by boards and commissions.
3. Undertake a comprehensive review of the subdivision regulations.
4. Continue to review the zoning regulations and zoning map.

8. CONCLUSION

The Plan of Conservation and Development has been prepared to meet the challenges that will confront the Town of Somers over the next four years and beyond.

In preparing this Plan, the Commission reviewed the previous POCD (2015) to identify work items that had been accomplished and new priorities for the community. The Commission reviewed the Zoning Regulations and other pertinent regulations and ordinances to determine what areas were in need of update. The Commission also reviewed the current housing and economic needs, and developed the priority areas for focus over the next decade.

Despite all of the thought and effort that went into preparing this Plan, the most important step of the planning process is implementation. While the task of implementation falls on all Somers residents, the responsibility for implementing the Plan lies with the Planning Commission and other Town agencies. The Plan is intended as a guide to be followed in order to enhance the quality of life and the community character of Somers. It is intended to be flexible in terms how specific goals and objectives are reached, provided that the long-term goals of the community are achieved.

During the next few years, many of the higher priority action items will be completed and hopefully goals will be achieved. Circumstances will inevitably arise that may suggest that it is time to reconsider the Plan or some of its elements. Such situations should be welcomed since it will mean that the Plan is being actively used and considered by residents.

By preparing this Plan, Somers has taken the first step towards creating a better future for its residents.



A. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Protect Natural Resources		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Consider establishing a septic management program to identify possible septic problems and avoid potential pollution.	Years 2-4	Health Dept.
2. Conduct public education about protecting water quality (including reducing fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide use).	Years 1-2	Conservation Commission
Preserve Open Space		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Adopt regulations to allow off-site dedication and/or banking of open space	Years 1-2	Planning and Zoning Commission
Preserve Character Resources		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Endorse design guidelines to help guide applicants and the Design Review Board.	Years 1-2	Planning and Zoning Commission
2. Inventory scenic resources and establish policies and regulations to protect them.	Years 3-4	Board of Selectmen Conservation Commission
3. Consider expanding the P.A. 490 open space program.	Years 3-4	Board of Selectmen
4. Work with utility companies to preserve scenic streetscapes.	Ongoing	Public Works
Promote Sustainability/Resiliency		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure (e.g. utilities, transportation, structures) to natural events, prepare for recurring events, and respond to such events when they occur.	Ongoing	Board of Selectmen Public Works Utilities

Enhance Somers Center		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Undertake a special study of land use, zoning, transportation, and other issues affecting Somers Center.	Years 3-4	Planning and Zoning Commission
2. Seek to require pedestrian oriented business signage such as on windows and awnings.	Years 1-2	Planning and Zoning Commission
3. Pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements in Somers Center.	Ongoing	Board of Selectmen Planning Staff
Enhance Somersville Center		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Continue to pursue grants and other funds to promote streetscape improvements in Somersville.	Ongoing	Board of Selectmen Planning Staff
Promote Economic Development		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Revise, as necessary, the development standards located in the Zoning Regulations to ensure that future development is compatible with the character of the community.	Ongoing	Planning and Zoning Commission
2. Consider establishing programs to support and encourage property improvements.	Years 3-4	Board of Selectmen
Address Changing Housing Needs		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Explore ways to diversify Somers' housing portfolio.	Ongoing	Housing Authority Planning and Zoning Commission
Address Transportation Needs		
Action Items	Timeframe	Entity Responsible
1. Review and revise sidewalk standards as appropriate.	Ongoing	Board of Selectmen Public Works