



The Borough of Somerville Historic Preservation Plan Element

**Prepared for:
The Borough of Somerville Planning Board**



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Borough of Somerville Master Plan Historic Preservation Element

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Historic Preservation Master Plan Element

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) authorizes the planning board to prepare a master plan that contains, among other things a Historic Preservation Plan element.

Among its purposes it is *“to promote the conservation of historic sites and districts”*.

The Role of the Historic Preservation Master Plan Element

The MLUL defines the role of the Historic Preservation Plan element of the master plan as follows:

1. To indicate the location and significance of historic sites and historic districts;
2. To identify the standards used to assess worthiness for historic site and district identification; and
3. To analyze the impact of each component and element of the master plan on the preservation of historic sites and districts.

Definitions for Historic Site and Historic District

The MLUL also offers the following definitions:

Historic Site – means any real property, man-made structure, natural object or configuration or any portion or group of the foregoing of historical, archeological, cultural, scenic or architectural significance.

Historic District – means one or more historic sites and intervening or surrounding property significantly affecting or affected by the quality and character of the historic site or sites.

Local Regulations

The state statute allows local regulations to protect the historical resources of a community. These locally adopted ordinances are established by the municipal governing body. A variety of local regulations can be adopted to help encourage historic preservation.



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II. SOMERVILLE'S HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Significance

The period of historical significance for Somerville spans from 1751, the date of the construction of the earliest surviving building in the town, to 1950, the end of the post World War II period, by which time the Borough was almost fully developed. The surviving street patterns and some scattered buildings, reflect earlier patterns of development reaching back to the second half of the 18th century. Most of Somerville however reached its present form in the approximately 50 years spanning the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The historical background of the Borough relates to three of New Jersey's state-wide historic contexts:

- 7. Initial Colonial Settlement, 1630-1775;*
- 9. Industrialization, Urban Growth, and the First Suburbs, 1790-1880; and*
- 10. Immigration and Agricultural, Industrial, and Urban Expansion, 1850-1920.*

A number of areas of significance can be defined for the Borough. Transportation was one important factor. The development of Somerville was in large part determined by its development along transportation corridors: first, an important east-west road of late 17th century origin; second, the railroad, which began service in 1842.

Two other determinative areas of significance are religion and politics/government. The decision to locate the Somerset County Court House and the First Dutch Reformed Church in Somerville made the town the political and religious center of the county.

The pull of these institutions, as well as transportation facilities, also made Somerville a commercial center. The combination of these factors led to the town's development as a residential community, another area of significance for Somerville. Industry was an area of significance for Somerville, but only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Finally, for a brief period during the Revolutionary War, Somerville had military significance as the site of Washington's headquarters during the winter of 1778-1779.



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Architectural Significance

The Borough of Somerville is also significant for a range of surviving architecture that reflects its development over almost two centuries. The buildings include examples of work by nationally-recognized architects such as William Appleton Potter, George B. Post, John Russell Pope and J. Riely Gordon, as well as those known for their work in New Jersey, such as Frank V. Bodine.



Old Somerset County Courthouse
Designed by J. Riely Gordon
Neo-Classical

The Borough contains high-style and vernacular examples of a broad range of styles, from Georgian through Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Richardsonian Romanesque to early 20th century Neo-Classical.



Greek Revival



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III. NATIONAL AND STATE REGISTERS OF HISTORIC SITES AND DISTRICTS

Background

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established a federal policy of preserving the country's cultural heritage. This marked the first time that funding had been made available throughout the country to identify, map and preserve historic and pre-European structures and sites.

Much of the identification and organizing work was delegated to the state level through the establishment of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). The State Historic Preservation Officer is the official liaison between local officials or groups and the federal Department of Interior, the agency responsible for administering federal historic preservation efforts. The federal program became the impetus for the New Jersey Legislature's passage of historic preservation legislation in 1970.

In New Jersey, the State Historic Preservation officer and staff are part of the state Department of Environmental Protection. The SHPO is responsible for maintaining the State Register and evaluating petitions for inclusion on the list, as well as submitting request for inclusion on the National Register.

Benefits of Listing Historic Sites and Historic Districts

Sites and districts on the Registers are afforded a certain level of protection. Projects involving federal money that may have an impact on National Register sites or districts must undergo a comprehensive evaluation process of that impact. The State requires a similar evaluation of State Registered sites and districts.

In addition, numerous studies have been undertaken that have found historic listing has positive economic benefits for both the property owner and the community. Some of the benefits of historic site and district listing are as follows:

- It can encourage owners of historic sites and properties within historic districts in their efforts to preserve the historic character of such properties.
- It can stabilize and improve property values in the community.
- It can foster civic pride in the historic and architectural accomplishments of the past.



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Currently, there are seven (7) National and State Register historical sites in the Borough of Somerville. There are no listed historic districts. The historic sites include a variety of properties representing different important time periods in the Borough's history. They also include a variety of architectural styles. The long term preservation of these important resources has been enhanced through the listing of these historic sites on the National and State Registers. The seven listed sites include:

- J. Harper Smith Mansion, 228 Altamont Place
- W. End Hose Co Firehouse, 15 N. Doughty Street
- St. John's Church Complex, 154-158 W. High St.
- Somerset Court House Green, Main St., Grove & N. Bridge Streets
- Somerville Borough Hall, 25 West End Avenue
- Wallace House, 28 Washington Place
- Old Dutch Parsonage, 65 Washington Place



228 Altamont Place



Somerville Borough Hall



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IV. STANDARDS AND CRITERIA TO ASSESS WORTHINESS

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior has developed a set of criteria to aid in the identification of historic sites and districts. The criteria, any one of which may be conclusive in the determination to protect a site or district, are widely utilized to assess worthiness for historic site and district identification and designation.

These criteria were utilized in Somerville to assess the worthiness of potential historic sites and districts. These criteria include:

1. Whether the site or district has significant charter, interest, or value, as part of the heritage or cultural characteristics of the municipality, state, or nation, or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past.
2. Whether the site or district is associated with an event of importance to the history of the municipality, state, or nation.
3. Whether the place reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
4. Whether the building or structure embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.
5. Whether the work is one by a designer, architect, landscape architect, or engineer whose design has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, special or cultural development of the municipality, state, or nation.
6. Whether the site or district contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
7. Whether an area is part of or related to a park or other distinctive location which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.
8. Whether an area has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to pre-history or history.
9. Whether the site or district exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.



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V. IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC SITES

A detailed survey was undertaken in Somerville in 1992 and an inventory was created of buildings and structures with potential architectural and historic merit.

This survey was updated in 2008. Close to 1,000 buildings were inventoried throughout the Borough. A photo record and inventory form was created for each property, similar to the following form for 6 W. Cliff St. (A copy of the *2008 Historic Property Inventory Survey of Somerville* is available as a separate report.)

Current conditions and use were recorded and any major changes in significance since the preparation of the 1992 survey were noted. The majority of the close to 1,000 properties that were inventoried were deemed to contribute to the significance of Somerville and are in good to excellent condition. Non contributing buildings and structures generally consist of properties that post-date the period of significance.

Of the close to 1,000 properties inventoried, thirty three (33) have been identified as key contributing sites. Seven (7) of these sites are listed in the State and National Registers. The U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for assessing worthiness were referred to in this evaluative process. A key contributing property is one that is usually in excellent condition and/or excellent integrity, and has historical and/or architectural significance. These properties are listed on the following page in alphabetical / numerical order.

Address: 6W. Cliff Street

Property Name: William H. Dakin House

Date: c.1877 **Source:** Beers & Fowler

Style: Italianate / Swiss Chalet

Condition & Integrity: Excellent & Excellent

Contributing Status: Key Contributing

Current Use: Office

Context: Large carriage house of same style and date as main house.

Historical Significance: Stands on Hangman's Hill, site of the old gallows.

Property Description: Ornate 2 ½-story residence; porch, porte cochere, bays and bargeboards adorned with sawnwork and kneebraces; cross-façade gables; board-and-batten siding beneath eaves with jig-sawed ends; segmental arches punctuated by applied blocks at openings; circular windows below eaves; flat-roofed cupola with brackets.





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Key Contributing Historic Sites

228 Altamont Place, J. Harper Smith House*
246 Altamont Place
254 Altamont Place, Samuel Miller House
41 N. Bridge St., Craig House
57 S. Bridge St., Richard Hoaglund House
31 E. Cliff St.
6 W. Cliff St., William H. Dakin House
15 N. Doughty Ave, WE Hose Co Firehouse*
24 Franklin St.
45 Grant Ave., Vanderveer Farmstead
77 E. High St.
40 W. High St.
154-158 W. High St., St. John's Church*
198 W. High St., Noey-Hope-Case House
E. Main & N. Bridge, First Reformed Church
E. Main & Grove, Old County Courthouse*
48-50 W. Main Street
54-58 W. Main Street, Gaston Building
W. Main, United Reformed Church
166 N. Middaugh Street
16 Mountain Ave.
35 Mountain Ave., J. Vanderbeek House
165 Mountain Ave., Alvah A. Clark House
280 W. Summit St.
1 Veterans Memorial Dr., Train Station
38 Washington Pl., Wallace House*
65 Washington Pl., Old Dutch Parsonage*
77 Washington Pl., Mann House
10 West End Ave., John Lindsley House
20 West End Ave., William Steel House
25 West End Ave, Somerville Borough Hall*
58 West End Ave.
102 West End Ave.

* Historic Sites listed on the State and National Registers



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VI. IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The 1992 Survey of Somerville identified one area of significance for the Borough as a potential Historic District. This area encompassed much of the Borough and included the close to 1,000 properties identified in the inventory.

Since this time, members of the Borough's Historic Advisory Committee have reviewed the historic sites in Somerville and their context and have identified seven (7) potential Historic District Overlay Zones.

Two new areas were included for consideration – the Vanderveer Farmstead area and Victory Homes area.

The seven (7) proposed Historic District Overlay Zone areas include:

- West End
- Central Area
- Downtown
- Southside
- Washington Place
- Vanderveer Farmstead
- Victory Homes

These areas were assessed for worthiness as part of the 2008 update process. A brief description of each area is included in this report. A detailed map of each proposed Historic District Overlay Zone is attached to this report as Exhibits #1-7. Copies of the inventory forms for the properties located within each proposed Historic District Overlay Zone are included in the *2008 Historic Property Inventory Survey of Somerville* report.



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West End

The West End area is bounded by Altamont Place to the south, Prospect Drive to the north, Cornell Blvd to the west and Mountain Ave on the east. The area includes Altamont Place, part of West Summit St., Prospect St., Prospect Drive, and portions of N. Middaugh and Mountain Ave.

Altamont Place includes some of the largest and finest residential properties in Somerville. Ample in scale, although set in relatively small lots, these provide excellent examples of late 19th and early 20th century styles, especially Queen Anne and Shingle Style. Also surviving are brick houses in the Greek Revival style.



Altamont Place

West Summit St. (west of Mountain Ave.) exhibits turn of the century styles, as well as later Four Squares and Colonial Revival examples.

Prospect St. is an eclectic mix of 20th century styles including Colonial Revival, Tudor, English Arts and Crafts and Prairie Style. The block between Mountain Ave. and N. Middaugh is dominated by houses from the earlier part of the century, principally Bungalows and Four Squares.

Prospect Dr. includes one good example of Dutch Colonial revival. The remainder of the houses on this street are typical post-war subdivision and non-contributing.

N. Middaugh St. (north of West End Ave.) is characterized by buildings that share the more generous scale of those along Altamont Place and W. Summit St.



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N. Middaugh

Mountain Ave. (north of Altamont Place) includes the location of two of Somerville's large residences dating from the first half of the 20th century. Chiefly characterized by early 20th century houses in Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival.



Mountain Ave

Overall, the West End area includes a significant collection of historic sites. Most of the properties are in good condition and have good integrity. There has also not been a significant amount alterations/and or additions to properties or infilling in the area. All of this contributes to a sense of neighborhood and community.

The proposed boundaries of the West End Historic District Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. Through this evaluation, it may be deemed beneficial to reduce the proposed boundaries in certain areas to ensure that the Historic District Overlay Zone area includes only contributing properties. One recommendation to consider would be to delete the inclusion of Prospect Place given that it includes only one potentially significant structure and a number of non-contributing properties.



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Central Area

The Central Area is bounded by West End Ave., Hunterdon St. and W. and E. High St. on the south, W. Summit St. to the north, Mountain Ave. / West End Ave. to the west and Grove St on the east. It includes portions of West End Ave., Mountain Ave., N. Doughty Ave., Mercer St., Davenport St., Ross St., N. Bridge St., Grove St., W. and E. High St., W. and E. Cliff St. and W. Summit St.

West End Ave. almost presents a capsule history of the development of architecture in Somerville, with the buildings decreasing in age from east to west. At the eastern end of West End Ave. are surviving Greek Revival and Italianate buildings from the first half of the 19th century; at its western end are late 19th and early 20th century Shingle Style and Classical Revival examples. In between can be found Gothic Revival, Second Empire and Queen Anne.



West End Ave.

West and East High Street developed in the second and third quarters of the 19th century with substantial houses and several churches. Now a mixed avenue of historic buildings and new construction. Many of the old residences have been converted to office uses.

West and East Cliff Street, developed in the second half of the 19th century, retains a substantial group of houses in the fashionable styles of the period – Italianate, Second Empire, Gothic Revival and Queen Anne. The buildings reflect Somerville's emergence as a desirable place of residences for well-to-do middle-class families.

West Summit Street (east of Mountain Ave.) exhibits turn of the century styles, as well as later Four Square and Colonial Revival examples.



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Mountain Ave. is chiefly characterized by early 20th century houses in the Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival.

North Doughty Ave. (north of High St.) is characterized by 2 ½ story frame houses, most dating from the last third of the 19th century.

Mercer St. has a consistent character of gable front Victorian Vernacular frame houses, almost all with front porches. Most structures have been altered over time, with ornament removed and synthetic or aluminum siding applied, a few retain much of their original features.

Davenport St. (north of High St.) buildings generally appear to date from the last decade of the 19th century through the first two decades of the 20th. Davenport St. traverses what was once known as the “Lottery Field”, an area historically occupied by African-Americans. Their presence is further attested to by the location of two churches on Davenport St., St Thomas AME Zion and Shiloh Pentecostal.



Davenport Street, St. Thomas AME Zion Church

Ross St. shows a consistency of scale and style that give it a high level of integrity. All the houses are 2 ½ story, typically front gabled and Queen Anne or Victorian Vernacular in style; all are shown on 1890 Sanborn map.

N. Bridge St. is largely developed with buildings that can best be classified as Victorian Vernacular. There are some outstanding examples of late 19th century styles such as Queen Anne/Shingle Style.

Grove Street (north of High St.) is largely occupied by 2 ½ story houses on relatively narrow lots. The majority date from the period between c. 1870 and 1883 and are



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relatively simple examples of vernacular versions of Italianate and Gothic styles. With relatively uniform setbacks, they form a tight, cohesive streetscape.



Grove Street

The Central Area is the largest proposed Historic District Overlay Zone area. It includes many significant historic sites representing a diverse array of architectural styles. A number of the buildings are in excellent condition and important sites in Somerville's history. The majority of the buildings are in good to fair condition and have not undergone significant alterations. Some of the buildings in need of repair still retain many original elements.

The area has undergone some change over time. A number of former residential sites have been converted to new uses such as offices and commercial establishments. There has also been some infill development with new non contributing structures. Despite this, the area still maintains a historical sense of place. There is consistency of setback, scale and height of most of the structures in the Central Area which results in an aesthetically pleasing streetscape.

The proposed boundaries of the Central Area Historic District Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. One potential area of review would be to consider whether the district should be expanded to include all the properties along West End Ave. up to the municipal border. Currently the border ends at N. Middaugh St. West End Ave. serves as an important gateway into the Borough. Even though the consistency of sites is not as apparent in the area west of N. Middaugh St., there are still a number of well preserved historic sites in good condition. If these properties were to be significantly altered or removed, West End Avenue's role as a gateway into the Borough could be diminished.



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Downtown

The Downtown area is bounded by Veterans Memorial Drive / W. Main Street / West End Ave. in the south, Hunterdon St. on the north, Mountain Ave. to the west and Grove St on the east. The area includes portions of N. Doughty Ave., Davenport St., Maple St., West End Ave., Division St., N. and S. Bridge St., Veterans Memorial Dr., South St. and W. and E. Main St.

Veterans Memorial Drive includes one property, the former Somerville Train Station.



Former Somerville Train Station

South Street includes two Victorian Vernacular properties.

West Main St. is the historic commercial spine of Somerville. For most of its length West Main Street is solidly lined with three and four-story brick commercial buildings, dating from the last quarter of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. Although many storefronts have been altered, the upper stories generally remain intact, and exhibit Italianate or, less commonly, Romanesque detailing. These solid walls of adjoining buildings are punctuated by more monumental structures, such as the Richardsonian Romanesque United Reformed Church or the Beaux Arts Somerset Trust Company.

East Main St. is extremely varied in character. The first block between Grove and Bridge Streets, has the Court House Green, with its key buildings on the north side and an admixture of primarily undistinguished buildings on the south side. The northeast corner of Main and Grove Streets is anchored by the Somerset Hotel. East of this point the street is a mix of small-scale late 19th and early 20th century dwellings and institutional and commercial buildings.



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Hunterdon Street is essentially an alley, faced by rear sides of buildings fronting onto streets to the north and south. The south is occupied largely by a Borough-owned parking lot. Only one house fronts on the street.

N. Doughty Ave. between Main and High Streets is developed with mixed commercial and residential uses in the period from c. 1885 to 1925. It also includes West End Co. Firehouse that now serves as a Fireman's Museum.



N. Doughty Ave, West End Hose Company Firehouse

Davenport St. between Main and High Street includes a number of properties converted from residential to business use.

Maple St. includes a number of properties converted to office uses, including the former public library building.



Maple Street

S. Bridge St. is Somerville's earliest thoroughfare. This is reflected in some of the buildings along the west side of the street south of Main Street. Although almost all the buildings in this area have been heavily altered, several appear to date from the first



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half of the 19th century and some may even date to the first half of the 19th century and some may even date to the late 18th century.

N. Bridge St includes buildings between Main and High Streets that have been altered for adaptation to commercial use.



N. Bridge Street

The Downtown Area is the most diverse proposed Historic District Overlay Zone area. It includes some of Somerville's most important significant historic and architectural sites, such as the Old Somerset County Courthouse located on East Main Street. There are also a number of streets included in the proposed Historic District Overlay Zone that have been significantly altered or consist of only a few remaining contributing sites and these are in fair to poor condition. South Street for example only includes two historic sites, both in poor condition and integrity.

The proposed boundaries of the Downtown Area Historic District Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. Streets with mostly non contributing properties or properties in poor condition, such as South Street should be potentially considered to be deleted from the proposed Historic District Overlay Zone.

Portions of the proposed Downtown Area Historic District Overlay Zone have recently been designated as a Main Street area by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth. The Borough should consider making the boundaries of the Downtown Area Historic District Overlay Zone consistent with the area designated as a Main Street area. This would be very beneficial for the implementation of any recommended design guidelines and grant programs to assist property owners with changes and additions to their properties. It would also help to ensure consistency in streetscape elements and design elements in the Downtown area.



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Southside

The Southside Historic District Overlay Zone is bounded by the New Cemetery / Old Raritan Cemetery, Southside Ave. and the Tunison Family Burial Ground on the south, Franklin St. / Veteran Memorial Drive on the north, S. Bridge St. on the west and Hamilton St. on the east. It includes portions of S. Bridge St., Center St., Hamilton St., Southside Ave., Veterans Memorial Drive, Franklin St. and all of Second St. and Third St.

New Cemetery is located at the southern most part of Bridge Street. This 19th century design cemetery is a still active garden cemetery. It features funerary sculpture and local history from about 1860 through the present. The cemetery also incorporates the old local “Colored Cemetery” where many African American veterans of the Civic War are buried. Numerous state and county political figures are buried in this cemetery as well.

Old Raritan Cemetery is located across the street from the New Cemetery on South Bridge St. It contains graves of prominent individuals in the town and county through the late 1800’s.

S. Bridge St. includes buildings that date from the first half of the 19th century and some may even date to the late 18th century. South of Third Street, the buildings are later and are interspersed with more modern structures.



S. Bridge Street

Center Street is a short street with vernacular workers’ housing dating to the late 19th or early 20th century. The buildings are in general cohesive in scale and style.

Hamilton. St. is the site of a small colonial era cemetery, the Tunison Family Burial Ground, where a number of Somerset County’s first settlers are buried.



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Southside Street is characterized by modest dwellings, largely dating from the last decades of the 19th century.

Third Street is a remarkably intact component of the middle and working-class neighborhood east of South Bridge St. and south of the railroad.



Third Street

Second Street appears to have been a lower middle and working-class neighborhood. It has a number of good examples of Victorian Vernacular housing. The condition of the buildings is only fair and many have synthetic siding. The integrity of the street is fairly high.

Franklin Street retains a few buildings dating from the first half of the 19th century. The majority of them can only be classified as fair integrity.

Veterans Memorial Drive east of S. Bridge Street and west of Hamilton Street includes a few buildings dating from the first half of the 19th century with only fair integrity.

The Southside Historic District Overlay Zone includes a variety of potential historic sites. There are a number of fine examples of vernacular housing. The area has however experienced a fair amount of infill development. There are also a number of properties that are in poor or only fair condition.

The proposed boundaries of the Southside Historic District Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. There are a number of structures in poor condition or are non contributing structures located on Franklin Street and Veterans Memorial Drive that should be potentially considered to be deleted from the proposed Historic District Overlay Zone.



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Washington Place

The Washington Place Historic District Overlay Zone is bounded by Washington Place on the south, Somerset St. on the north, Route 206 on the west and Veterans Memorial Drive on the east. It includes all of Washington Place and S. Middaugh Street.

Washington Place is the location of Somerville's earliest surviving buildings, including the Wallace House, Old Dutch Parsonage and the Mann House, as well as turn of the century residences in good to excellent condition.



Mann House, Washington Place

Middaugh St. S is a one-block section extending from Somerset St. south to Washington Place. It is the location of a cluster of early 20th Century houses of modest scale. All are essentially vernacular but they have sufficient age, character and integrity to be considered contributing.



S. Middaugh Street

The Washington Place Historic District Overlay Zone area includes some of Somerville's most important historic sites, surrounded by a fine collection of properties of good condition. The proposed boundaries of the Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. There are a number of non contributing structures located at the end of Washington Place that should be potentially considered to be deleted from the proposed Historic District Overlay Zone.



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Vanderveer Farmstead

The Vanderveer Farmstead Historic District Overlay Zone is bounded by Grant Ave. on the south, Fairmont Ave. on the north, Vanderveer Ave. on the west and Rehill Ave on the east. It includes one property, the former Dr. Henry Vanderveer House, located on Grant Ave.



The Vanderveer Farmstead property is a significant historical site and also represents an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture from the early 1835-1860 time period. The property is recommended in the *Somerset County Cultural Resource Survey*, prepared in August 1989, as individually eligible for listing on the National Register.

The Borough may want to consider recommending this preservation strategy to the property owner versus considering nomination as a historic district. The nomination of this property as a historic site should include consideration for the surrounding property so that the historical context is also preserved. The nomination of the property should be undertaken with the concurrence of the property owner.



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Victory Homes

The Victory Homes Historic District Overlay Zone is bounded by Adams St. on the south, Union Ave on the north, N. Richards Ave. on the west and Adamsville Rd. on the east. It includes portions of N. Richards Ave., N. Auten Ave., Adamsville Rd, Adams St., Madison St., Putnam St. and Hope St.



N. Richards Ave

The Victory Homes Historic District Overlay Zone area includes a fine collection of post World War II bungalows. The properties have uniform setbacks that form a tight, cohesive streetscape. All or most of the properties are in good to excellent condition and have good integrity. There has not been a significant amount alterations/and or additions to properties or infilling in the area. All of this contributes to a sense of neighborhood and community.

Because of the relative modest size of the properties, there is the potential for significant change in this area. Additions and alterations to existing properties could have a significant impact on the sense of neighborhood that currently exists. In addition, infill development of new buildings that are incompatible with the surrounding structures could threaten the integrity of the area. The nomination of this area as a historic district could help to preserve the character of the neighborhood. Design guidelines and guidelines for infill development could be adopted and used as a reference by property owners contemplating changes and new construction.

The proposed boundaries of the Victory Homes Historic District Overlay Zone should be evaluated in detail prior to recommending Historic District nomination. Any non contributing structures located close to the boundaries of the Historic District Overlay Zone should be potentially considered to be deleted from the proposed Historic District Overlay Zone.



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VII. HISTORIC SITE AND DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

The most common and effective technique used by municipalities to protect historically significant structures and historic areas is to nominate them to the State and/or National Historic Registers. Given this fact, the Borough should encourage the additional nomination of historic sites and the nomination of historic districts in Somerville.

Continue to Nominate Historic Sites to the National and State Registers

The Borough could encourage the additional nomination of sites to the State and National Register of Historic Places. The properties that have been assessed as key in the inventory should be prioritized for listing on the National and State Registers. In particular, those properties that have already been deemed to be worthy of listing could have nomination information prepared.

In addition to these, the Borough could also encourage the nomination of any other historic sites deemed to be contributing and assessed to be worthy of listing. The nomination of a property should be undertaken with the concurrence of the property owner whenever possible.

The Borough could also consider producing a public information brochure that explains the nomination process and the various benefits of a property being listed and the rights and responsibilities of nomination and listing of historic properties. A meeting to explain the nomination process could also be convened for all potential property owners.

Nominate Historic Districts to the State and National Registers

The Borough could also encourage the nomination of districts to the State and National Registers. The seven proposed Historic District Overlay Zones could all be considered for possible historic district listing.

Neighborhood committees in each proposed Historic District Overlay Zone area should be formed to lead the process. This neighborhood committee should evaluate the inventory that has been created for their respective Historic District Overlay Zone and further validate the worthiness of each structure to be contributing or non contributing. This committee should also closely evaluate and review the recommended borders of the potential district and determine if any additions or reductions are recommended.

A public meeting for all the property owners located within a potential historic district should be convened. At this meeting, the nomination process should be fully explained, along with the rights and responsibilities of nomination and listing. The nomination of a historic district should be undertaken with the concurrence of the majority of the property owners whenever possible.



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VIII. PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

There are a number of important considerations for a municipality in encouraging the long-term preservation of historic sites and historic neighborhoods, while accounting for change and development. The two most significant matters are when changes or additions are proposed to a historic site or historic property located within a historic district, and new construction. Significant changes to a historic site can have a permanent impact on a property and even impact the neighborhood. Similarly, new construction that is incompatible next to a historic site or within a historic district can drastically impact the streetscape and context of historic sites.

The Borough could consider the use of guidelines and standards as an aid in responding to change and development. The following standards and guidelines can be used by the Borough to help to provide advice to property owners proposing changes and additions or new construction.

Standards for Rehabilitation

The most prevalent preservation treatment today is rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is defined as the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character. In response to this, the Secretary of the Interior has established Standards for Rehabilitation. The Standards were originally published in 1977 and revised in 1990 as part of the Department of the Interior regulations.

The Standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environmental as well as attached, adjacent or related new construction. The intent of the Standards is to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance. They are intended to be used as a guide in providing advice and assistance to property owners rehabilitating their historic property.

The ten (10) Standards for Rehabilitation are presented on the following page. They should be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. To be eligible for Federal tax incentives, a rehabilitation project must meet all ten Standards.

The Borough of Somerville should consider adopting the Standards as the municipalities design guidelines to provide advice to historic site property owners and property owners located within a historic district overlay zone whenever rehabilitation work is proposed to be undertaken.



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1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historical significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive features, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sand blasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be distributed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.



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Guidelines for Infill Development

Infill development refers to the construction of new buildings within an existing historic neighborhood, or the replacement of existing buildings with new ones. Respect for the surrounding context of buildings becomes paramount. Incompatible buildings threaten the integrity of a historical area and sufficient numbers of them may result in the disqualification for future listing of the district on the State and National Registers.

Since it is the visual compatibility of new buildings with the historical ones that is the most important factor, exterior design principles should be established to guide the designer of a new building. The Borough should consider the use of the below mentioned guidelines whenever new construction is proposed next to a historic site or in a historic district.

- The massing and height of the building should be similar to the ones that make up the rest of the streetscape.
- The relationship of the building's height to width in the front façade should be proportioned to be compatible with nearby buildings.
- The elements in the facade, such as windows, doors, sidelights, and projections from it, such as porches, balconies, or porte-cocheres should be proportional in height and width both within themselves and in relationship to the supporting wall as other structures in the streetscape.
- The spacing and size of exterior wall to the elements in the facade should be compatible with adjacent and nearby buildings.
- The relationship of the new building to side yards and the setback from the street should be similar to the existing pattern of development.
- The use of building materials, their texture, and color should be visually compatible with existing building in the district.
- The shape, roofline, and slope of roofs, including dormers, chimneys, and other projections should be compatible with nearby structures.
- Landscape elements such as individual trees and tree masses, walls fencing, and other materials should continue the existing views from the street.
- The exterior features of a building, including ornamentation, should be visually compatible with the architectural era of nearby buildings.



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IX. ROLE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

Present Role

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) was created as part of the Somerville District Management Corporation (DMC) to serve in an advisory capacity with a mission to preserve the sense of architectural history that is found within the Special Improvement District (SID), as defined by the Somerville Borough Council, and to promote a sense of aesthetics.

The ARB reviews designs of new buildings and/or renovations to the exterior surfaces of existing buildings located within the District. This review is also intended to include any appurtenances that are attached on or ancillary to such buildings, including but not limited to signs, awnings, lighting, etc. The ARB may also at the request of other Somerville bodies, e.g. the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment, review designs submitted to the Borough for new construction or exterior renovations in properties located outside the SID.

The recommendations of the ARB are to be subsequently considered by either the Borough Planning Board or the Borough Zoning Board of Adjustment who may accept, ignore or modify these recommendations when setting their conditions.

Recommendations for the Future

The role of the ARB could be expanded to include the responsibility to review and advise the Planning Board on issues pertaining to historic preservation. The jurisdiction for the ARB would thus need to be expanded to include all properties located within a historic district and to individual historic sites. The ARB could be asked to potentially advise the Planning Board on seven types of action. The ARB should adopt standards like the Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Infill in their implementation of the below mentioned actions:

1. Demolition of a historic site or building within a historic district.
2. Relocation of historic site or building within a historic district.
3. Change in the exterior appearance of a historic site or building within a historic district.
4. Any new construction adjacent to a historic site or in a historic district.
5. Changes in signage or exterior lighting to a historic site or in a historic district.
6. Application for site plan or subdivision approval that may affect a historic site or district.
7. Application for a zoning variance that may affect a historic site or district.



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X. ROLE OF THE HISTORIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Present Role

The present mission of the Historic Advisory Committee is defined as follows:

"We will promote, protect and preserve the historic heritage, character and architecture of the Borough of Somerville by increasing public awareness of that heritage on local, regional, state, and national levels, and by creating for our citizens and our descendants resources that accentuate and emphasize the town's history. We will provide informed and consensus-based recommendations regarding the conservation of historical artifacts, structures, and other property, with a focus on enhancing the quality of life for our residents, and preserving the historic character of the Borough while allowing for appropriate growth and change."

Recommendations for the Future

The role of the Historic Advisory Committee as advocate and educator for preservation in the Borough should be continued. The Historic Advisory Committee should continue to encourage the study of historic properties. Writing history is an evolutionary process. A number of excellent histories, documents, and journals exist as excellent reference materials on the Borough history. This information provides a basis for informing citizens and owners of historic properties and, those who plan to develop in historic areas, about what is historically significant.

The Historic Advisory Committee could also be the lead agency to propose the nomination of a historic site or historic district to the State and National Registers. Nominations should be made with the assistance of private homeowners, historical groups and neighborhood committees.

The Committee could also be charged with identifying and recording changes to the *2008 Historic Property Inventory of Somerville*. The inventory should be reviewed on a regular basis. Changes in condition should be noted and documented. Potential new historic sites and districts, not currently identified, could be reported.



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XI. INTERFACE WITH OTHER MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

The MLUL requires the Historic Preservation Plan to analyze the impact of each element of the Master Plan on the preservation of historic sites and districts. It is also important that the Historic Preservation Plan Element integrate with other elements of the Master Plan. This Historic Preservation Plan Element seeks to find a balance between the preservation, maintenance and interpretation of the Borough's key historic resources and the community's need for ongoing change.

At the time of the writing of this Master Plan element, the Borough of Somerville is in the process of updating its existing Master Plan that was adopted in 1990. The elements of the 1990 Master Plan include the following: Goals & Policies for the Future, Land Use, Circulation Analysis, Community Facilitates, Housing Plan and Regional Overview. Most elements of the 1990 Master Plan have either a generally positive impact or no negative impact on historic preservation.

As the Borough progresses in the updating of the 1990 Master Plan, there are a number of potentially important implications for historic preservation that should be considered. These are discussed below and include: the Circulation Plan, Land Use Plan, Housing Element and Community Facilities Plan

Circulation Plan

The Circulation Plan Element should identify the location of significant historic sites and districts. The design, improvement and maintenance of public roadways and bridges in Somerville can have a significant impact on historic properties and districts. In particular, special attention should be paid to preserving historic roadway widths, historic bridges and historic roadway intersections.

Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan contains policies that are intended to guide the Borough's zoning and subdivision regulations. These regulations can have implications on historic preservation. Historic structures are typically located close to roadways and/or other property lines and the distance between structures is much more varied than those built to modern standards.

Some historic structures are also not readily adapted to modern needs or they were constructed for uses no longer economically viable. Variances from zoning standards and subdivision regulations which promote the preservation of historic structures and/or the historic character of an area should be considered.



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The Land Use Plan also contains policies related to institutional and public utility uses. These uses can include new sewage facilities, pipelines and transmission lines and cell tower locations. Such uses can be visually prominent and incompatible with historic integrity. Consideration should be given to locations that minimize their visual impact on historic sites and districts.

Housing Plan Element

A significant amount of the Borough of Somerville's existing housing stock includes historic properties. The preservation of these properties is important in order to respond to future housing needs. The Housing Plan Element should encourage that historic buildings be saved by adapting them for low and moderate income housing. In addition, the Borough can also consider adaptive re-use of commercial and industrial buildings for residential use.

Community Facilities

The Borough of Somerville owns and uses some historic properties as public facilities. Borough Hall is currently located in the Daniel Robert House at 25 West End Ave. This property is listed on the National and State Registers. Any future development plans for this site should be sensitive to the preservation and maintenance of the historic integrity of the property. If the Borough ever sells a historic property to a private sector entity, consideration should be given to safeguarding the property with a historic preservation covenant.



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XII. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Borough should continue to nominate historic sites to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
2. The Borough should consider pursuing the nomination of historic districts to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.
3. The Borough should consider adopting design guidelines like the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to provide advice and guidance to historic property owners and property owners located in historic districts contemplating alterations or additions.
4. The Borough should consider adopting guidelines for infill development to provide advice and guidance to property owners proposing new construction next to a historic site or within a historic district.
5. The Borough should consider expanding the role of the Architectural Review Board to review and provide advice on actions that could potentially impact historic sites or properties located within a historic district.
6. The Borough should continue the role of the Historic Advisory Committee as advocate and educator for preservation and consider enlisting the Committee with the responsibility for the nomination of historic sites and districts and updating of the inventory.
7. The Borough should continue to reexamine municipal policies that affect historic resources, especially land use ordinances, to ensure that they are consistent with the goals of this Element.