



Somersworth Master Plan

HOUSING CHAPTER

Adopted April 17, 2024

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Living in Somersworth

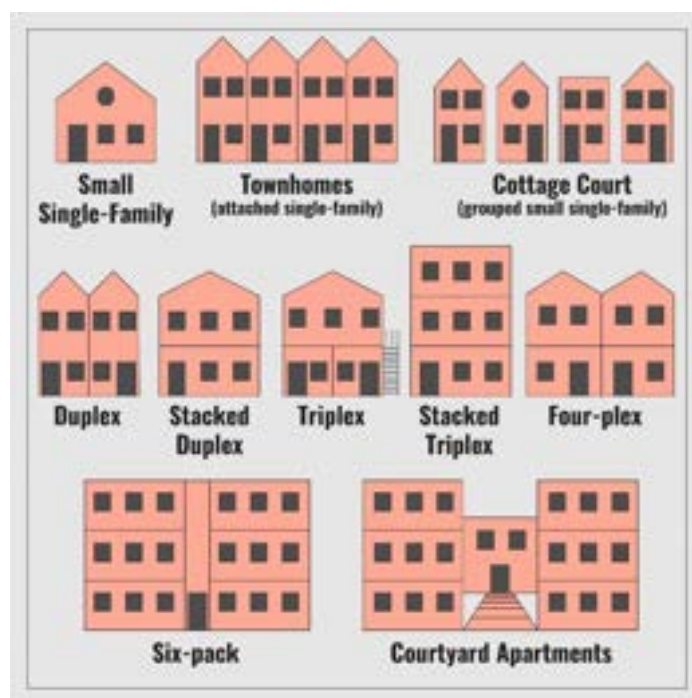
A Housing Plan for the City

Introduction

Somersworth's walkable, established downtown situated on the Salmon Falls River, as well as its proximity to nature and major cities like Boston, Portsmouth and Portland, make it a desirable place for people to call home. The City's diverse housing stock, which comprises 64% of the land area in the City (see **Figure 2**), is dispersed throughout the community. Somersworth residents benefit from accessible housing prices relative to other Seacoast municipalities and possesses "missing middle" housing (**Figure 1**) largely absent elsewhere. While relatively affordable housing has historically been available, rising housing costs and lack of inventory have threatened Somersworth's affordability, and current land use regulations play a role in the ability to continue to create new affordable housing in various locations throughout the City (see **Figure 3**). Based on current and future housing needs, Somersworth is working to expand the availability of affordable housing, diversify their housing stock to accommodate the current and future needs of its residents, leverage existing locations (such as the National Guard site and the former Aclara factory) for the creation of multi-family housing, and update the zoning ordinance to increase housing opportunities for people of all ages and incomes. The existing zoning map (**Figure 4**) depicts where housing opportunities are currently available.

Based on community input, residents would like to see more affordable housing (both single and multi-family), improved walkability/accessibility, safety, and property maintenance, conservation of natural spaces, a vibrant downtown that includes more businesses and mixed-use development, and enhancements along the Salmon Falls River that make it more inviting.

Figure 1: Missing Middle Housing Types. (Source: NH Housing Toolbox. 2023)



"I would love to see the downtown area developed and improved and I would like more affordable housing ... (near downtown)."

Source: Somersworth Housing Survey 2023.

Figure 2: Residential Zoning (Source: City of Somersworth, 2024)

Housing Type		Land Acres	% of Land
Total Land Area in Somersworth		5,891	100%
All Residential		3,774	64%
Single Family (Allowed + Conditional)		3,774	64%
	Single Family (Allowed)	3,774	64%
	Single Family (Conditional)	0	0%
Two-Family (Allowed + Conditional)		749	13%
	Two-Family (Allowed)	749	13%
	Two-Family (Conditional)	0	0%
Multi-Family (Allowed + Conditional)		407	7%
	Multi-Family (Allowed)	269	5%
	Multi-Family (Conditional)	138	2%

Figure 3: Residential Parcels in Somersworth (Source: SRPC, 2024)

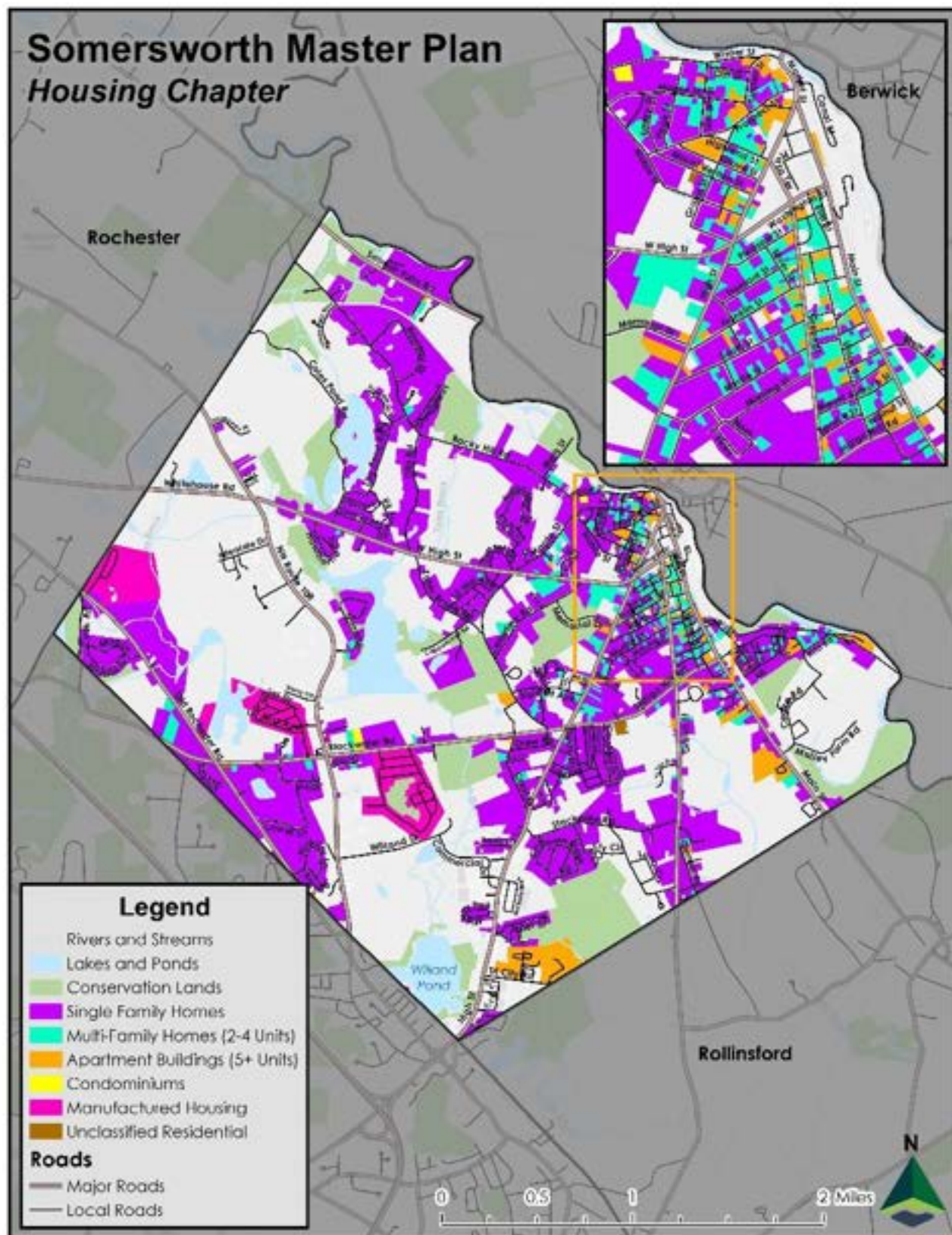
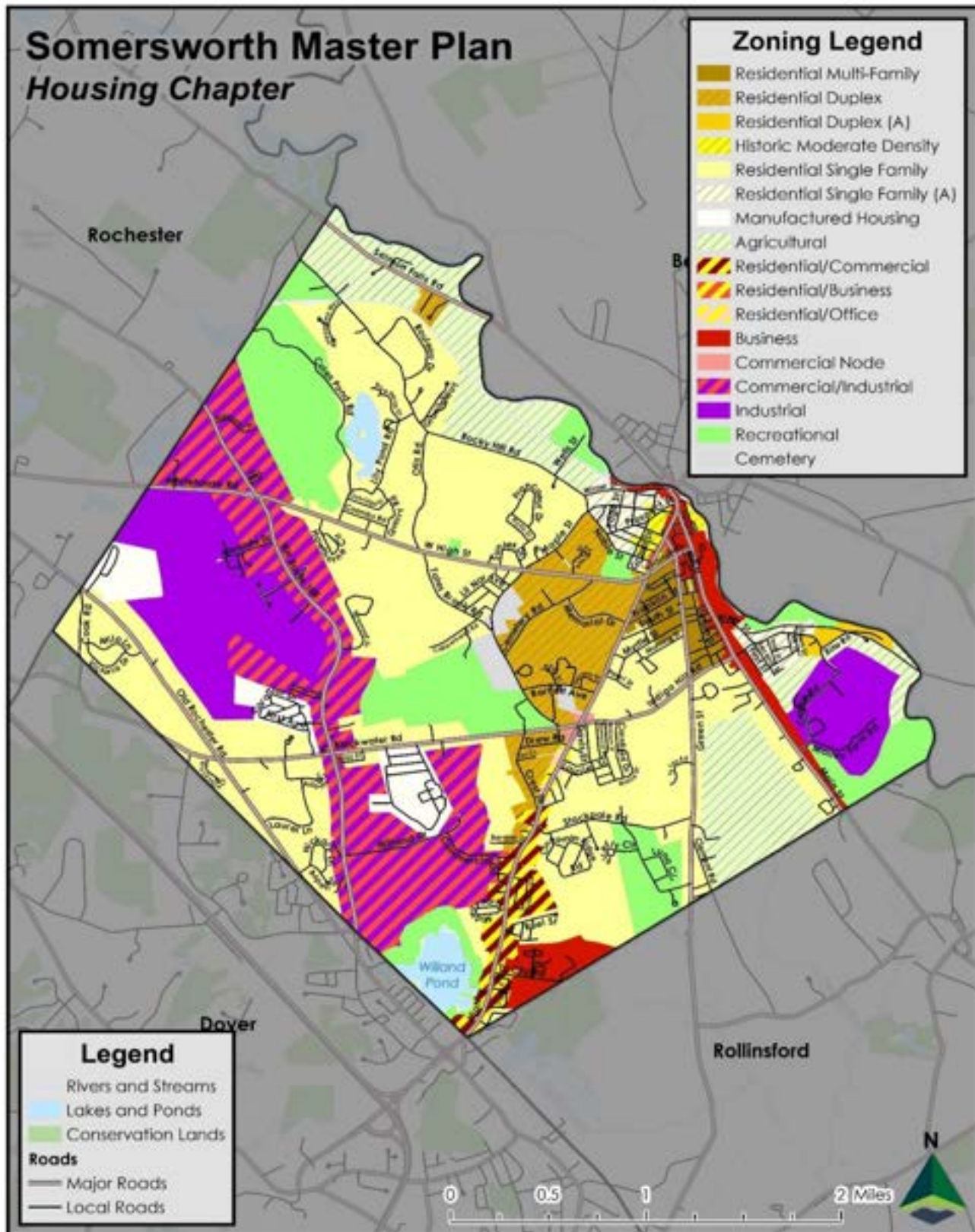


Figure 4: Somersworth Zoning (Source: SRPC and City of Somersworth, 2023)



Community Engagement

To develop the Housing Chapter, City staff and the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) conducted extensive outreach with residents and stakeholders throughout 2023. This included a community-wide survey, which was open from June through August 2023 and received over 300 responses, a Community Housing Workshop that was held in September at Somersworth High School (**Figure 5**), and a Planning Board workshop hosted in October. City Planning staff also hosted a table at the National Night Out event in August. The survey was prepared by the SRPC, with support from City staff and the Housing Chapter Steering Committee comprised of municipal staff and volunteer board members. The Community Housing Workshop included presentations on the state of housing in New Hampshire and the City of Somersworth, a panel discussion focused on various housing myths and how to overcome them, and breakout sessions where attendees explored numerous housing topics including: where housing should be developed, how to increase support for housing, and the challenges and opportunities of housing for younger and older adults. The findings of the outreach efforts are documented throughout this chapter.

Figure 5: Somersworth Community Housing Workshop, September 2023

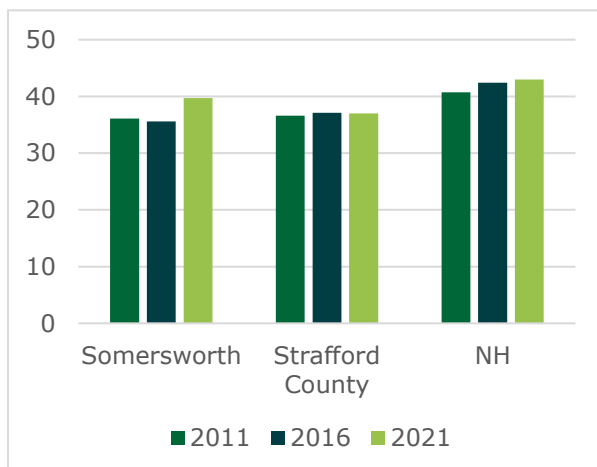


Our Housing Story

This section explores key themes associated with Somersworth's unique housing landscape. These themes are informed by data and public outreach, including the community workshop and survey, interviews, and discussions with the Planning Board.

Theme 1. Population trends are changing.

Figure 6: Median Age (Source: ACS, 2021)



The population of Somersworth is increasing and aging, while the number of children and the household sizes are declining. The City's population has been steadily increasing over the years, and projections show that by 2050, the population in Somersworth will have increased by over 13% compared to 2021.ⁱ Similarly, the median age of the population has also been rising (39.7 in 2021 compared to 35.6 in 2016), as shown in **Figure 6**.ⁱⁱ On the contrary, the average household size has declined more in Somersworth than in Strafford County or New Hampshire, as have the number of households with children, which has dropped from 35% to 30% from 2011

to 2021.ⁱⁱⁱ These population trends likely mean that smaller housing sizes, limited to a single-story, located in close proximity to supportive services will become more appealing for existing and future residents. See **Figure 7** for other household statistics which could impact the type, location and size of future units to match the changing needs of Somersworth’s existing and future residents.

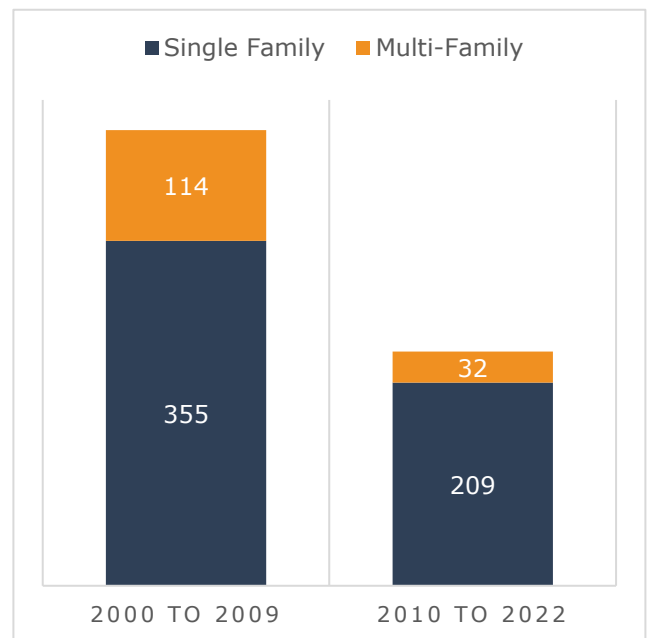
Figure 7: Somersworth Household Sizes (Source: ACS, 2021)



Theme 2. Supply is limited.

The City has seen a significant decrease in the number of building permits over the past decade, resulting in a shortage of housing inventory. From 2000 to 2009, Somersworth issued 469 building permits for single family and multi-family structures.^{iv} This dropped almost 50% the following decade, when the total number of permits issued was 241, as shown in **Figure 8**. It is important to note that while a building permit might be issued, this is not indicative of when or whether the development will actually occur. The shortage of supply is also reflected in the number of days that properties are spending on the market, as well as historically low vacancy rates. In a balanced rental market, the target vacancy rate should be between 5-6%, however, the vacancy rate in Strafford County was 1.1% in 2022, according to New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority’s 2023 Residential Rental Cost Survey Report,^v and an even tighter vacancy rate is expected in 2023 based on data available for the first two quarters. In the community-wide survey, respondents indicated that the availability of housing was one of the biggest housing-related challenges faced in their community.

Figure 8: Building Permits (Source: Office of Planning and Development, 2019)



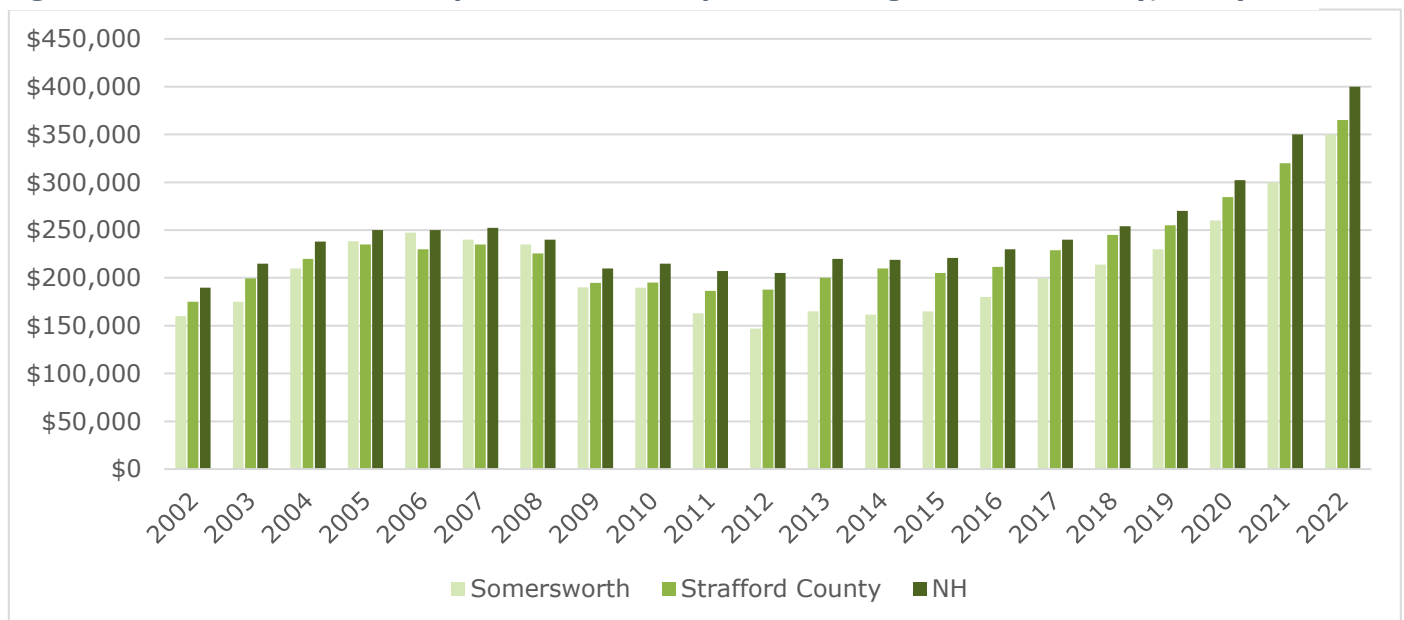
"[The city needs] housing, period. The city has the water and sewer capacity, a centrally located fire station and uncrowded schools. The city could increase the tax base significantly with minimal increase in government spending thanks to this abundance of resources."

Source: Somersworth Housing Survey 2023.

Theme 3. The cost of housing is increasing.

The limited inventory and growing demand for housing have resulted in higher costs, which in turn has impacted affordability in the community, particularly in recent years. From 2010 to 2019, the median purchase price in Somersworth rose 21%. Between 2019 to 2022, it increased more than 50% (**Error! Reference source not found.9**).^{vi} Affordability is further impacted by high interest rates, raising utility and construction costs, cost to permit new housing units, and increased property taxes that grow parallel to higher property values. Rental prices have also increased significantly, surpassing the Fair Market Rent (FMR) as set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2022, the median rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Somersworth was \$1,505^{vii}, while the FMR was \$1,399.^{viii} It is important to note that despite increased prices and general sentiment that housing in the City is no longer attainable for many, Somersworth remains relatively affordable in comparison to other neighboring communities in the Seacoast region, making it even more appealing to homebuyers and renters, further driving up the demand.

Figure 9: Median Purchase Price (Source: New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, 2022)



"LOW INCOME HOUSING NEEDS TO BE BUILT! We need LOWER TAXES! People are struggling to LIVE! Cost of living and renting/owning a home is WAY TOO HIGH!"

Source: Somersworth Housing Survey 2023.

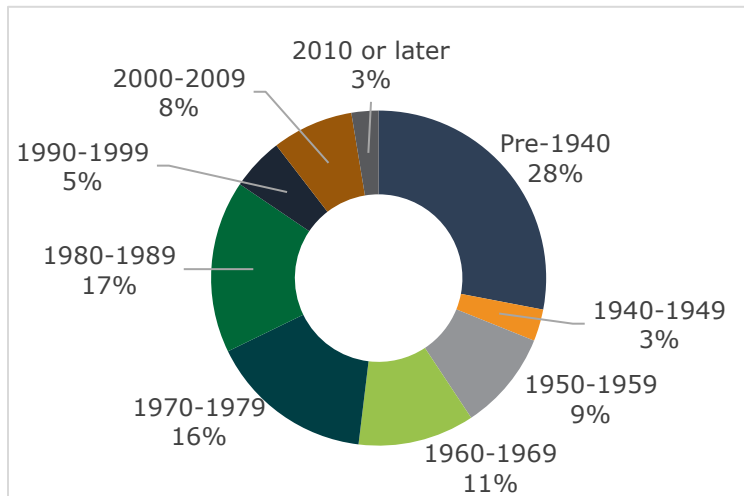
"[Somersworth is the] best option in the seacoast in regard to affordable housing"

Source: Somersworth Housing Survey 2023.

Theme 4. The City's housing stock is largely comprised of older homes.

Over half of Somersworth's housing stock was built before 1970, and 28% of units were built before 1940 (**Figure 10**).^{ix} The age of a community's housing stock raises concerns around

Figure 10: Age of Housing Structures (Source: ACS, 2021)



upkeep, maintenance, and preservation of existing housing supply. Based on code violation reports in Somersworth, a total of 219 Courtesy Notices and 60 Violation Notices were issued by the Code Compliance Office from January 2023 to October 2023. Furthermore, throughout the survey, residents brought up concerns regarding property owners not maintaining their properties, which may be a result of an increasing number of investor-owned properties. With an older housing stock, there is also concern around the presence of asbestos and lead paint, which can be found in many homes

built before 1978. Older homes can also be more difficult to upgrade or make them accessible for those who wish to age in place.

A benefit of an older housing stock is that some single-family homes tend to be large enough to be converted into multi-family housing- an opportunity to help increase the City's housing stock.

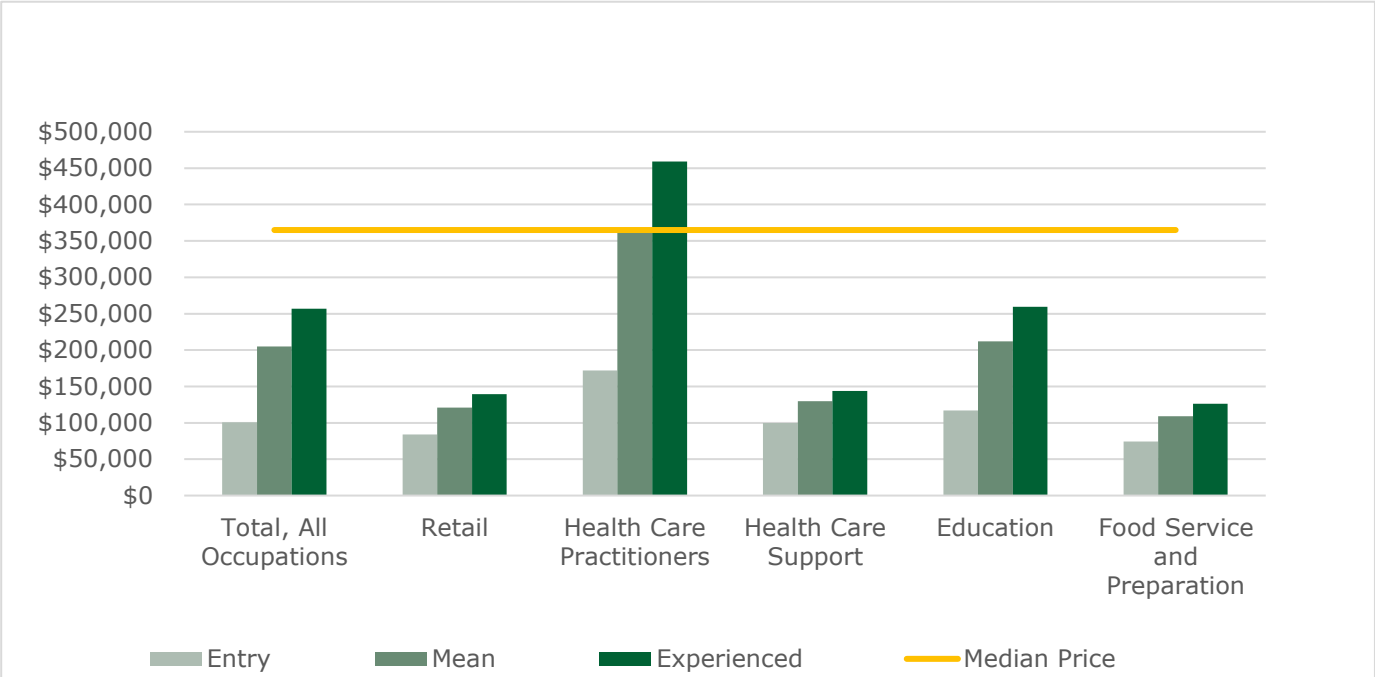
"...We should be caring for where we live, and that mindset needs to be cultivated more throughout our community... Coordinating events like neighborhood/city clean-up days could be a big step in fostering a community that takes responsibility and cares for their city."

Source: Somersworth Housing Survey 2023.

Theme 5. Housing stock does not meet local needs.

The cost of housing has increased at a faster pace than incomes, which further highlights the need for housing that meets the current needs of the community. In the survey, over half of respondents indicated that they are cost-burdened, meaning they pay over 30% of their household income on housing expenses. As shown in **Figure 11**, workers in only one of Strafford County's most common occupations (that is, mid-level and experienced healthcare workers) are able to afford the median price of a home (\$365,000 in 2022) in the County without being cost-burdened.^x At the housing workshop and throughout the survey, residents reiterated the urgent need for more affordable housing.

Figure 11: Maximum Mortgage Affordable by Occupation and Experience in Strafford County in 2022
 (Source: SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment)



The MIT Living Wage Calculator helps determine the living wage needed by county. The living wage is based on a very restrained budget that focuses on the bare minimum that an individual or family needs to live. **Figure 12** shows the wage estimates for “poverty” and “living” wages in Strafford County. Of note, the lowest living wage needed in Strafford County is \$12.85 (in the case of a household with 2 working adults with no children), yet the minimum wage in NH remains at \$7.25 in 2024.^{xi}



Figure 12. Living Wages by Housing Type for Strafford County, 2023 (Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator)

Household Type		Poverty Wage	Poverty Salary	Poverty Salary per month	Living Wage	Living Salary	Living Salary per month
1 Adult	0 Children	\$6.53	\$13,582	\$1,132	\$17.45	\$36,296	\$3,025
	1 Child	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$35.87	\$74,610	\$6,217
	2 Children	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$46.14	\$95,971	\$7,998
	3 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$61.30	\$127,504	\$10,625
2 Adults (1 Working)	0 Children	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$27.43	\$57,054	\$4,755
	1 Child	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$33.95	\$70,616	\$5,885
	2 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$38.62	\$80,330	\$6,694
	3 Children	\$15.61	\$32,469	\$2,706	\$43.86	\$91,229	\$7,602
2 Adults (both working)	0 Children	\$4.40	\$9,152	\$763	\$13.71	\$28,517	\$2,376
	1 Child	\$5.54	\$11,523	\$960	\$19.88	\$41,350	\$3,446
	2 Children	\$6.67	\$13,874	\$1,156	\$25.12	\$52,250	\$4,354
	3 Children	\$7.81	\$16,245	\$1,354	\$30.65	\$63,752	\$5,313

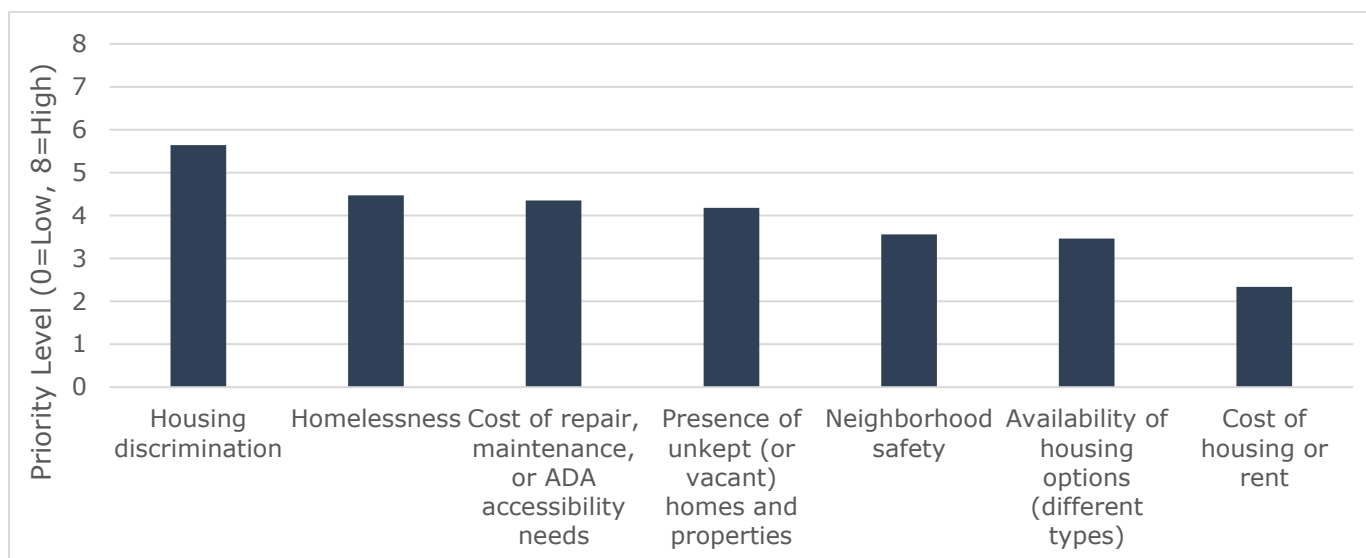
Affordability is only one aspect of the community’s current housing needs. While 76% of survey respondents indicated that Somersworth needs more moderate-income housing, about half stated that more rental units, housing for people with physical disabilities, and homes for older adults are also needed. When asked about their future housing needs, only about half indicated that it meets their anticipated needs for the next 10 years.

With an increasing population of older adults and household sizes that are declining, it is important that Somersworth’s housing stock meets the current and future needs of its residents who may wish to age in place by down- or up-sizing without sacrificing location or making significant adaptations to their properties. This includes:

- Having the option to stay in Somersworth or live in a place where residents have access to essential services and remain close to current social supports systems.
- Creating an Accessory Dwelling Unit.
- Improving accessibility, including but not limited to ensuring the availability of single-floor living. 17% of survey respondents regardless of age indicated having a disability of any kind.

Furthermore, when choosing where to live, most survey respondents said they prioritize safety, affordability, availability of infrastructure and utilities (sidewalks, water, sewer, internet, etc.), and quality of life (proximity to amenities such as shopping, healthcare, downtown center, recreational areas, etc.). When asked to rate the biggest housing-related challenges in their community, the top three challenges identified by respondents were the cost of housing, availability of housing options, and neighborhood safety (**Figure 13**).

Figure 13: Housing challenges identified by residents in the 2023 Somersworth Housing Survey*



**Note: In this adjusted scale, 0 is a low priority, and 8 is a high priority.*

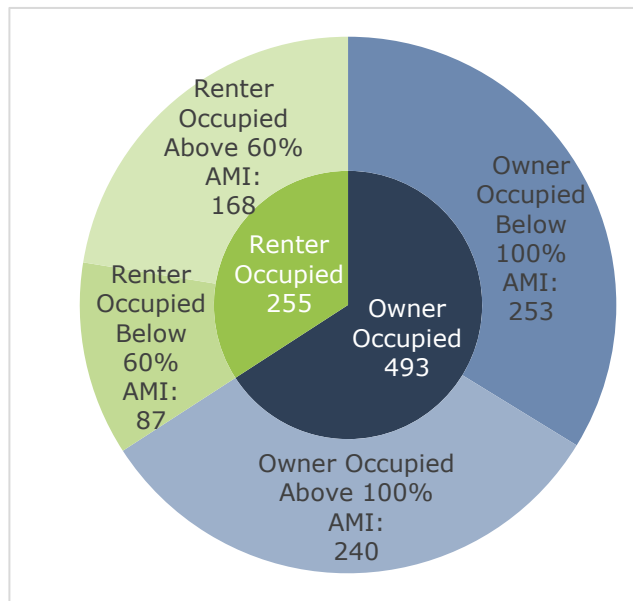
Finally, it is important to note that the City should still be creating housing appropriate for families. In 2023, 30% of the households in Somersworth have children^{xii} and the Somersworth School District (SAU 56 Somersworth) has capacity for additional students in the schools. According to the Business Administrator for SAU 56, all of the schools in the District have capacity. **Figure 14** compares the 2024 enrollment with capacity for each of the four schools in the District.

Figure 14: SAU 56 Somersworth Enrollment for 2024 compared to School Capacity (Source: SAU 56 Business Administrator)

School (Grades)	2024 Student Enrollment	School Capacity	#/% Capacity Available
Idlehurst School (K-2)	336	450	114/26%
Maple Wood School (3-5)	292	450	158/36%
Somersworth Middle School (6-8)	307	500	193/39%
Somersworth High School (9-12)	383	600	217/36%

Theme 6. 748 new units are needed by 2040.

Figure 151: New Units Needed by 2040
(Source: SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, 2023)



New Hampshire RSA 36:47 (II) requires that each Regional Planning Commission (RPC) compile an assessment of each municipalities housing needs by evaluating data and projecting future demand of residents of all income levels and ages. The Fair Share Housing Production model (**Figure 15115**), prepared as part of Strafford Regional Housing Needs Assessment^{xiii} adopted in 2022, projects the number of housing units needed over a twenty-year horizon (2020 - 2040) to meet anticipated population growth and employment forecasts.

Based on this production model, Somersworth is projected to need an additional 748 new housing units by 2040 (an average of 37.4 new units per year).^{xiv} This number distinguishes the number of owner vs. renter occupied units needed (493 owner; 255 renter), and also calculates the

number of units needed that is affordable to households of specified income ranges by using the Area Median Income (AMI), which is the midpoint of an area's income distribution. The results are presented for all owners, and for owners below and above 100% AMI for a 4-person household; and for all renters and renters below and above 60% AMI for a 3-person household (categories determined by the Workforce Housing Statute).^{xv} For the Strafford Planning Region, this is understood to be a household income of \$102,114 for 4-person owner-occupied households and \$54,900 for 3-person renter-occupied households. Regionally, there is a gap of 9,520 new units needed in the 18 municipalities.

Of the 493 owner-occupied units needed in Somersworth by 2040, roughly half (240 units) should be affordable to those making over 100% of the AMI, while the remainder (253 units), should be affordable to those making under 100% of the AMI, or a maximum purchase price of \$441,000.^{xvi} Similarly, of the 255 renter occupied units needed, 168 should be affordable to those making above 60% of the AMI, while 87 should be affordable to those making below 60% of the AMI, or a maximum rent of \$1,374 per month. Missing middle housing types, as described in the introduction, could be considered when building new housing and these types of units are affordable to build and maintain due to the size and composition.

The cities of Dover and Rochester also have projected housing needs estimated in the Strafford Regional Housing Needs Assessment. In addition to new units, Dover and Rochester also need to replace existing units that are in poor condition (i.e., lacking plumbing and/or kitchen facilities). **Figure 16** summarizes the projected housing needs for all three communities. In total, across the three communities, 4,848 new housing units need to be built to meet projected need by the year 2040. Communities in regions across the state are working together to form

Housing Trusts, or similar organizations, to address these needs. More information can be found in the endnotes of this Chapter.

Figure 16: Project Housing Need for Dover, Rochester and Somersworth (Source: 2023 Strafford Regional Housing Needs Assessment)

City	Current Housing Units	New Units Needed (2020-2040)	Replacements Needed (2020)	Total Future Units Needed (2040)
Dover	15,166	2,077	250	17,493
Rochester	14,582	2,023	230	16,835
Somersworth	5,325	748	0	6,073
Totals	35,073	4,848	480	40,401

Theme 7. Somersworth is expected to reach full buildout by 2031.

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission conducted a build-out analysis of the City using CommunityViz, an ArcMap extension used to model build-out scenarios using GIS. A build-out analysis is used to estimate and represent the amount and locations of future developments that could occur in a given area under a given set of regulations. Build-out analyses can be used to visually represent how land use regulations affect future development. CommunityViz takes inputs such as locations of existing buildings, minimum lot sizes, density requirements, set-back requirements, water and sewer availability, and zoning type allowances. The tool uses this data to model where future developments in the City could occur. Data from SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment was used to calculate the existing growth rate of developments and to model the future growth of development year by year. Based on this analysis, under current zoning and existing conditions, there will be no more space to build in the City of Somersworth by the year 2031 (see **Figure 17**). This analysis also shows key areas where future development "hubs" may occur. In addition to analyzing when buildout could occur in Somersworth, SRPC assessed where housing can be built based on access to water and sewer (Figures 17 and 18). Under existing zoning, if housing development is concentrated in areas where water and sewer are available (**Figure 18**), the City may not be able to create the 748 new units needed by 2040 (see Theme 6) because this infrastructure is limited to areas along major transportation corridors or in the downtown area. Where there is buildable land regardless of water or sewer access (**Figure 19**), housing can still be built, but the density of the housing may be lower and could require larger lot sizes to accommodate a septic system.

Figure 17: Somersworth Buildout Analysis (Source: SRPC, 2023)

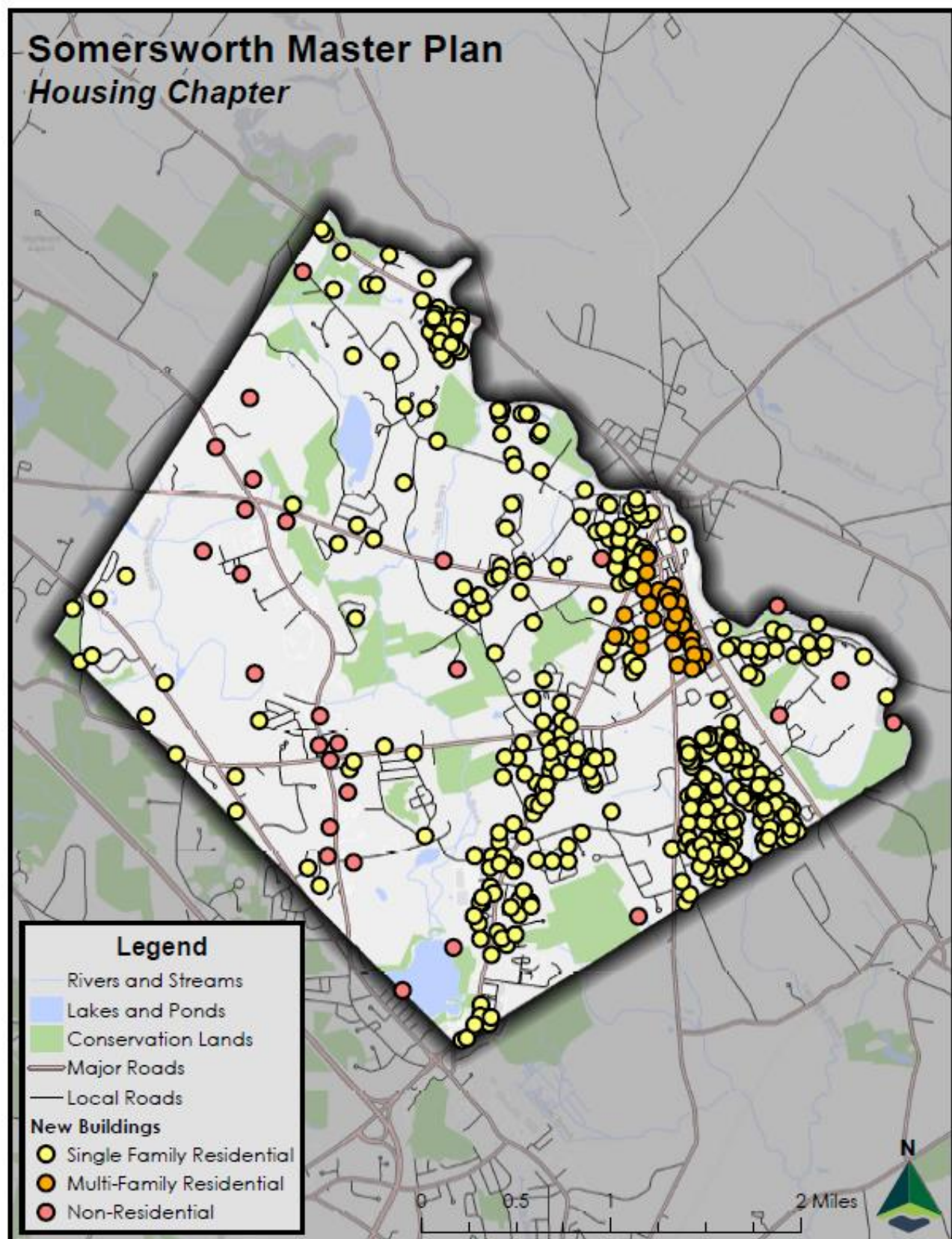


Figure 18: Somersworth Buildable Land with Access to Public Water/Sewer (Source: SRPC, 2023)

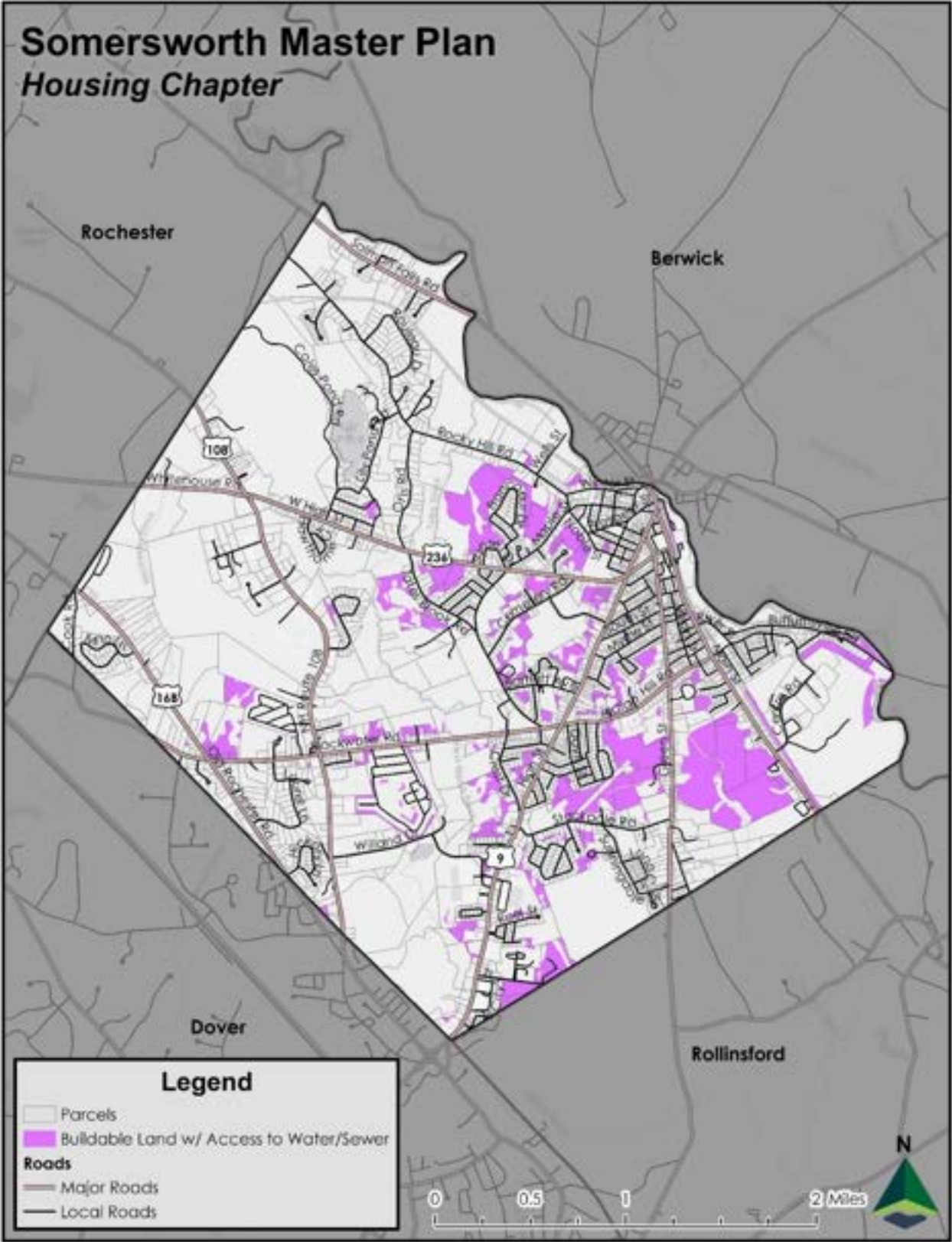
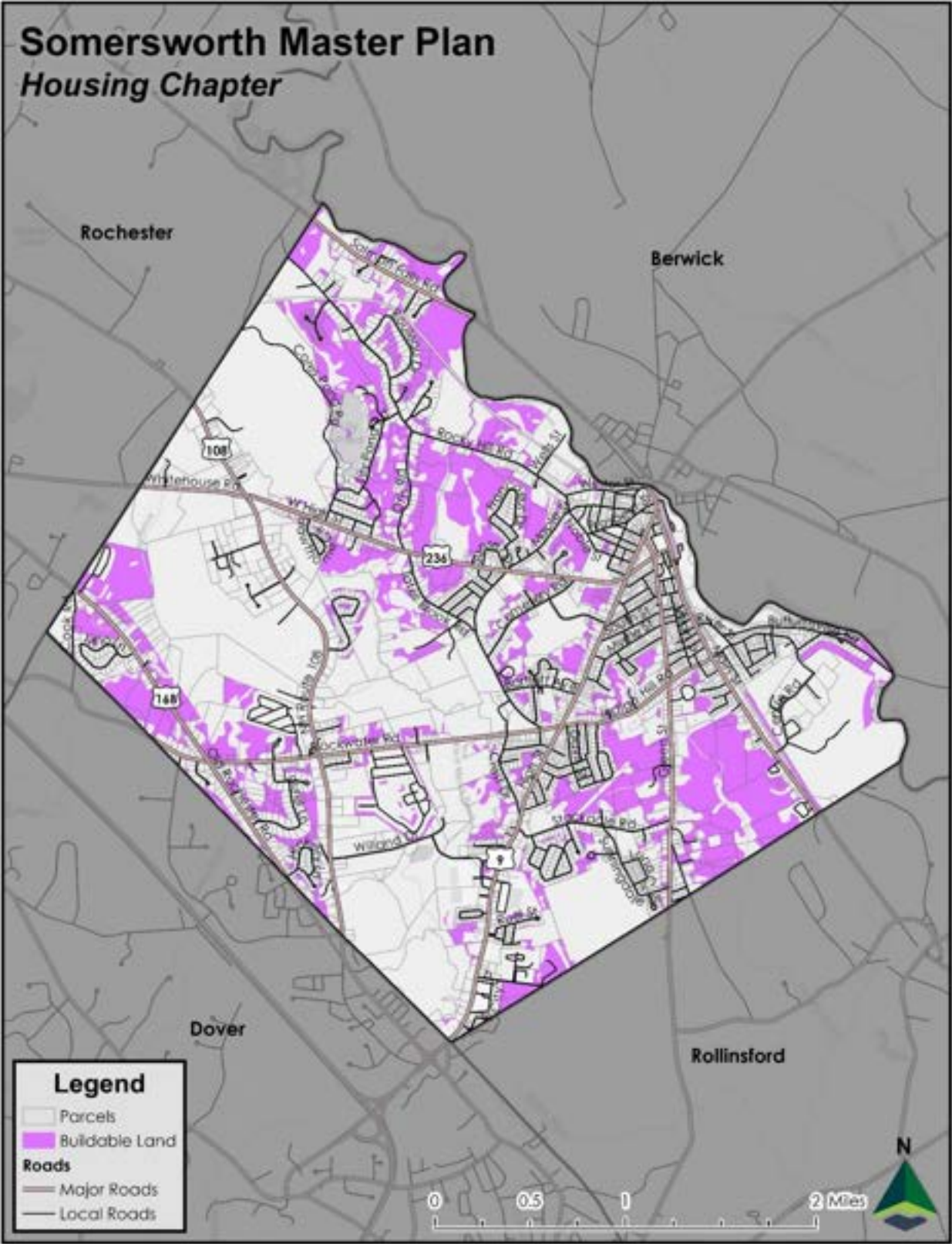


Figure 19: Somersworth Buildable Land, Regardless of Public Water/Sewer (Source: SRPC, 2023)



Goals

Actions to Meet Goals

Goal 1: Encourage development of diverse and accessible housing types.

Change zoning to allow for more multi-family housing in areas that are currently zoned for single family (such as Hilltop neighborhood).

Encourage the conversion of existing structures into multi-family housing.

Allow for multi-family residential use within the Commercial/Industrial District.

Review and consolidate redundant zoning districts.

Fund regular sewer and water assessments to balance housing development with sewer and water availability.

Update zoning to allow for the building of missing middle housing, allowing for greater diversity and affordability of housing types without changing the character of existing neighborhoods.^{xvii}

Explore development of a Housing Trust or other funding mechanism to create diverse and accessible housing types, especially missing middle housing.^{xviii}

Goal 2: Maintain existing housing stock.

Conduct annual inspections of multi-family housing to ensure they adhere to health and building codes.

Leverage available programs to help landowners maintain their units, including the lead-abatement program,^{xix} Chapter 31 (RSA 79-E),^{xx} NH's Community Development Block Grant program for housing rehabilitation, and revolving loan funds.

Support reinvestment in underutilized buildings and land.

Explore adopting specific areas 79-E:4-b (Residential Property Revitalization Zones)^{xxi} and 79-E:4-c (Housing Opportunity Zones).^{xxii}

Goal 3: Concentrate housing development along existing corridors/densely populated areas for easy access to transportation.

Amend zoning of the Commercial/Industrial District to allow housing along Route 108, leveraging the improvements of the **Complete Streets project** that is currently underway. With a key project goal of safety and mobility, housing added here would be a major benefit to employers in this district of town.

Create more housing downtown.

Work with COAST Bus to ensure neighborhoods with dense housing have access to transit.

Within the Commercial Industrial (C/I) and Residential Commercial (R/C) zones- encourage missed use development in existing commercial areas by adopting new and enhancing existing flexible zoning techniques.

Goal 4: Allow for mixed-use development nodes in more locations around the city.

Use zoning to allow for housing near art, culture, or recreation.

Convert underutilized parking lots for infill development projects to add mixed use and housing.

Investigate zoning changes at West High Street to Blackwater to allow mixed use.

Explore adopting Inclusionary Zoning.

Goal 5: Revitalize downtown as a place to live, visit, and do business.

Allow for and encourage development in the Millyard Zoning District, including housing.

Create new design guidelines/standards for infill development, including potential height restrictions.

Attract a variety of mixed-use development with a focus on uses that are convenient for everyday needs.

Allow larger homes near downtown to be converted to 2 or more units.

Improve connectivity and extend walkable downtown to Berwick, Maine.

Conduct a downtown parking study.^{xxiii}

Encourage conversion of commercial properties/vacant properties to mixed use residential use through streamlined permitting and tax incentives.

Goal 6: Create housing, infrastructure and programs that allow residents to age in Somersworth.

Help support the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by updating the Zoning Ordinance to include specific models for residents to choose from to easily develop ADUs on their property, as well as by removing permitting barriers.

Encourage development of new and upkeep of existing single-level homes to accommodate older adults and/or people with disabilities.

Allow for/create more housing near major corridors, schools, health and human services and public transportation.

Consider allocating Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for older adults to retrofit their units so they can remain in their homes.

Improve walkability and accessibility by creating more sidewalks connecting neighborhoods and services.

Resources

- I. [SRPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment](#)
- II. [NH Housing Toolbox](#)
- III. [New Hampshire Housing's Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes Program](#)
- IV. [Missing Middle Housing](#)

Sources

- i SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf
- ii American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- iii American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- iv SRPC Building Permit Data and Somersworth Code Enforcement Reports for 2020-2022.
- v New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, <https://www.nhhfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/NHH-2023-Res-Rental-Survey-Report.pdf>
- vi New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
- vii New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
- viii US Department of Housing and Urban Development, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2022_code/2022summary.odn
- ix American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
- x SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf
- xi <https://www.nh.gov/labor/inspection/wage-hour/minimum-wage.htm>
- xii American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
- xiii SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf
- xiv SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf
- xv https://www.nhhfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NH_Workforce_Housing_Law_Summary.pdf
- xvi "Affordable" means that all housing expenses (such as rent or mortgage, utilities, property taxes, HOA, insurance, etc.) do not exceed 30 percent of a household's gross annual income.
- xvii <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>
- xviii According to the Housing Trust Fund Project: Housing trust funds are distinct funds established by city, county, or state governments that receive ongoing dedicated public funding sources to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase opportunities for families and individuals to access decent, affordable homes. Housing trust funds systemically shift affordable housing funding from annual budget allocations to the commitment of dedicated public revenue. While housing trust funds can also be a repository for private donations, they are not public/private partnerships, nor are they endowed funds operating from interest and other earnings. There are several models of Housing Trusts around the State of New Hampshire, including: Contoocook Housing Trust (<http://www.housingtrust.org/>) the Manchester Housing Alliance Trust Fund (<https://mhalt.org/>).
- xix New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, <https://www.nhhfa.org/rental-assistance/landlords-property-owners/lead-and-healthy-homes/>
- xx https://www.somersworthnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1226/f/uploads/chapter_31-community_revitalization_tax_relief_incentive.pdf
- xxi <https://gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/V/79-E/79-E-4-b.htm>
- xxii <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/v/79-e/79-e-mrq.htm>
- xxiii This project is being completed with assistance from Strafford Regional Planning Commission as of March 2024.

Appendix A: Supporting Data

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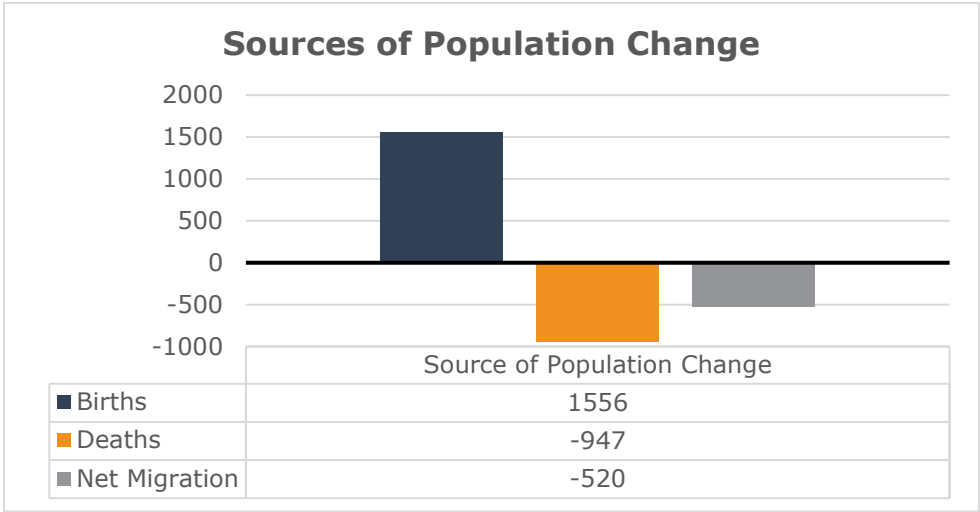
Demographics

Figure 1: Population Estimates and Projections

	Year	Population
Estimates	2000	11,477
	2010	11,766
	2011	11,777
	2012	11,765
	2013	11,754
	2014	11,718
	2015	11,698
	2016	11,684
	2017	11,751
	2018	11,848
	2019	11,844
	2020	11,855
	2021	12,008
Projections	2025	12,348
	2030	12,760
	2035	13,102
	2040	13,345
	2045	13,492
	2050	13,590

Sources: Census, NHOPD 2000-2050

Figure 2: Sources of Population Change



Sources: Census, NH Vital Stats 2010-2020

Figure 3: Population by Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity		Somersworth	Strafford County
Total Population		11,964	130,598
	Hispanic	531	3,626
	Not Hispanic	11,433	126,972
White		10,379	118,445
	Hispanic	144	1,864
	Not Hispanic	10,235	116,581
African American		208	1,382
	Hispanic	-	55
	Not Hispanic	208	1,327
American Indian		6	51
	Hispanic	-	-
	Not Hispanic	6	51
Asian		576	4,204
	Hispanic	14	36
	Not Hispanic	562	4,168
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander		-	149
	Hispanic	-	-
	Not Hispanic	-	149
Some Other Race		47	740
	Hispanic	47	540
	Not Hispanic	-	200
Two or More Races		748	5,627
	Hispanic	326	1,131
	Not Hispanic	422	4,496

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 4: Population with any Disability

	Somersworth	Strafford County
Total Population	11,964	130,598
With a Disability	1,741	16,574
Without	10,223	114,024

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 5: Median Age

Year	Somersworth	Strafford County	NH
2011	36.1	36.6	40.7
2016	35.6	37.1	42.4
2021	39.7	37	43

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 6: Population by Age

	Somersworth			Strafford County			NH		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
Under 10 Years	1,775	1,459	778	13,514	13,218	12,138	149,442	138,762	132,275
10 - 19 Years	1,040	1,353	1,852	18,342	17,794	19,503	181,079	167,495	167,322
20 - 29 Years	1,970	2,071	1,710	20,097	21,657	21,599	156,145	167,554	171,524
30 - 39 Years	1,873	1,616	1,686	15,237	14,332	16,401	156,508	151,409	167,257
40 - 49 Years	1,602	1,407	1,796	18,223	16,058	14,588	214,677	182,703	167,105
50 - 59 Years	1,477	1,740	1,568	17,086	18,596	18,588	203,710	217,950	212,813
60 - 69 Years	968	1,124	1,557	10,339	12,942	15,434	133,869	164,287	189,301
70 - 79 Years	693	604	826	6,049	7,066	7,468	70,892	84,791	109,578
Over 80 Years	432	382	191	3,972	4,250	4,879	49,589	52,552	55,000

Source: ACS 2006-2021

Income

Figure 7: Median Household Income By Tenure

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
All Households	\$51,350	\$60,943	\$68,762	\$59,082	\$63,533	\$76,560
Owner	\$67,257	\$74,107	\$79,258	\$75,781	\$80,798	\$97,580
Renter	\$37,193	\$41,875	\$48,260	\$34,063	\$38,225	\$49,225

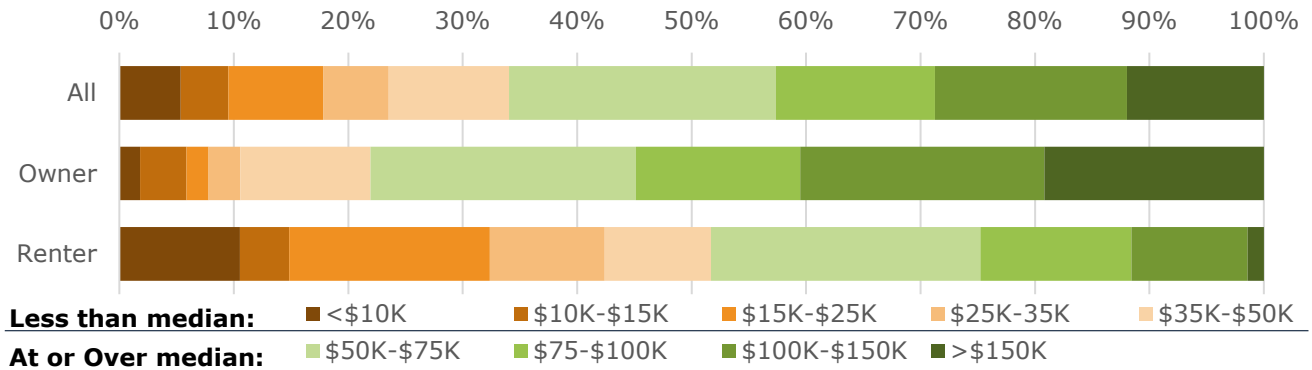
Source: ACS 2006-2021

Figure 8: Households by Income Bracket and Tenure

Income	Somersworth			Strafford County		
	All	Owner	Renter	All	Owner	Renter
<\$10K	5.35%	1.81%	10.52%	3.81%	2.20%	6.98%
\$10K-\$15K	4.17%	4.07%	4.30%	4.10%	2.07%	8.09%
\$15K-\$25K	8.27%	1.90%	17.55%	5.84%	3.22%	10.99%
\$25K-\$35K	5.74%	2.79%	10.04%	7.73%	5.81%	11.49%
\$35K-\$50K	10.51%	11.36%	9.28%	9.39%	7.51%	13.10%
\$50K-\$75K	23.32%	23.18%	23.53%	18.27%	17.39%	19.98%
\$75-\$100K	13.90%	14.38%	13.20%	12.47%	12.74%	11.93%
\$100K-\$150K	16.78%	21.34%	10.14%	18.17%	22.63%	9.39%
>\$150K	11.95%	19.17%	1.43%	20.23%	26.42%	8.03%

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 9: Households by Income Bracket and Tenure and Relationship to Median Income



Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 10: Households by Cost Burden Status

Household Incomes	Total			Cost Burdened			Not Cost Burdened		
	All	Owner	Renter	All	Owner	Renter	All	Owner	Renter
Under \$20K	603	207	396	422	152	270	181	55	126
\$20K-\$34.9K	593	115	478	534	84	450	59	31	28
\$35K-\$49.9K	540	346	194	342	230	112	198	116	82
\$50K-\$74.9K	1,198	706	492	546	459	87	652	247	405
Over \$75K	2,190	1,672	518	167	148	19	2,023	1,524	499
No Income	13	-	13						

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Households

Figure 11: Households by Tenure

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County			NH		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
All	4,739	4,646	5,137	46,384	47,779	50,630	514,869	521,373	540,498
Owner	2,797	2,532	3,046	31,494	31,102	33,577	373,342	368,553	387,149
Renter	1,942	2,114	2,091	14,890	16,677	17,053	141,527	152,820	153,349

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 12: Average Household Size by Tenure

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County			NH		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
All	2.49	2.53	2.33	2.49	2.46	2.4	2.48	2.47	2.46
Owner	2.55	2.77	2.56	2.63	2.58	2.57	2.61	2.58	2.61
Renter	2.41	2.24	1.99	2.18	2.22	2.07	2.13	2.19	2.1

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 13: Households by Size

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County			NH		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
Size = 1	1,176	887	1,570	11,574	12,130	13,454	128,449	133,879	144,294
Size = 2	1,726	1,703	1,616	17,308	17,998	19,343	191,384	198,326	208,156
Size = 3	745	1,108	992	7,375	8,296	8,027	82,399	84,590	82,400
Size = 4	723	682	653	6,865	6,320	6,509	74,280	67,909	67,848
Size = 5	245	219	266	2,197	2,102	2,387	26,676	25,238	25,325
Size = 6	121	47	24	752	765	577	7,836	7,350	8,212
Size >= 7	3	-	16	313	168	333	3,845	4,081	4,263

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 14: Households by Type

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
Family Households	3,035	3,341	3,149	30,058	30,709	32,023
with Married Couple	2,282	2,554	2,295	23,598	24,120	25,315
with Unmarried Female Householder	573	579	587	4,539	4,432	4,102
with Unmarried Male Householder	180	208	267	1,921	2,157	2,606
Non-Family Households	1,704	1,305	1,988	16,326	17,070	18,607
One Person	1,176	887	1,570	11,574	12,130	13,454
Multiple People	528	418	418	4,752	4,940	5,153

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 15: Households with Children

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
Households with "own" children	1,660	1,706	1,553	14,319	13,773	13,539
Married Parents	1,201	1,115	1,010	10,209	9,268	9,527
Single Parents	459	591	543	4,110	4,505	4,012
Unmarried Female Parent	279	434	390	2,772	2,913	2,567
Unmarried Male Parent	459	591	543	1,338	1,592	1,445

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 16: People Living Alone

Households	Somersworth			Strafford County		
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021
Under 65 Years Old	744	525	1,055	7,743	7,433	8,321
Over 65 Years Old	432	362	515	3,831	4,697	5,133

Source: ACS 2017-2021

Somersworth Housing Stock

Figure 17: Permitted New Buildings

Year	Residential			Other		Total
	Single Family	Multifamily	Manufactured Housing	Commercial	Other	
2008	19	0	0	2	0	21
2009	19	0	0	4	0	23
2010	17	0	0	8	0	25
2011	3	0	0	2	2	7
2012	3	0	0	2	1	6
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	3	0	3	4	0	10
2015	11	0	0	0	0	11
2016	15	0	7	3	1	26
2017	18	0	4	3	0	25
2018	12	0	0	3	0	15
2019	23	0	6	0	0	29
2020	36	9	9	2	1	57
2021	42	0	14	0	1	57

Source: SRPC's Building Permit Database 2008-2021

Figure 18: Buildable Land and Utilities

Buildable Land with Access to...	Land Acres	% of Land
Water and Sewer Infrastructure	605.98	10%
Water Infrastructure Only	1093.9	19%
Sewer Infrastructure Only	0	0%
All Buildable Land	1283.15	22%

Source: City Data 2023

Figure 19: Potential and Existing Density

Infrastructure	Potential Density		Existing Density Range
	Low	High	
Water and Sewer	4 units/acre	6 units/acre	0.05 - 26.49 units/acre
Water or Sewer	1 unit/acre	1.5 units/acre	0.05 - 7.42 units/acre
None	0.5 unit/acre	1 unit/acre	(DES Septic Prevails)

Source: City Data 2023

Figure 20: Somersworth Zoning

Housing Type		Land Acres	% of Land
All Land		5891.02	100%
All Residential		3773.59	64%
Single Family (Allowed + Conditional)		3773.59	64%
	Single Family (Allowed)	3773.59	64%
	Single Family (Conditional)	0	0%
Two-Family (Allowed + Conditional)		749.36	13%
	Two-Family (Allowed)	749.36	13%
	Two-Family (Conditional)	0	0%
Multi-Family (Allowed + Conditional)		407.22	7%
	Multi-Family (Allowed)	269.11	5%
	Multi-Family (Conditional)	138.11	2%

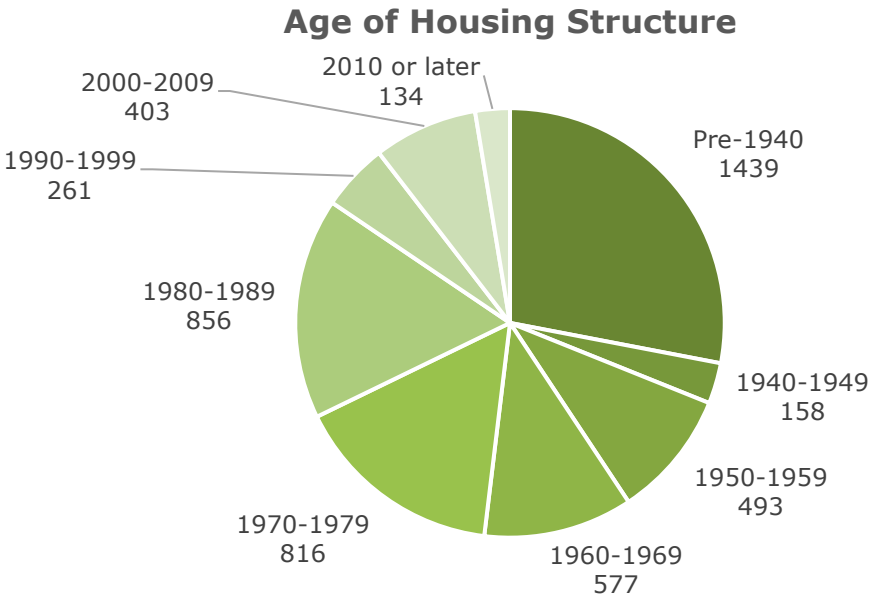
Source: City Data 2023

Figure 21: Number of Units in Structures

	Somersworth		Strafford County	
	2016	2021	2016	2021
1 Unit in Structure	2,890	3,014	36,382	37,975
2 Units	761	947	3,552	3,769
3-4 Units	457	616	4,277	4,238
5-9 Units	314	215	2,983	3,150
10-19 Units	181	265	1,592	1,943
20-49 Units	361	228	2,334	2,626
50+ Units	27	256	1,269	1,439
Total Households	4,646	5,137	47,779	50,630

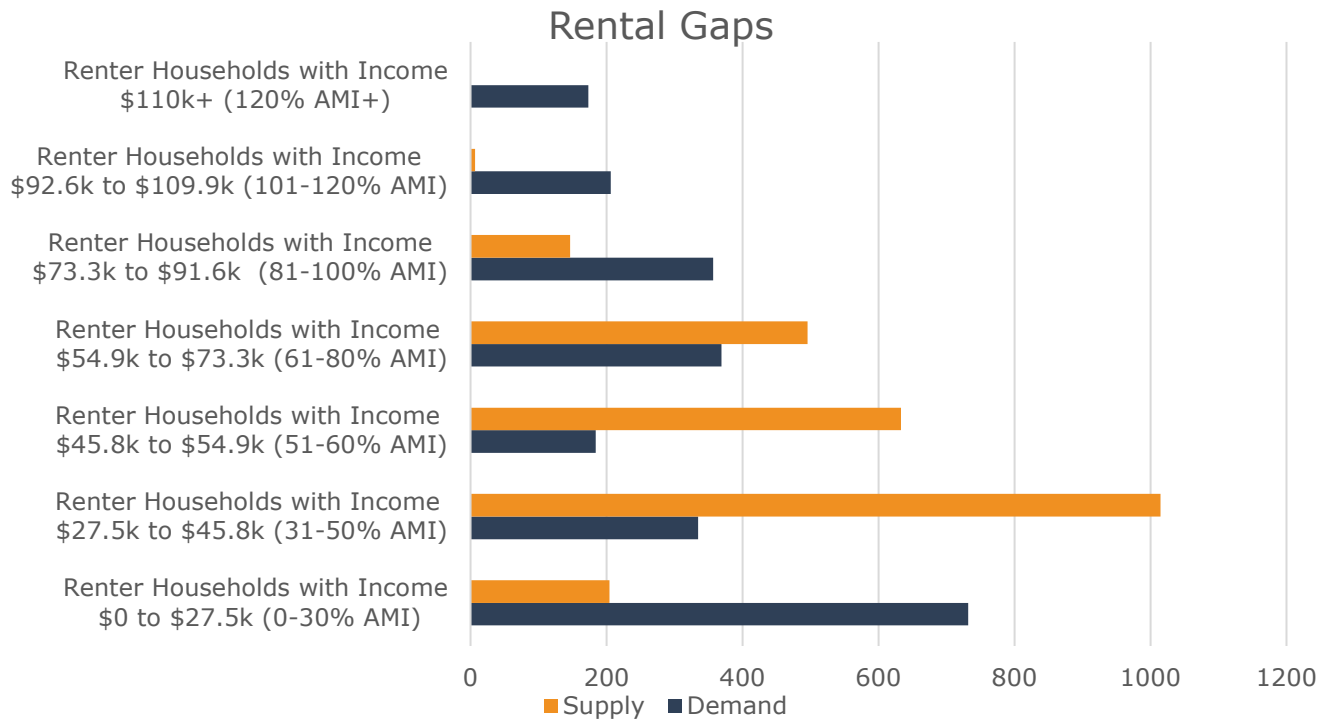
Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 22: Age of Housing Structure



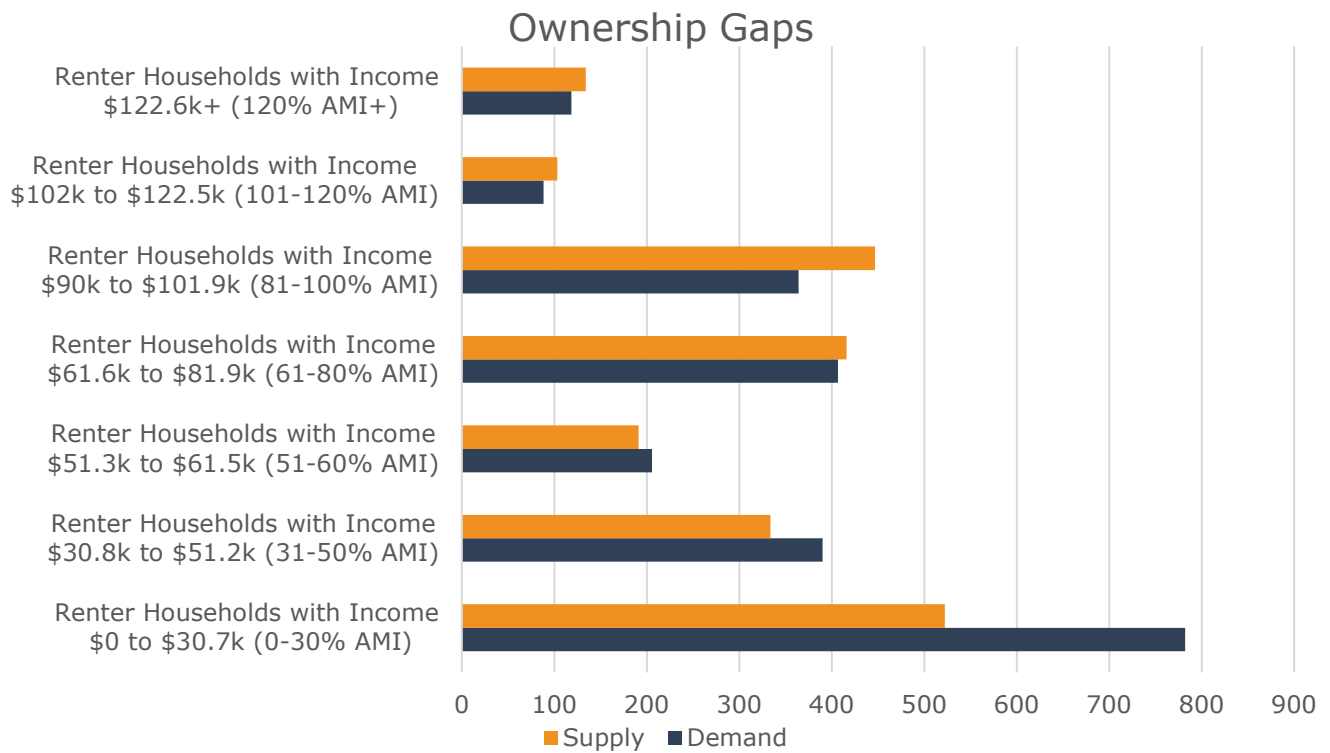
Source: ACS 2017-2021

Figure 23: Housing Gaps for Rental Housing



Source: Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2021

Figure 24: Housing Gaps for Home Ownership



Source: Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2021

Figure 25: Housing Production Needs for Somersworth

New Units Needed by		2025	2030	2035	2040
Total		254	479	632	748
Owner Occupied		171	320	419	493
	Below 100% AMI	85	162	212	253
	Above 100% AMI	85	159	207	240
Renter Occupied		84	159	212	255
	Below 100% AMI	27	53	71	87
	Above 100% AMI	56	106	141	168

Source: Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2021

Affordability

Figure 26: Median Home Purchase and Rental Costs

Year	Median Purchase Prices			Median Rent (All Units)		
	Somersworth	Strafford County	NH	Somersworth	Strafford County	NH
2002	\$159,933	\$175,000	\$189,900	\$740	\$775	\$810
2003	\$175,000	\$199,500	\$215,000	\$755	\$789	\$854
2004	\$210,000	\$220,000	\$238,000	\$796	\$883	\$896
2005	\$238,450	\$235,000	\$250,000	\$833	\$863	\$901
2006	\$247,200	\$229,900	\$249,900	\$916	\$916	\$928
2007	\$240,000	\$235,000	\$252,500	\$938	\$932	\$946
2008	\$235,000	\$225,500	\$240,000	\$930	\$932	\$969
2009	\$190,000	\$194,933	\$210,000	\$884	\$928	\$969
2010	\$189,900	\$195,000	\$215,000	\$944	\$937	\$980
2011	\$163,000	\$186,250	\$207,000	\$926	\$935	\$983
2012	\$147,000	\$187,900	\$205,000	\$945	\$950	\$1,005
2013	\$164,930	\$200,000	\$220,000	\$952	\$942	\$1,018
2014	\$161,533	\$210,000	\$219,000	\$974	\$974	\$1,037
2015	\$164,900	\$205,000	\$221,000	\$974	\$992	\$1,069
2016	\$180,200	\$211,500	\$230,000	\$1,054	\$1,043	\$1,113
2017	\$199,500	\$229,000	\$240,000	\$1,179	\$1,108	\$1,143
2018	\$213,800	\$244,900	\$254,000	\$1,355	\$1,146	\$1,177
2019	\$230,000	\$255,000	\$270,000	\$1,246	\$1,259	\$1,251
2020	\$260,000	\$284,500	\$302,300	\$1,107	\$1,210	\$1,283
2021	\$300,000	\$320,000	\$350,000	\$1,394	\$1,356	\$1,373
2022	\$350,000	\$365,000	\$400,000	\$1,414	\$1,518	\$1,510

Source: New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority 2002-2022

Figure 27: Portsmouth-Rochester Metro Area Fair Market Rents

Unit Size	2020	2021	2022	2023
Studio/0 Bedroom	\$1,000	\$969	\$977	\$1,112
1 Bedroom	\$1,029	\$1,033	\$1,092	\$1,232
2 Bedroom	\$1,315	\$1,330	\$1,399	\$1,563
3 Bedroom	\$1,795	\$1,803	\$1,871	\$2,034
4 Bedroom	\$2,212	\$2,226	\$2,295	\$2,488
5 Bedroom	\$2,544	\$2,560	\$2,639	\$2,861
6+ Bedroom	\$2,876	\$2,894	\$2,984	\$3,234

Source: HUD 2020-2023

Figure 28: Housing Choice Vouchers

Housing Choice Vouchers (2021)	
Number of Households	82
Average rent	\$1,296
Median rent	\$1,136
Applicants	61
Actively looking for units	4

Source: Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2021

Figure 29: Subsidized Housing Units

Subsidized Units	Somersworth	Strafford County
LIHTC Units	Yes	
Special Needs Units	No	
Age-Restricted Units	Yes	
% Age-Restricted Units	57%	52%
% Units within 1/2 mile of Transit	78%	82%
Total Subsidized Units	374	2643

Source: Regional Housing Needs Assessment 2021

Figure 30: Employment and Wages for Strafford County's Top Occupations

Occupations	Employees	Wages			
		Entry	Mean	Experience	Median
Total, All Occupations	47,530	\$29,316	\$59,686	\$74,871	\$46,334
Retail	1,230	\$24,514	\$35,302	\$40,697	\$30,917
Health Care Practitioners	3,570	\$50,137	\$105,849	\$133,706	\$78,260
Health Care Support	1,750	\$29,131	\$37,721	\$42,016	\$37,104
Education	4,240	\$34,087	\$61,793	\$75,646	\$57,034
Food Service and Preparation	4,380	\$21,708	\$31,766	\$36,795	\$29,555

Source: NH Employment Security 2022

Figure 31: Maximum Affordable Rent for Strafford County's Top Occupations

Occupations	Employees	Max Rent Affordable				Median Rent
		Entry	Mean	Experience	Median	
Total, All Occupations	47,530	\$733	\$1,492	\$1,872	\$1,158	\$1,518
Retail	1,230	\$613	\$883	\$1,017	\$773	\$1,518
Health Care Practitioners	3,570	\$1,253	\$2,646	\$3,343	\$1,957	\$1,518
Health Care Support	1,750	\$728	\$943	\$1,050	\$928	\$1,518
Education	4,240	\$852	\$1,545	\$1,891	\$1,426	\$1,518
Food Service and Preparation	4,380	\$543	\$794	\$920	\$739	\$1,518

Source: NH Employment Security 2022

Figure 32: Maximum Affordable Home Purchase Price for Strafford County's Top Occupations

Occupations	Employees	Max Mortgage Affordable				Median Price
		Entry	Mean	Experience	Median	
Total, All Occupations	47,530	\$100,500	\$205,000	\$257,000	\$159,000	\$365,000
Retail	1,230	\$84,000	\$121,000	\$139,500	\$106,000	\$365,000
Health Care Practitioners	3,570	\$172,000	\$363,000	\$459,000	\$268,500	\$365,000
Health Care Support	1,750	\$100,000	\$129,500	\$144,000	\$127,400	\$365,000
Education	4,240	\$117,000	\$212,000	\$259,500	\$195,500	\$365,000
Food Service and Preparation	4,380	\$74,500	\$109,000	\$126,000	\$101,500	\$365,000

Source: NH Employment Security 2022

Living Wage

The MIT Living Wage Calculator estimates the cost of living in a county and determines the necessary living wage and the poverty wage based on those costs. The table below represents the Strafford County Living Wages.

Figure 33: Living Wages for Strafford County

Household Type		Poverty Wage	Poverty Salary	Poverty Salary per month	Living Wage	Living Salary	Living Salary per month
1 Adult	0 Children	\$6.53	\$13,582	\$1,132	\$17.45	\$36,296	\$3,025
	1 Child	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$35.87	\$74,610	\$6,217
	2 Children	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$46.14	\$95,971	\$7,998
	3 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$61.30	\$127,504	\$10,625
2 Adults (1 Working)	0 Children	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$27.43	\$57,054	\$4,755
	1 Child	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$33.95	\$70,616	\$5,885
	2 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$38.62	\$80,330	\$6,694
	3 Children	\$15.61	\$32,469	\$2,706	\$43.86	\$91,229	\$7,602
2 Adults (both working)	0 Children	\$4.40	\$9,152	\$763	\$13.71	\$28,517	\$2,376
	1 Child	\$5.54	\$11,523	\$960	\$19.88	\$41,350	\$3,446
	2 Children	\$6.67	\$13,874	\$1,156	\$25.12	\$52,250	\$4,354
	3 Children	\$7.81	\$16,245	\$1,354	\$30.65	\$63,752	\$5,313

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator 2022

Income vs Mortgages

Figure 34: Down Payment, Mortgages, and Salaries Needed to Afford Median Priced Homes

Loan Assumptions			Down Payment			Monthly Mortgage Payment				Monthly Mortgage Payment + Utilities, Tax, PMI, and Insurance				Median Rents	Salary Needed					Actual
Year	Average 30 year rate	Median Price	20% Down	10% Down	3.5% Down	20% Down	10% Down	3.5% Down	0% Down	20% Down	10% Down	3.5% Down	0% Down	All Units	20% Down	10% Down	3.5% Down	0% Down	Median Rent	Per capita income
2000	8.053462	\$128,500	\$25,700	\$12,850	\$4,498	\$758	\$853	\$915	\$948	\$758	\$1,237	\$1,326	\$1,374	-	\$30,326	\$49,469	\$53,042	\$54,965	-	\$28,344
2001	6.967885	\$156,000	\$31,200	\$15,600	\$5,460	\$828	\$931	\$998	\$1,035	\$828	\$1,350	\$1,448	\$1,500	-	\$33,104	\$54,001	\$57,901	\$60,002	-	\$30,340
2002	6.537308	\$175,000	\$35,000	\$17,500	\$6,125	\$888	\$999	\$1,072	\$1,110	\$888	\$1,449	\$1,554	\$1,610	\$830	\$35,533	\$57,964	\$62,150	\$64,404	\$33,200	\$30,544
2003	5.826981	\$199,500	\$39,900	\$19,950	\$6,983	\$939	\$1,057	\$1,133	\$1,174	\$939	\$1,532	\$1,643	\$1,702	\$857	\$37,568	\$61,283	\$65,709	\$68,092	\$34,280	\$31,219
2004	5.839231	\$220,000	\$44,000	\$22,000	\$7,700	\$1,037	\$1,167	\$1,251	\$1,296	\$1,037	\$1,692	\$1,814	\$1,880	\$902	\$41,483	\$67,670	\$72,557	\$75,189	\$36,080	\$32,885
2005	5.866731	\$235,000	\$47,000	\$23,500	\$8,225	\$1,111	\$1,250	\$1,340	\$1,389	\$1,111	\$1,812	\$1,943	\$2,014	\$899	\$44,444	\$72,499	\$77,735	\$80,555	\$35,960	\$33,923
2006	6.413269	\$229,900	\$45,980	\$22,990	\$8,047	\$1,152	\$1,296	\$1,390	\$1,440	\$1,152	\$1,879	\$2,015	\$2,088	\$929	\$46,081	\$75,170	\$80,599	\$83,522	\$37,160	\$34,975
2007	6.337308	\$235,000	\$47,000	\$23,500	\$8,225	\$1,168	\$1,314	\$1,409	\$1,460	\$1,168	\$1,906	\$2,043	\$2,117	\$956	\$46,730	\$76,228	\$81,733	\$84,698	\$38,240	\$36,412
2008	6.02717	\$225,500	\$45,100	\$22,550	\$7,893	\$1,085	\$1,220	\$1,308	\$1,356	\$1,085	\$1,769	\$1,897	\$1,966	\$965	\$43,390	\$70,779	\$75,891	\$78,644	\$38,600	\$38,107
2009	5.036538	\$194,933	\$38,987	\$19,493	\$6,823	\$841	\$946	\$1,014	\$1,051	\$841	\$1,371	\$1,470	\$1,524	\$961	\$33,626	\$54,852	\$58,813	\$60,946	\$38,440	\$37,392
2010	4.689808	\$195,000	\$39,000	\$19,500	\$6,825	\$808	\$909	\$975	\$1,010	\$808	\$1,318	\$1,413	\$1,465	\$971	\$32,325	\$52,730	\$56,538	\$58,589	\$38,840	\$38,395
2011	4.447885	\$186,250	\$37,250	\$18,625	\$6,519	\$750	\$844	\$905	\$938	\$750	\$1,224	\$1,312	\$1,360	\$973	\$30,014	\$48,961	\$52,497	\$54,401	\$38,920	\$39,915
2012	3.6575	\$187,900	\$37,580	\$18,790	\$6,577	\$688	\$774	\$830	\$860	\$688	\$1,123	\$1,204	\$1,248	\$979	\$27,532	\$44,911	\$48,154	\$49,901	\$39,160	\$41,160
2013	3.975577	\$200,000	\$40,000	\$20,000	\$7,000	\$762	\$857	\$919	\$952	\$762	\$1,242	\$1,332	\$1,380	\$981	\$30,465	\$49,695	\$53,284	\$55,217	\$39,240	\$41,629
2014	4.168868	\$210,000	\$42,000	\$21,000	\$7,350	\$818	\$921	\$987	\$1,023	\$818	\$1,335	\$1,432	\$1,484	\$1,012	\$32,740	\$53,407	\$57,264	\$59,341	\$40,480	\$43,398
2015	3.850577	\$205,000	\$41,000	\$20,500	\$7,175	\$769	\$865	\$927	\$961	\$769	\$1,254	\$1,345	\$1,394	\$1,026	\$30,756	\$50,171	\$53,794	\$55,745	\$41,040	\$45,718
2016	3.654038	\$211,500	\$42,300	\$21,150	\$7,403	\$774	\$871	\$934	\$968	\$774	\$1,263	\$1,354	\$1,404	\$1,083	\$30,976	\$50,530	\$54,179	\$56,144	\$43,320	\$47,007
2017	3.989808	\$229,000	\$45,800	\$22,900	\$8,015	\$874	\$983	\$1,054	\$1,092	\$874	\$1,425	\$1,528	\$1,583	\$1,156	\$34,942	\$56,999	\$61,116	\$63,332	\$46,240	\$48,413
2018	4.544615	\$244,933	\$48,987	\$24,493	\$8,573	\$998	\$1,123	\$1,204	\$1,248	\$998	\$1,628	\$1,746	\$1,809	\$1,174	\$39,921	\$65,122	\$69,825	\$72,357	\$46,960	\$50,729
2019	3.935769	\$255,000	\$51,000	\$25,500	\$8,925	\$966	\$1,087	\$1,166	\$1,208	\$966	\$1,576	\$1,690	\$1,752	\$1,347	\$38,656	\$63,057	\$67,611	\$70,063	\$53,880	\$53,852
2020	3.111698	\$284,533	\$56,907	\$28,453	\$9,959	\$973	\$1,095	\$1,174	\$1,217	\$973	\$1,588	\$1,703	\$1,764	\$1,291	\$38,938	\$63,518	\$68,105	\$70,575	\$51,640	\$57,449
2021	2.957692	\$320,000	\$64,000	\$32,000	\$11,200	\$1,073	\$1,208	\$1,295	\$1,342	\$1,073	\$1,751	\$1,878	\$1,946	\$1,394	\$42,939	\$70,044	\$75,103	\$77,827	\$55,760	\$61,139
2022	5.344038	\$365,000	\$73,000	\$36,500	\$12,775	\$1,629	\$1,833	\$1,966	\$2,037	\$1,629	\$2,658	\$2,850	\$2,953	\$1,518	\$65,179	\$106,324	\$114,003	\$118,138	\$60,720	-

Source: US Federal Reserve and NHHFA 2000-2022

Base Assumptions used in the table above:

- Median Purchase Prices are for Strafford County
- 30-year interest rates are annual averages for each year
- “Mortgage + PMI” accounts for utilities, tax, PMI and mortgage insurance and assumes that these cost 45% of the original mortgage payment.
- Salary needed to afford each mortgage is the salary at which Mortgage + PMI is less than 30% of the monthly income.
- Down payments used are:
 - 20% to avoid needing PMI and Mortgage Insurance
 - 10% as an easier to attain high percentage down
 - 3.5% as a common minimum for many assistance programs
 - 0% as the minimum for veteran assistance and other programs



Somersworth Master Plan

NATURAL RESOURCES CHAPTER

Adopted November 20, 2024

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Funding to support this Master Plan Chapter update for the City of Somersworth was provided The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREPA) Grant.

Natural Resources in Somersworth

Introduction

The natural resources chapter of the master plan looks at the environmental attributes of topography, soils, water resources and conservation land to help guide the city in land use and development. Finding the right balance between development, resource protection and conservation is crucial for maintaining rural character and ensuring the long-term sustainability of existing resources. Conservation and preservation of Somersworth's land and water resources received strong support from residents during the outreach events and community survey. Many residents view natural resources as a main feature defining the rural character of their community.

Community Engagement

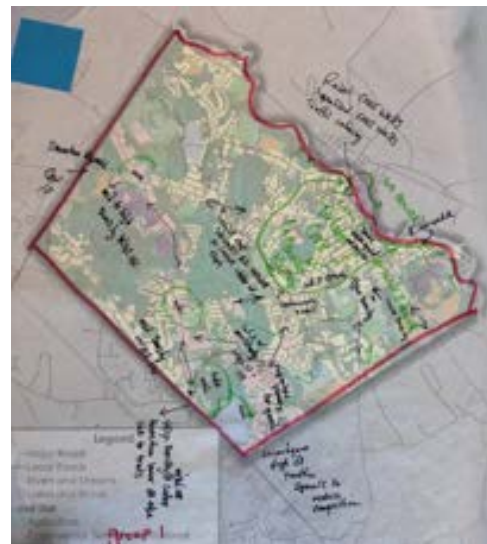
Engagement integrates local knowledge and information not always available through data research. It provides an inside view of public sentiments. City planning staff and the Strafford Regional Planning Commission reached out to residents and stakeholders through a survey conducted from August to September 2024 in which 297 people participated. In addition to the survey, three workshops were conducted where members of the public were invited to attend alongside city board members.

- February 27, 2024 – Conservation Commission Workshop
- March 20, 2024 – Joint workshop with the Planning Board and Conservation Commission
- May 2, 2024 – Community Workshop
- August 21, 2024 – Planning Board Workshop

The workshops asked participants what Somersworth should look like ten years from now and engaged in a series of scenarios brainstorming. Participants identified special places and memorable natural and scenic features.

The outreach findings are documented throughout this chapter.

Figure 1: Somersworth Community Workshop, May 2024



Our Natural Resources Story

Theme 1. Green Spaces, Natural Amenities, & Sustainable Development

Natural Resources add value to the quality of life for residents and visitors by providing health, recreation opportunities, and economic benefits. The community survey showed that 86% of Somersworth residents who participated in the community survey responded that the preservation of open space was very important or extremely important to them. More than a third of Somersworth's land area is comprised of forest lands. Additionally, more than 12% of the city is in conservation, protecting these important resources.

Table 1: General Land Statistics (Source: SRPC, 2024)

Resource	Acres	% of City
Wetlands	970.6	15.2%
Waterbodies	349.6	5.5%
Forest Land	2,194.6	34.3%
Agricultural Land	180.8	2.8%
100-Year Flood Zone	599.7	9.4%
Conservation Lands	786.4	12.3%
Conservation Focus Areas	559.2	8.7%
Wildlife Corridors	543.3	8.5%
Total Area – Land and Water	6,398.3 acres	

Water Resources

Surface Waters

Surface water includes all of the naturally occurring water including lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. Somersworth has approximately 126 acres of lakes and ponds as well as 14.3 miles of rivers and streams (Figure 2). Maintaining good water quality is a necessary part of natural resource protection. The Salmon Falls River, Willand Pond, and Lily Pond are protected by the NH Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA). Sustainable public access to these waterbodies adds protection by providing safe parking and boat ramp areas that will reduce unfiltered stormwater run-off from entering the waters.

Aquifers

Aquifers are geological formations that can provide drinking water through drilled wells. These wells can be either fractured bedrock or sand and gravel. The rate at which water moves through these areas is called aquifer transmissivity. Aquifers are generally resupplied by groundwater recharge, which is the absorption of water through the ground surface.

Somersworth has approximately 4,216 acres of stratified drift aquifer, which are aquifers that consist of sand and gravel. Most of the stratified drift aquifer has a relatively low maximum transmissivity of 2,000 square feet per day, however, due to the favorable location, the City Well has a much higher transmissivity rate of approximately 8,000 square feet per day when saturated (Figure 3).

Groundwater in saturated soils is highly vulnerable to pollutants because surface contamination can infiltrate directly into the aquifer and may remain there for a very long time. Sources of contaminants are often located above the aquifer (ground surface) or nearby to the aquifer including septic tank effluent, land fill material, fertilizers and pesticides, hazardous material,

and more. Protection of well sites, aquifers and waterbodies was ranked as the highest or second highest priority (78 % of responses) among survey participants. Continued efforts to protect drinking water and surface water should be considered during land development requests. Additional methods of protection through ordinances, regulations, and policies may be needed.

Table 2: Aquifer Transmissivity (Source: SRPC, 2024)

Aquifer Transmissivity	Square Feet/Day	Square Acres	% of City
Low	1 - 2,000	4,146.06	64.8%
Medium	2,001 - 4,000	55.08	0.9%
High	4,001 - 8,000	14.39	0.2%

Figure 2: Water Resources (Source: SRPC,2024)

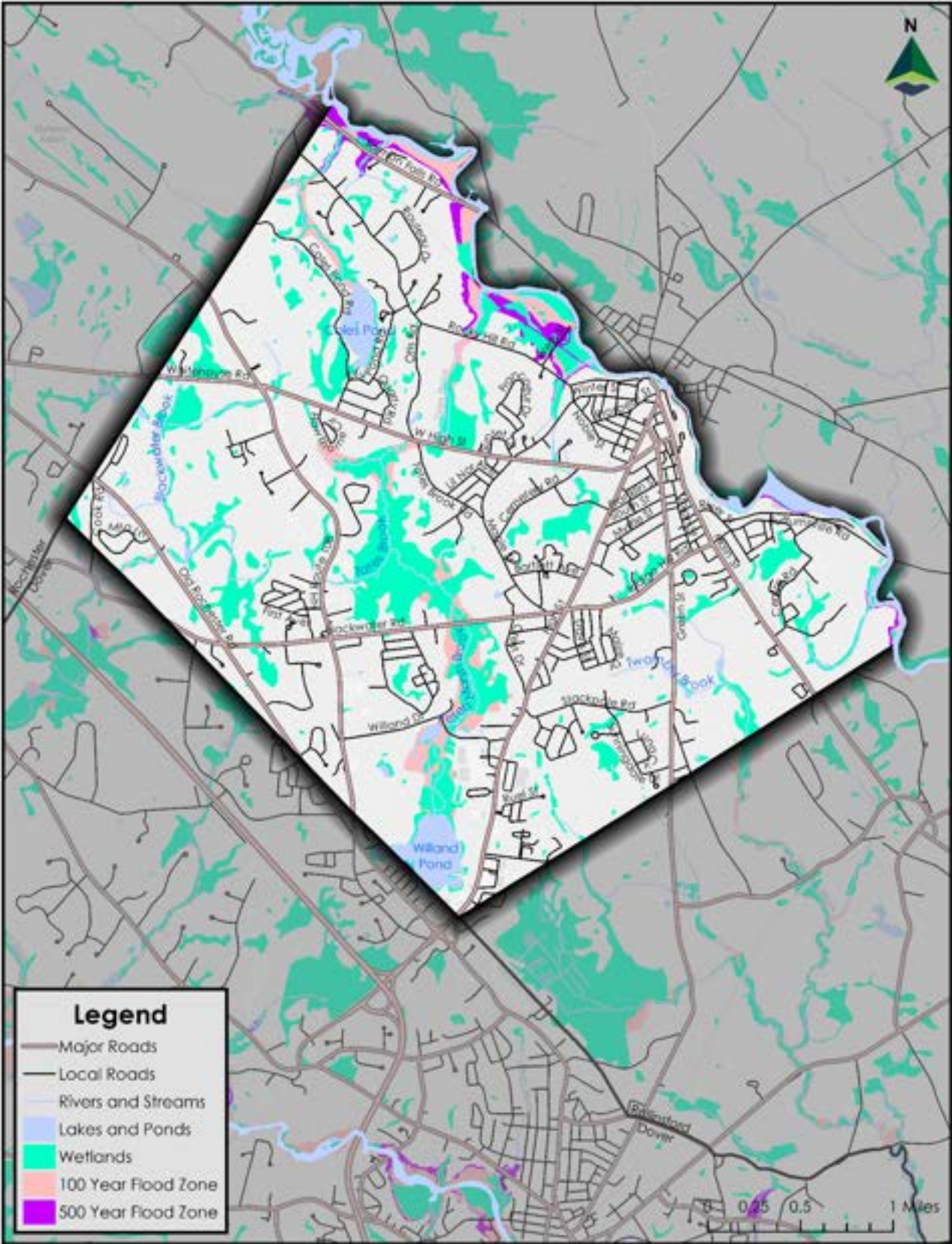
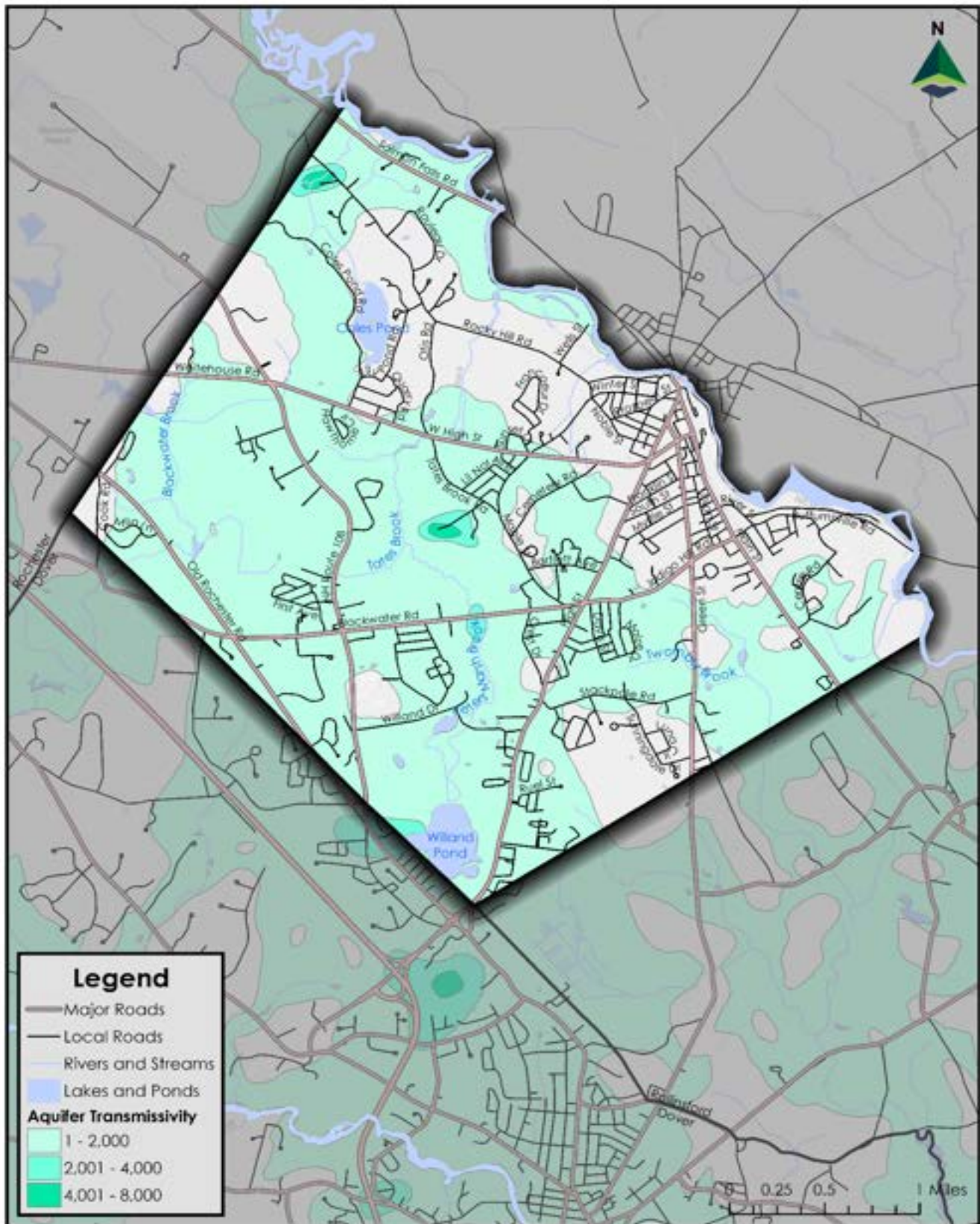


Figure 3: Aquifer Transmissivity (Source: SRPC, 2024)



Forest and Agricultural Lands

Forests play an important role in providing clean air, clean water, and are an essential habitat for plants and animals. Forest lands are a defining feature of the landscape and an asset for economic development and tourism through the trail systems. There are approximately 2,195 acres of forest land in the city. Proper forest management and good stewardship will help protect this valuable resource for generations to enjoy.

Agricultural lands support many bird and small animal species, adding to the need to properly manage the land. Often, however, this land is also a favorable place for residential subdivisions to be developed. Competing interests have resulted in a loss of agricultural land.



Farmland Soils

Soil characteristics are an important consideration in determining the success or failure of farmland for crops. Soil types that have proper drainage encourage healthy plant growth and high yield crops.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service delineates *Prime Farmland* and *Farmland of Statewide Importance*. There are 732 acres of prime farmland in the city and 191 acres of farmland of statewide importance. The locations are shown on Figure 5.

Soil Drainage

Soil drainage is the rate that water moves through the soil, which is a determining factor on the land use. The Soils Table indicates that there are 1,105.2 acres of poorly drained soils in Somersworth and an additional 416.8 acres of very poorly drained soils. Poorly drained soils have an impact on the types of vegetation that can sustain plant life, especially during periods of heavy precipitation. This also has an impact on wells (aquifer transmissivity) and the placement of new septic systems. Poorly drained and very poorly drained soils are identified in Figure 6.

Table 3: Soil Drainage (Source: SRPC, 2024)

Soils	Square Acres	% of City
Prime Farmland	732.1	11.4%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	191.1	3.0%
Very Poorly Drained Soils	416.8	6.5%
Poorly Drained Soils	1,105.2	17.3%
Total Area – Land and Water	6,398.3 acres	

Figure 4: Forest and Agricultural Land (Source: SRPC, 2024)

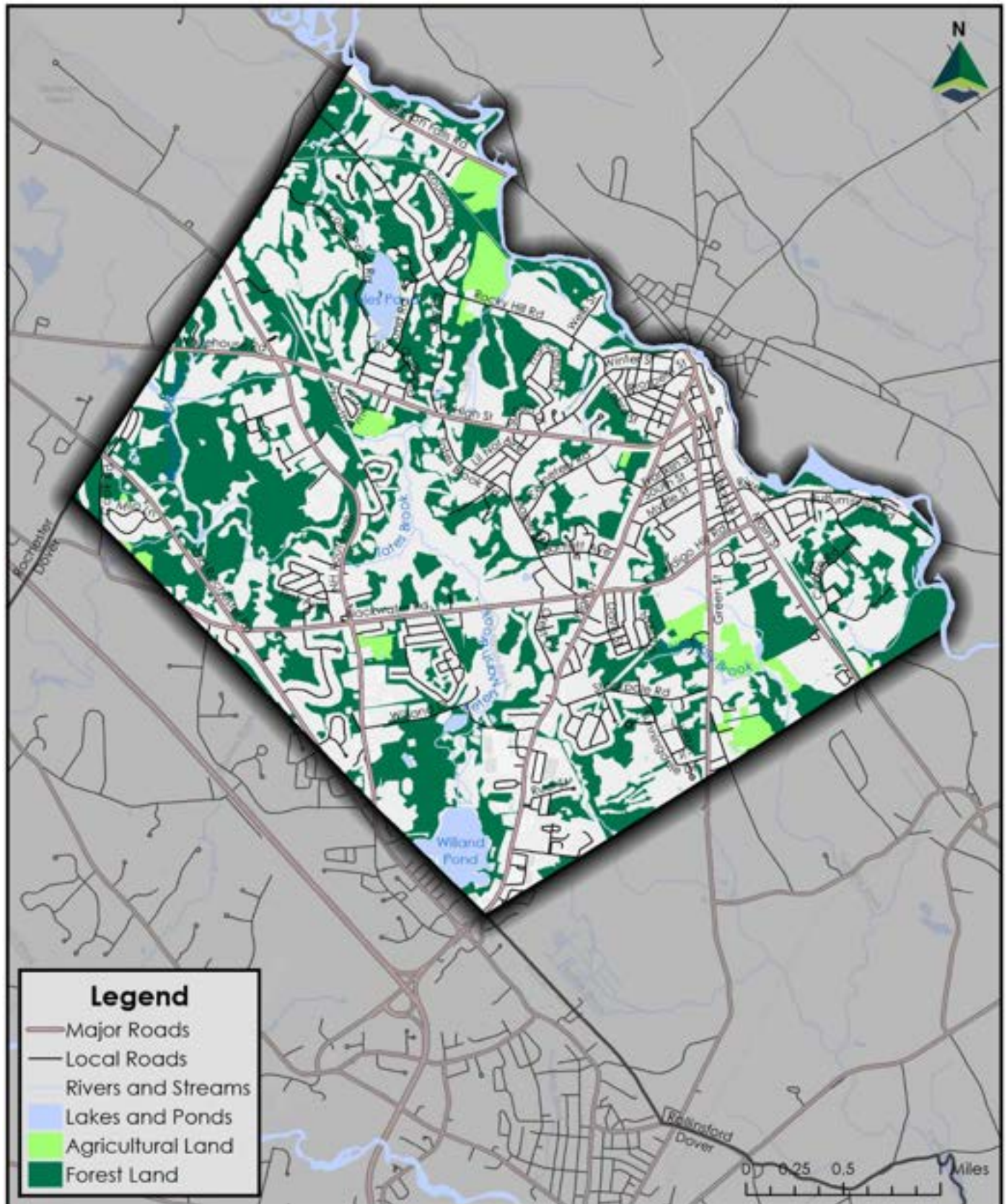


Figure 5: Farmland Soils (Source: SRPC, 2024)

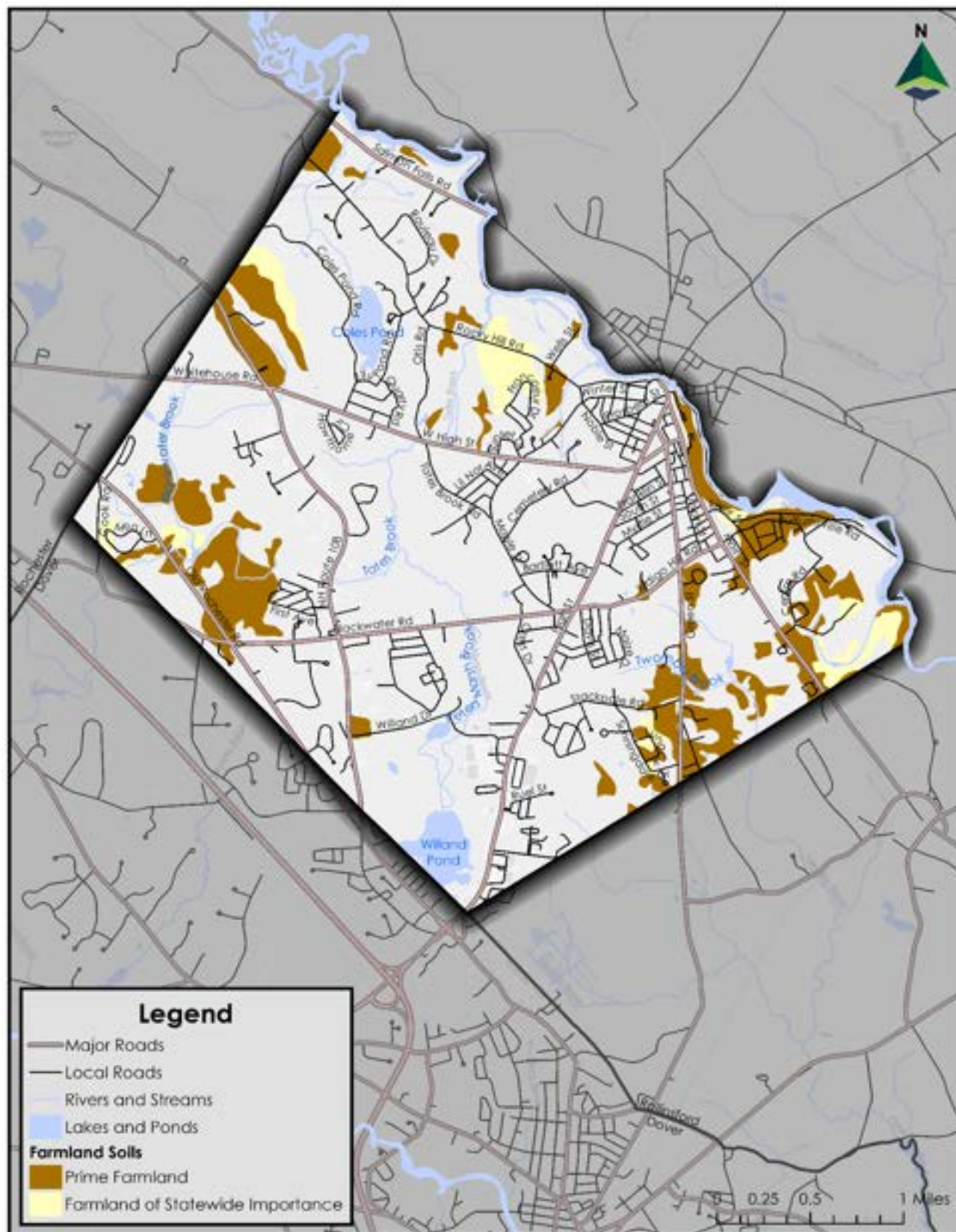
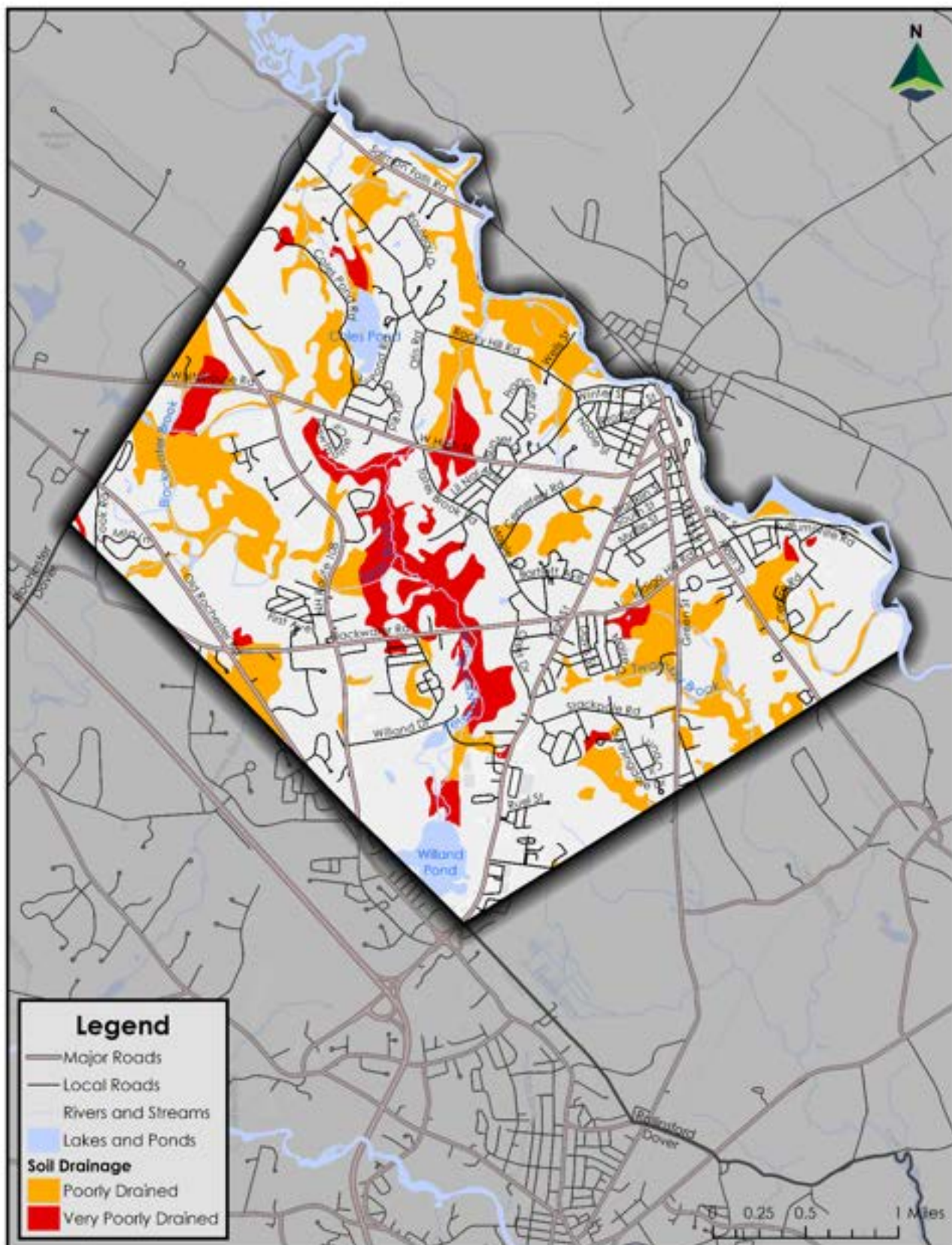


Figure 6: Soil Drainage (Source: SRPC, 2024)



Theme 2. Land Conservation, Trails & Connectivity.

Conservation Lands

One of the first lines of defense for natural resource protection is through land conservation and subsequent stewardship. Somersworth has approximately 786.4 acres (12.3% of total land) of conserved land (Figure 7). The community survey showed that 91% of participants support the acquisition of lands for conservation purposes. In addition to the land that is already under conservation, the [NH Coastal Conservation Plan](#) (Connect to Protect) identifies 559.2 acres for areas designated as conservation focus areas within the City. The NH Coastal Conservation Plan was developed by to provide a tool for communities, land trusts, and conservation groups in the coastal watershed to identify the critical areas for protection.



Photo Credit: Scott Orzechowski

Two notable tracts of land have been acquired by the City during the last decade to improve natural resource protection and expand unfragmented lands. The Sunningdale property is a 107-acre parcel that protects wildlife habitat areas and provides opportunities for passive recreation. The other parcel is the Lily Pond Conservation area (35 acres) that provides protection in the drinking water area. Both parcels are important steps to resource protection. Expansion of these parcels will provide a larger area of unfragmented corridors.

Unfragmented Lands

Unfragmented lands are parcels of land which are connected and form a larger area of contiguous land. These lands provide a valuable area of wildlife habitat for breeding, nesting and food, as well as a corridor for traveling and migration. When considering lands for conservation, it is important to consider these connections that may extend into other conservation lands. It is also beneficial to look at conservation lands of other communities for a greater wildlife corridor since wildlife travels across borders. This type of planning will also benefit the expansion and connectivity of the trail system in Somersworth and the region.

The *Unfragmented Lands map* (Figure 8) is an excellent source to use when planning for future conservation and consideration of development pressures. It indicates that there is a large unfragmented area identified in the northwest quadrant of the City that connects to conserved land in Rochester and Dover. This area provides some of the highest value natural resources. Somersworth has conserved a large portion already, and should focus on conserving the remaining portion between NH Route 108 and Old Rochester Road. Another key area is in the southeastern corner which would connect to other high value areas in Rollinsford and Berwick, Maine.

Figure 7: Conservation Lands (Source: SRPC, 2024)

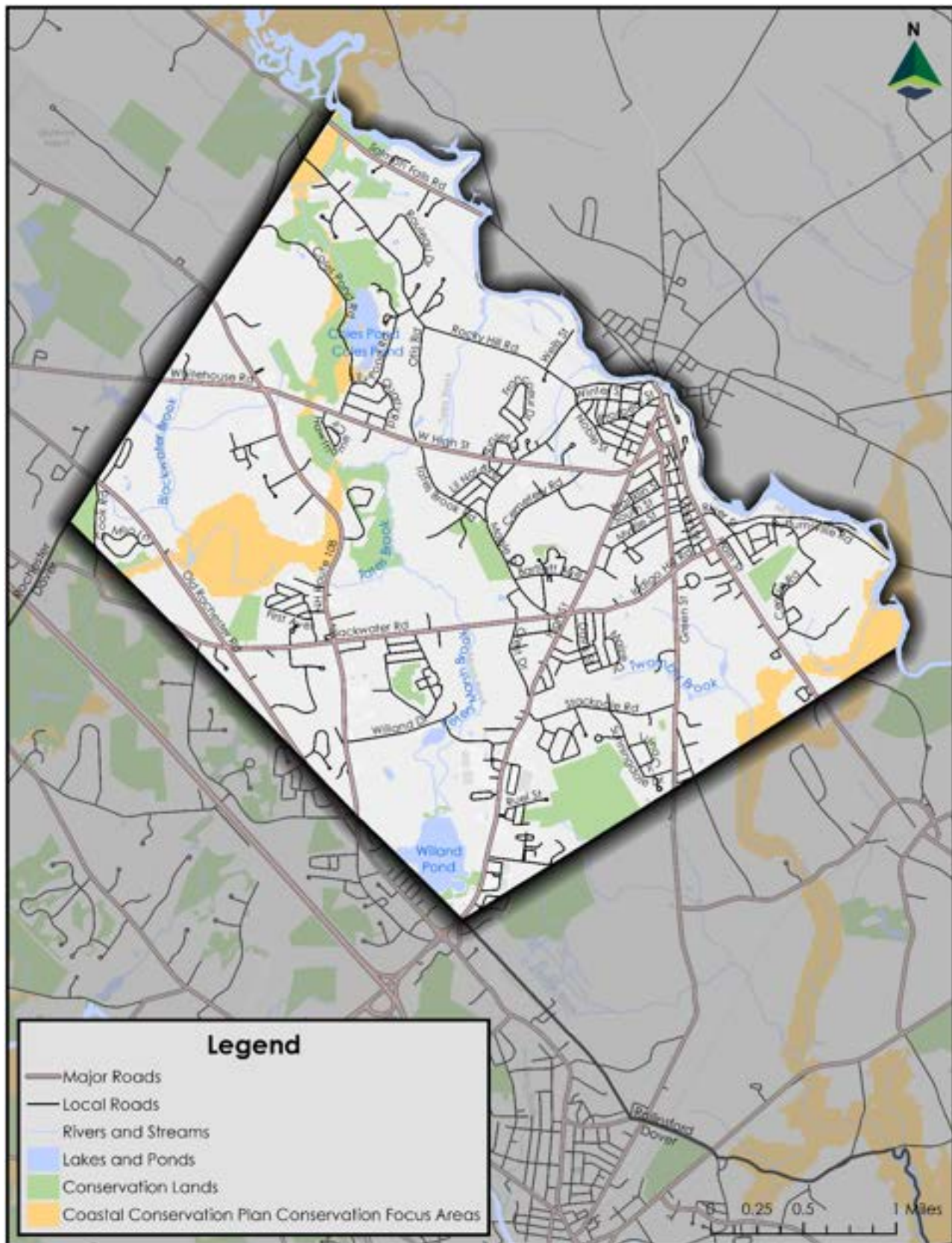
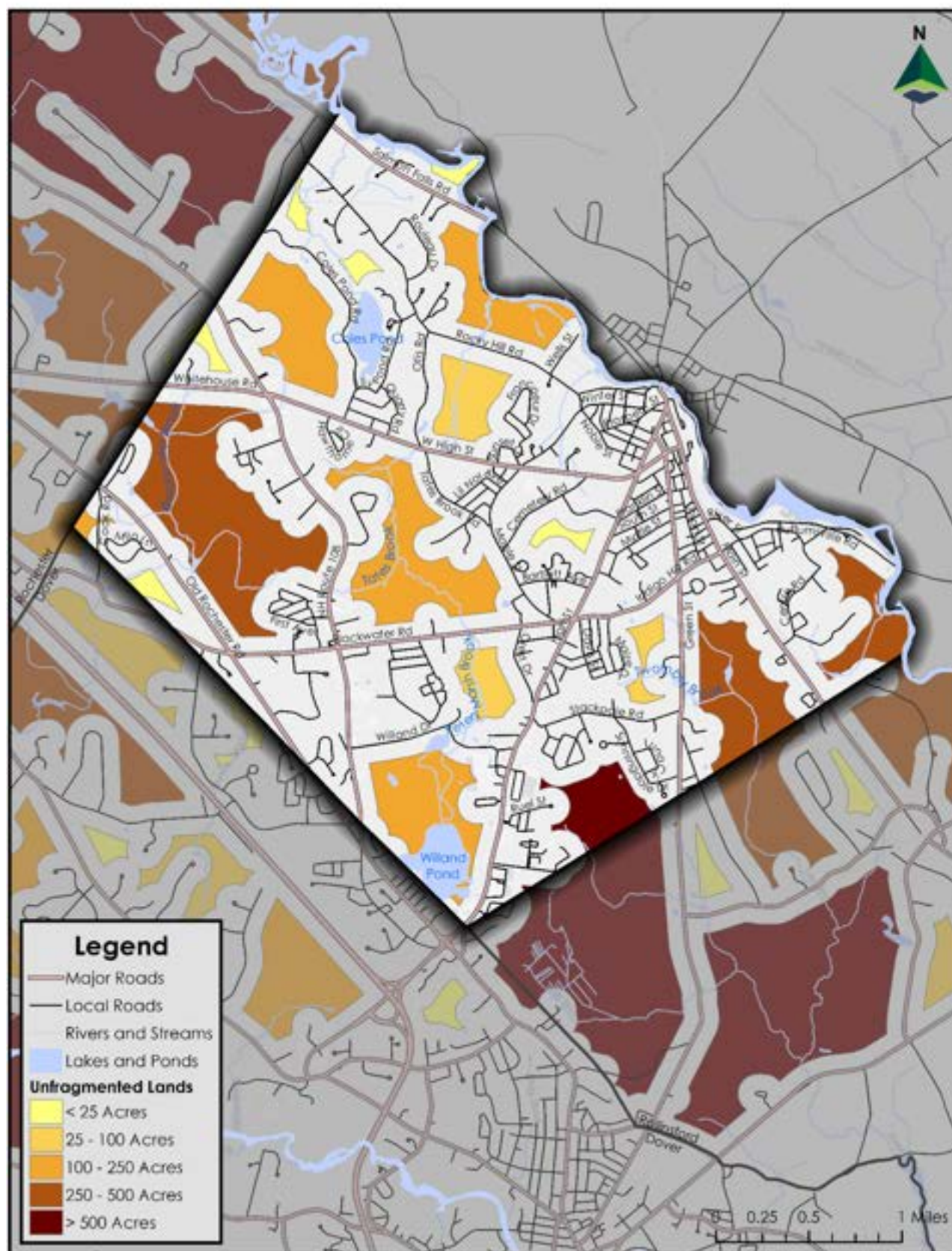


Figure 8: Unfragmented Lands (Source: SRPC, 2024)



Theme 3. Environmental Stewardship and Protection.

[NH's Wildlife Action Plan](#) provides a baseline to help communities protect important habitats. Somersworth is home to a wide variety of different habitat types ranging from floodplains, forests, peatlands, and swamps among others (Figure 9). Forest types are identified by distinctive groupings of trees and shrubs in a given area. Climate, elevation, soil condition and land use all have an impact on the type of forests that are present. Subsequently, the type of forest and age determine what types of wildlife may be found there and what threats it can withstand. The predominant forest types in the city include Appalachian Oak-Pine, Floodplain Forest, Hemlock-Hardwood-Pine, and Wet Meadow/Shrub Wetland. Some of the threats facing these forests include development, fragmentation, climate change, invasive species, diseases, and unmanaged forest practices.

Table 4: Wildlife Habitat Types (Source: NH Wildlife Action Plan, SRPC 2024)

Habitats	Square Acres	% of City
Appalachian Oak-Pine	1,609.60	25.2%
Developed Impervious	1,638.60	25.6%
Developed Or Barren Land	1,568.92	24.5%
Floodplain Forest	111.23	1.7%
Grassland	373.40	5.8%
Hemlock-Hardwood-Pine	139.54	2.2%
Open Water	173.90	2.7%
Peatland	79.96	1.2%
Sand/Gravel	20.53	0.3%
Temperate Swamp	361.83	5.7%
Wet Meadow/Shrub Wetland	313.40	4.9%



Photo Credit: Scott Orzechowski

There are 3 larger areas of land within city limits that are characteristic of *Highest Ranked Habitat in New Hampshire* and *Highest Ranked Habitat in the Biological Region* (Figure 10). These occur along the borders and connect to larger parcels in surrounding communities. Approximately 170.9 acres of land in the northeast quadrant are classified as highest ranked habitat in New Hampshire. There are approximately 188.7 acres of land that is classified as highest ranked habitat in the biological region along the border with Dover and Rollinsford that lead to larger parcels in those communities. Identification of these areas is the first step to planning for the conservation and protection of these habitat areas. Gaining knowledge and an understanding of the wildlife needs for each area can help determine the path to proper stewardship.

Table 5: Wildlife Action Tiers (Source: NH Wildlife Action Plan, SRPC 2024)

Wildlife Action Plan Habitat Tiers	Square Acres	% of City
Total Area in Somersworth	6,398.31	100.0%
Highest Ranked Habitat in New Hampshire	170.93	2.7%
Highest Ranked Habitat in Biological Region	188.72	2.9%

Figure 9: Habitat Land Types (Source: NH Wildlife Action Plan, SRPC 2024)

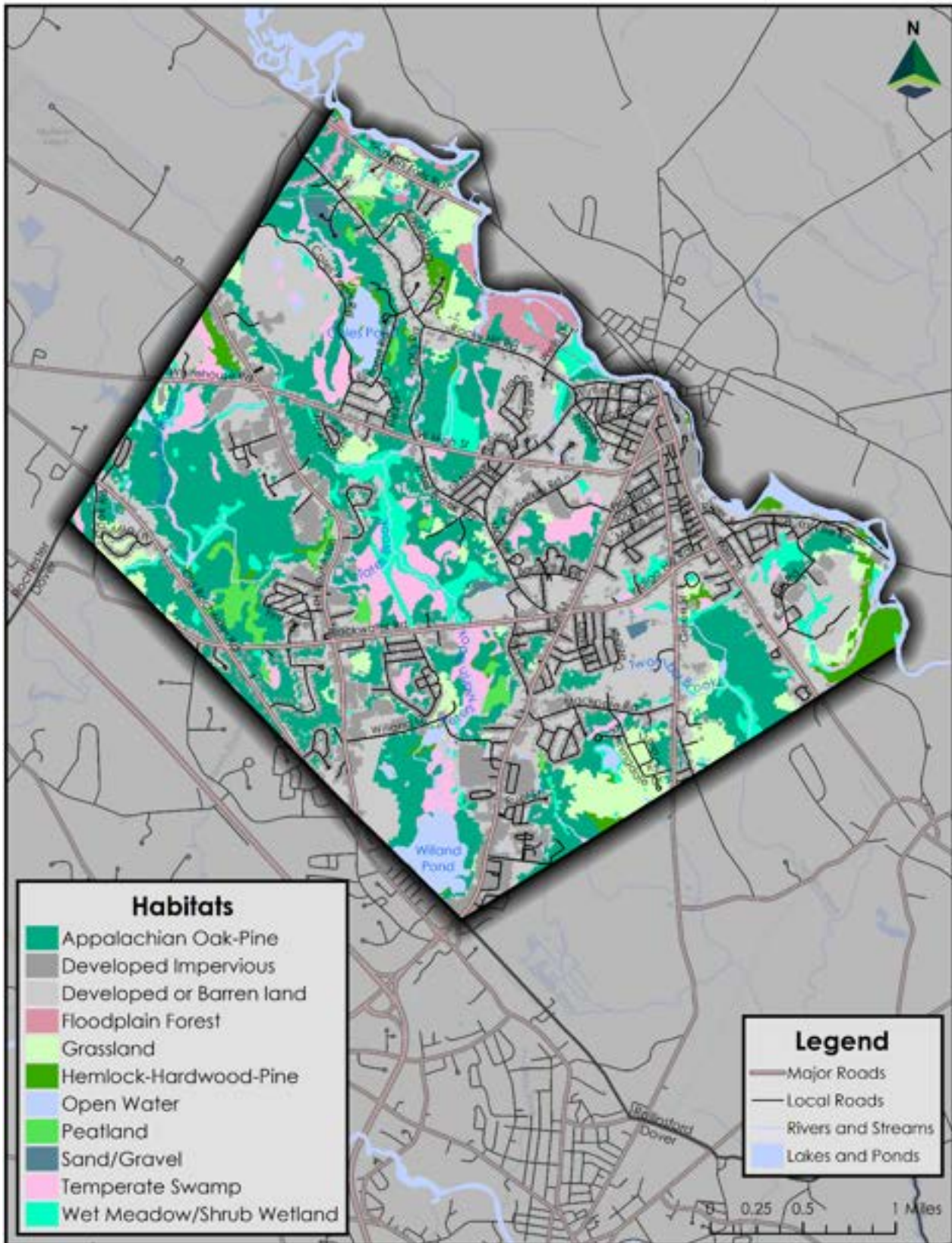
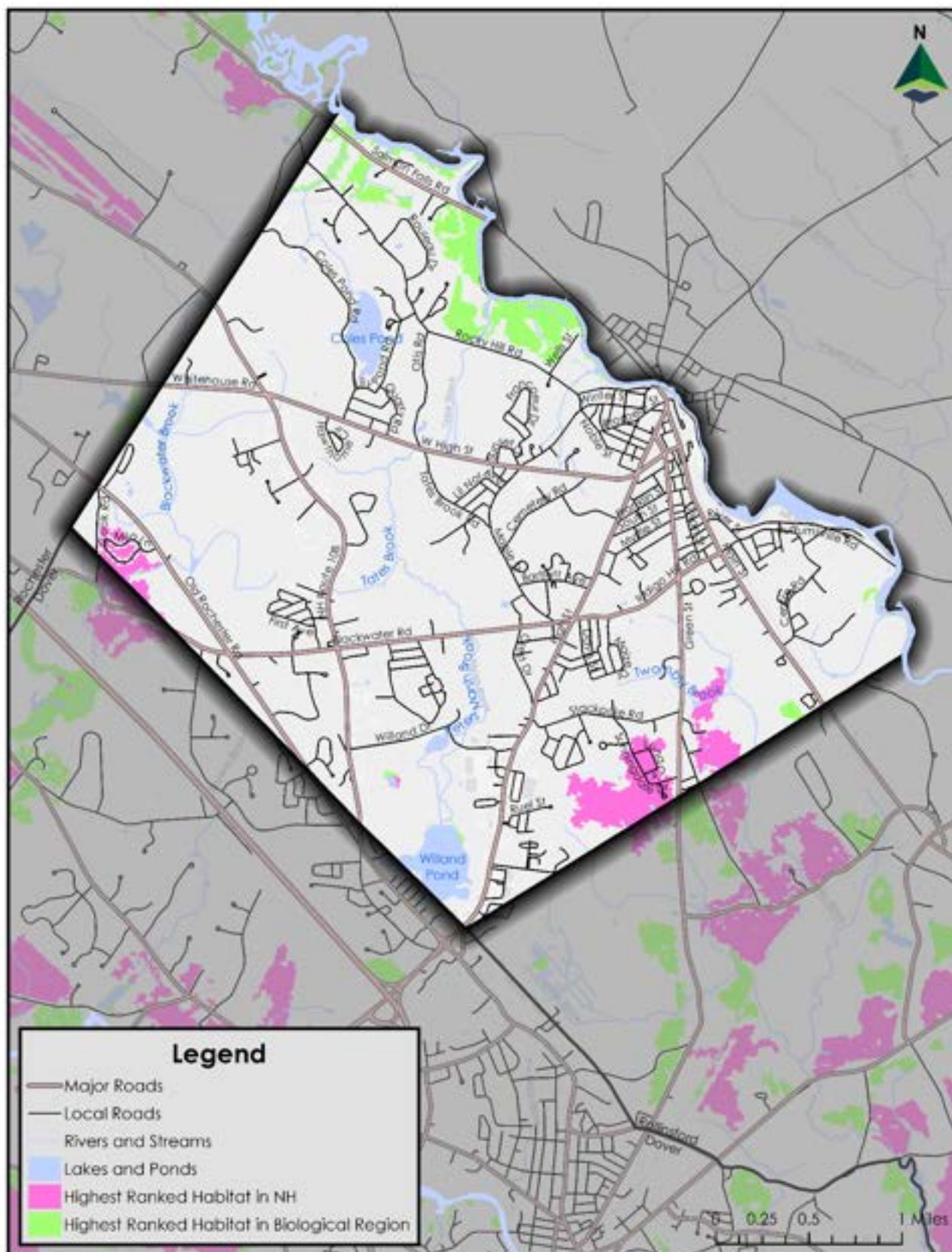


Figure 10: Habitat Tiers (Source: NH Wildlife Action Plan, SRPC 2024)



The Co-occurrence Map (Figure 11) provides a visual reference of the areas where several natural resource attributes overlay and helps to identify areas with the highest natural resource value when considering land for conservation and protection. The areas of highest co-occurrence are located along the Salmon River, Bates Brook, Blackwater Brook, Peter's Marsh Brook, and Twombly Brook. Areas around Willand Pond and Coles Pond are also areas worth noting for co-occurrence values. Somersworth has protected some of the highest natural resource value lands, especially along Bates Brook and Coles Pond.

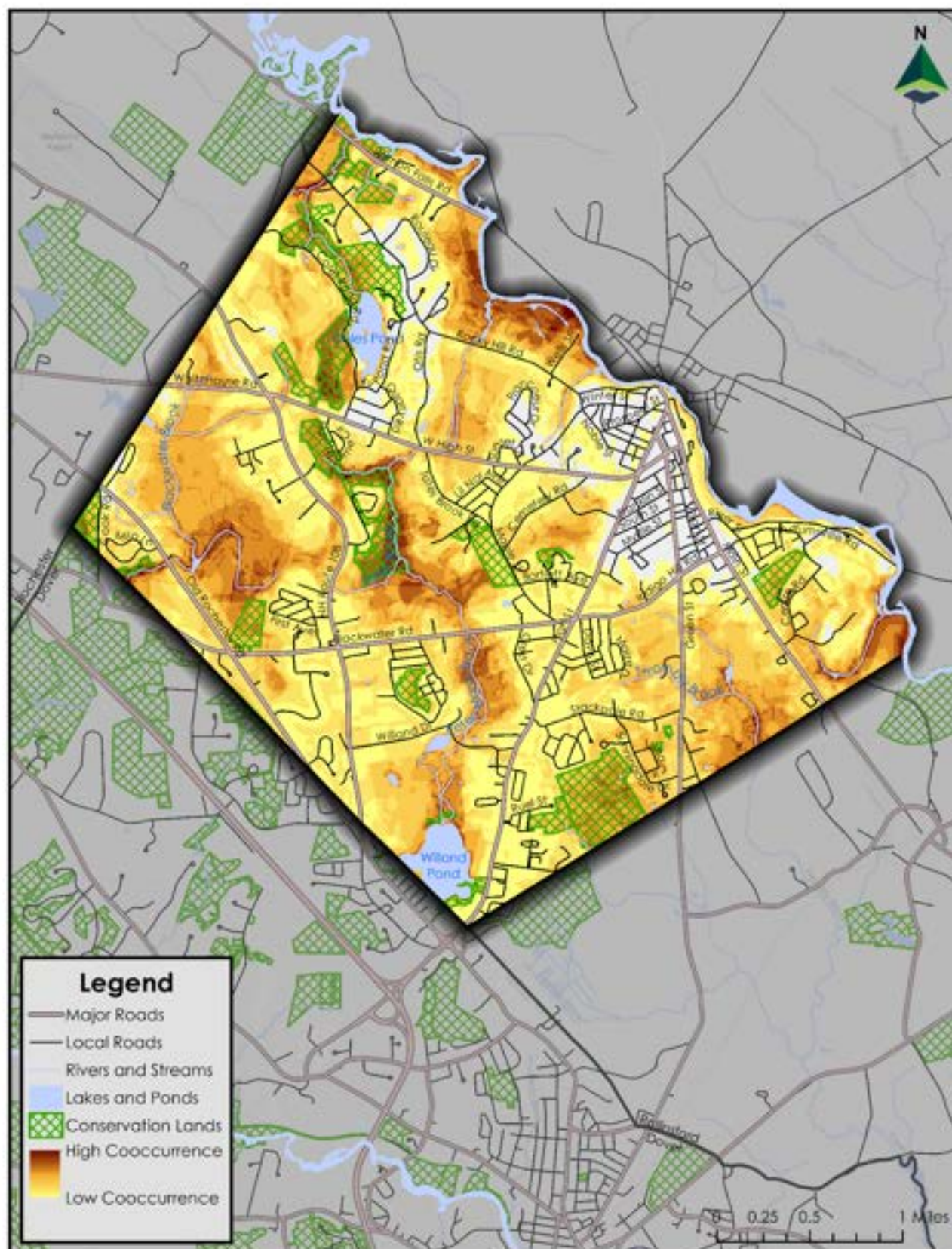
Data Layers Included in the Co-occurrence Map

- Conservation Lands
- Coastal Conservation Plan Conservation Focus Areas
- Forest Land
- Agricultural Land
- Wetlands
- Flood Zones
 - 100 Year Flood Zone
 - 500 Year Flood Zone
- Wildlife Action Plan Habitat Tiers
 - Highest Ranked Habitat in NH
 - Highest Ranked Habitat in Biological Region
- Connect the Coast Wildlife Corridors
- Connect the Coast Prioritized Habitat Blocks
- Steep Slopes
- Soil Drainage
 - Poorly Drained Soils
 - Very Poorly Drained Soils
- Farmland Soils
 - Prime Farmland
 - Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unfragmented Lands
- Aquifers
- Urban Heat Islands



Photo Credit: Scott Orzechowski

Figure 11: Co-occurrence Map (Source: SRPC, 2024)



Theme 4. Education, Outreach & Leadership Development

There are many threats to our natural environment that have the potential to change the abundance or absence of plant and animal species that we observe today. Land conservation and good stewardship practices are a critical part of natural resource protection and should be coupled with outreach and education to maximize benefits to the community. Likewise, getting people involved in events and activities that aim to clean up and improve the natural environment are also ways to promote sound practices and expand volunteer involvement.

In general, most people don't really want to do things that are harmful to the natural environment, however, they may not be aware of the unintended consequences of their actions. Common examples include improper disposal of medicines and household cleaning products, poor septic maintenance, unfiltered stormwater entering waterbodies, or improper removal and disposal of invasive species. Several comments received during the workshops and community survey mentioned a need for creating an enhanced awareness of resource protection and generating interest of the younger generations to continue the past and current efforts of natural resource protection. Creating an awareness of smart practices for environmental protection will aid in empowering residents with enhanced knowledge and likely encourage volunteerism to keep Somersworth natural assets healthy and vibrant.

Finding the best way to reach people can be difficult and is ever-changing as more social media platforms become available. Using multiple methods of outreach is the key to reaching a large and diverse public audience.

Figure 12: Somersworth Community Workshop, May 2024



Natural Resource Goals and Actions

The following provides a solid set of goals and obtainable actions to ensure that we preserve the natural resources of Somersworth for generations to enjoy and reap the benefits that they bring. These should be reviewed annually or more frequently to keep this as a living document.

Goals

Actions to Meet Goals

Goal 1: Conserve and expand green spaces and natural amenities

Increase the inventory of open space areas.

Improve access to recreation while emphasizing environmental stewardship and conservation.

Promote urban green space development through the creation of pocket parks, living streetscapes, and the planting of more urban trees.

Improve natural assets in the urbanized areas and ensure that new developments emphasize sustainable practices.

Implement innovative land use methods to encourage alternatives to conventional subdivisions. Review and amend the existing ordinances surrounding Conservation Subdivisions

Goal 2: Expand and maintain land conservation, trails, and connectivity

Improve community connectivity through the creation of a network of trails and natural areas.

Develop criteria to assist in decisions for acquisition of land for conservation.

Seek to conserve lands that will create unfragmented parcels and wildlife corridors.

Goal 3: Maintain environmental protection/stewardship.

Seek best management practices for reducing invasive species and develop resources for property owners.

Develop strategies to protect air quality.

Protect the quality and quantity of water resources through regulatory changes, outreach and education.

Consider ways for biodiversity and habitat protection.

Create awareness of the impact of climate change and weather impact on the natural environment.

Goal 4: Improve public outreach & education and foster leadership development.

Increase awareness of the City's natural resources through outreach and education.

Cultivate leadership for the future to support environmental stewardship and conservation efforts.

Conduct public workshops to generate interest in environmental protection and educate on topics of importance.

Provide outreach material or host a workshop to assist residents with invasive species removal and proper disposal. Consider posting instructions at the public works for disposing of invasive plant material.

Resources

NH Wildlife Action Plan:

<https://www.wildlife.nh.gov/wildlife-and-habitat/nh-state-wildlife-action-plan>

NH Coastal Conservation Plan: <https://connect-protect.org/>

Map Sources

Data Layer	Source	Year
Agricultural Land	NH GRANIT	2015
Conservation Focus Areas	Coastal Conservation Plan (TNC)	2021
Conservation Lands	NH GRANIT	2023
Farmland Soils	NRCS Soil Survey Geographic Database	2021
Flood Zones	FEMA	2015
Forest Land	NH GRANIT	2015
Lakes and Ponds (NHD Hydrography)	NH GRANIT	2006
Prioritized Habitat Blocks	Connect the Coast	2019
Rivers and Streams / Flowlines (NHD Hydrography)	NH GRANIT	2006
Roads	NHDOT	2024
Slope	NH Geological Survey	2000
Soil Drainage	Soil Survey Geographic Database	2021
Wetlands	National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)	2019
Wildlife Action Plan Habitat Tiers	NH GRANIT	2020
Wildlife Corridors	Connect the Coast	2019



Somersworth Master Plan

LAND USE CHAPTER

Adopted November 20, **2024**

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Funding to support this Master Plan Chapter update for the City of Somersworth was provided The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREPA) Grant.

Land Use in Somersworth

Introduction

The Land Use Chapter of the Somersworth Master Plan serves as the groundwork for future development goals in the City. As one of the smallest communities by land area in the Strafford region, Somersworth faces unique challenges and opportunities related to development, preservation, and meeting the needs and priorities of a growing population.

Community engagement was integral to the themes, goals, actions, and overall development of this chapter. Through public workshops, surveys, and discussions with municipal boards and other stakeholders, invaluable insights were gathered that reflect the priorities of the community. This feedback highlights the community's priority for diverse housing options, enhanced connectivity, and robust infrastructure. Throughout this chapter are discussions and actions that shape a thoughtful approach to future land use priorities. Key themes that define Somersworth's land use vision, including sustainable growth, equitable development, improved access, and resilience are highlighted. Central to these discussions is the overarching goal of creating a future that reflects the community's shared vision—a future where Somersworth thrives as a connected, resilient, and sustainable City.

Community Engagement

Somersworth City Staff worked together with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to develop a comprehensive outreach and engagement plan to gather input and feedback from key stakeholders including municipal boards and members of the public. This information helped shape the development of this Land User chapter update. One meeting in February 2024, two meetings in March 2024, and one final meeting in August 2024 were focused on engaging members of the Planning Board and representatives from other municipal boards in the City. A public community workshop was held in May 2024 which brought together over a dozen individuals who shared ideas and perspectives about the community and fostered discussions about a vision for the future of Land Use in Somersworth **(Figure 1)**. This workshop had several activities including a visual exercise that gauged preferences for different styles of development and other collaborative activities to highlight culturally and historically important places in the City. A community-wide survey was open for input during the

Figure 1: Somersworth Community Workshop, May 2024



months of August and September 2024. Significant outreach campaigns were utilized to bolster the quantity of responses; these efforts included social media campaigns, City-wide digital communications, and reminders sent to property owners in water bills. The survey yielded nearly 300 responses and included input from a range of individuals connected to the City of Somersworth.

Information gathered through these community engagement avenues helped shape the Goals and the Actions to reach these goals for this Land Use chapter update. These Goals, Actions, and community engagement findings are referenced throughout this chapter.

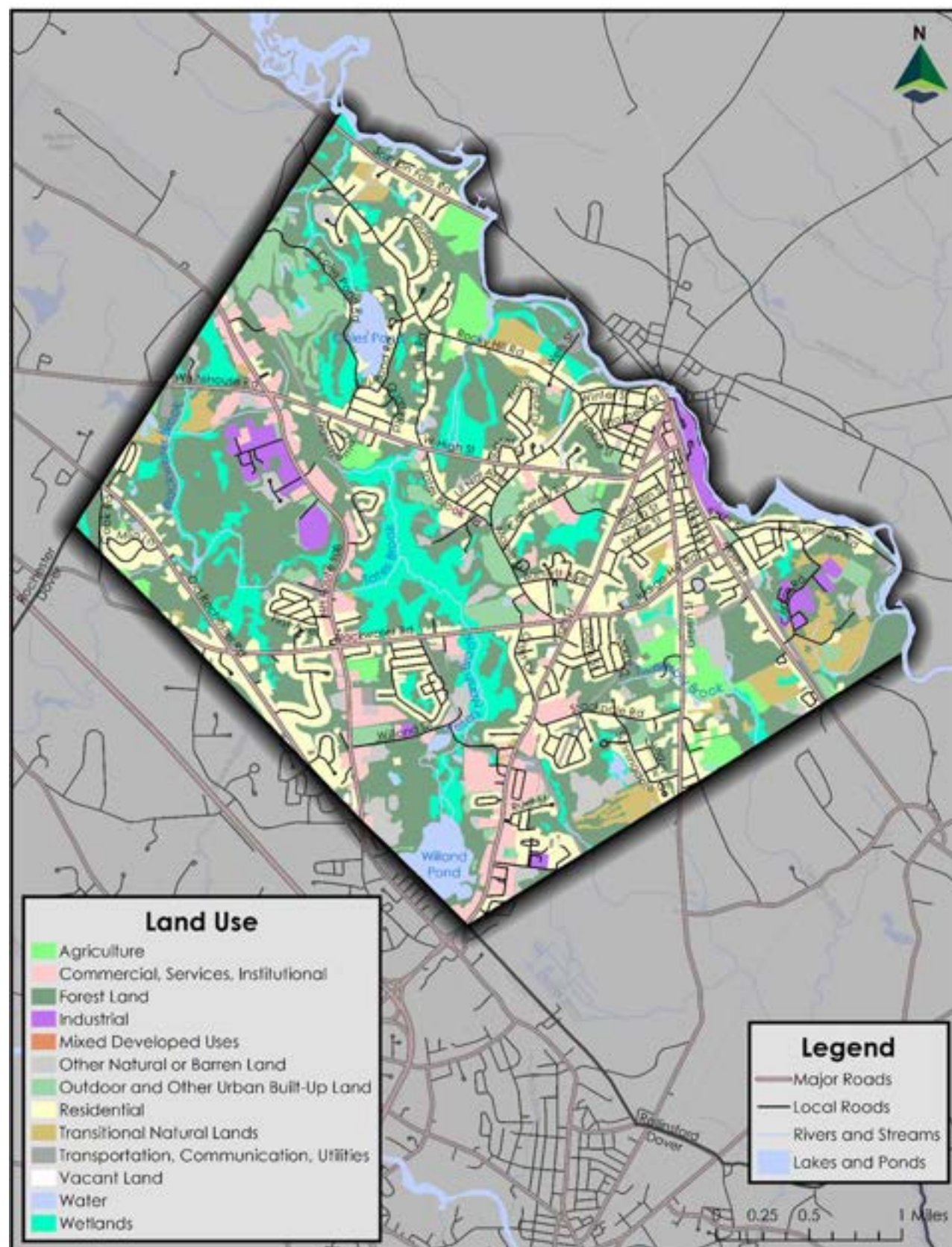
Our Land Use Story

The following sections of the Land Use chapter include discussion of themes related to current land use trends and the future landscape of land use in the City of Somersworth. These themes, which structure this chapter, are informed by background research on existing conditions and projections of the future of the community and region, analysis of community and municipal engagement efforts, and the developed Goals and Actions.

Existing Land Uses

The City's existing land use encompasses a range of applications and priorities across the community. The City's land area covers 5,891.03 total acres and includes a diverse mix of housing types, businesses, open spaces, recreation, and industrial places that all contribute to the unique character, history, and fabric of the community (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Somersworth Land Use (Source: City of Somersworth)



Residential: Throughout Somersworth, residential areas can be found across many portions of the community and encompass over 1,700 acres (**Figure 3**). Housing stock in the community includes a mix of housing types, with a majority being single-family dwellings. Many neighborhoods are primarily zoned for low- or moderate-density residential development. Areas and neighborhoods along High Street, Green Street, and Main Street include greater levels of density and a greater diversity of residential housing types, which better meet the needs of Somersworth's demographically diverse population.

Business, Commercial, and Industrial: Business and Commercial areas account for nearly a fifth of the total land area in Somersworth, and are concentrated on thoroughfares including Route 108, Main Street, and High Street. Industrial areas of the community are positioned in similar areas of commercial uses, with access to major roads and transportation corridors. Key industrial use areas include business and industrial parks located on Route 108 and Main Street.

Agriculture and Open Space: Agriculture accounts for just under 10 percent of the land in the City and is concentrated in northern areas of the community along the Salmon Falls River and eastern areas near the Twombly Brook. Several parks and recreation areas are available throughout the community, and across Somersworth are areas of forested land, wetlands, ponds, rivers, and other valuable resources and amenities.

Vacant and Underutilized Land: There are several areas around the City that are considered vacant or underutilized. Notably, former industrial sites along the Salmon Falls River present opportunities for redevelopment and reuse.

Downtown Area: The downtown area of Somersworth includes a mix of residential, commercial, business, services and offices, and mixed-use development. This region of the community encompasses the most densely developed areas of the City with access to key utilities including water and sewer infrastructure, and other infrastructure including extensive sidewalks, ample street lighting, and more.

Figure 3: Somersworth Table of Current Land Uses (Source: City of Somersworth)

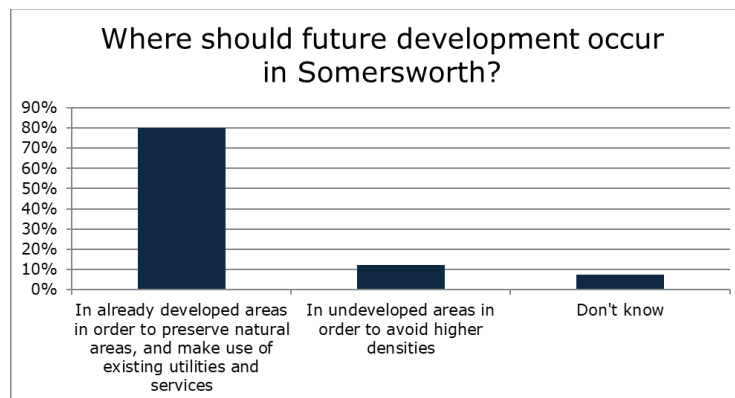
Land Use Type	Acres	% of Town
All Residential	1,727.50	27.0%
Multi-Family	206.85	3.2%
Single Family	1,417.92	22.2%
Mobile Home Parks	102.73	1.6%
Commercial, Services, Institutional	387.47	6.1%
Commercial Retail	194.42	3.0%
Commercial Wholesale	13.76	0.2%
Services	78.35	1.2%
Government	32.41	0.5%
Institutional	31.34	0.5%
Educational	31.00	0.5%
Indoor Cultural/Public Assembly	6.19	0.1%
Industrial	133.77	2.1%
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	315.79	4.9%
Rail Transportation	12.94	0.2%
Road Right-of-Way	204.77	3.2%
Parking Structure/Lot	14.95	0.2%
Auxiliary Transportation	7.09	0.1%
Other Road Transportation	4.92	0.1%
Electric, Gas, and Other Utilities	58.21	0.9%
Water and Wastewater Utilities	12.91	0.2%
Mixed Developed Uses	2.24	0.0%
Outdoor and Other Urban and Built-Up Land	325.88	5.1%
Outdoor Recreation	181.55	2.8%
Cemeteries	40.72	0.6%
Maintained Open Areas	103.61	1.6%
Vacant Land	3.61	0.1%
Agricultural Land	181.11	2.8%
Transitional Land	215.27	3.4%
Forest Land	2,024.69	31.6%
Water	186.38	2.9%
Wetlands	675.98	10.6%
Barren Land	220.88	3.5%
Total Land and Water Area	6,398.31	100.0%

Theme 1. Sustainable & Smart Growth

Development patterns, zoning ordinances, and the community's industrial history have yielded many positive attributes in terms of land use: a mix of housing types, a community core denser than the surrounding areas of the City, and many forested areas throughout to preserve green space. Despite many of the positive attributes, Somersworth faces several challenges and decisions regarding future development and land use given their status as the second smallest community by land area in Strafford County. In contrast to its small geographic size, Somersworth's population has steadily grown over the years. Projections show that by 2050, the population will have increased by more than 13 percent compared to 2021.ⁱ

Maintaining balanced, sustainable development and smart growth in Somersworth will require several key considerations. Ensuring that land use regulations and zoning reflect the perspectives of the community at large will ensure that continued development in the community meets the needs and preferences of residents, businesses, and the City as a whole. Additionally, considerations surrounding the development requirements of new construction or re-development efforts of existing properties should examine requirements or incentives to promote resilient development, green infrastructure incorporation, and sustainable practices while also considering community character and historical preservation.

Figure 4: Somersworth Land Use Survey Results – Future Development



Feedback gathered through engagement with community members (**Figure 4**) highlighted several key consensuses that support the preference for the community to bolster development and density in regions of the City where density is already present while ensuring development is resilient for the future.

Theme 2. Equitable & Inclusive Development

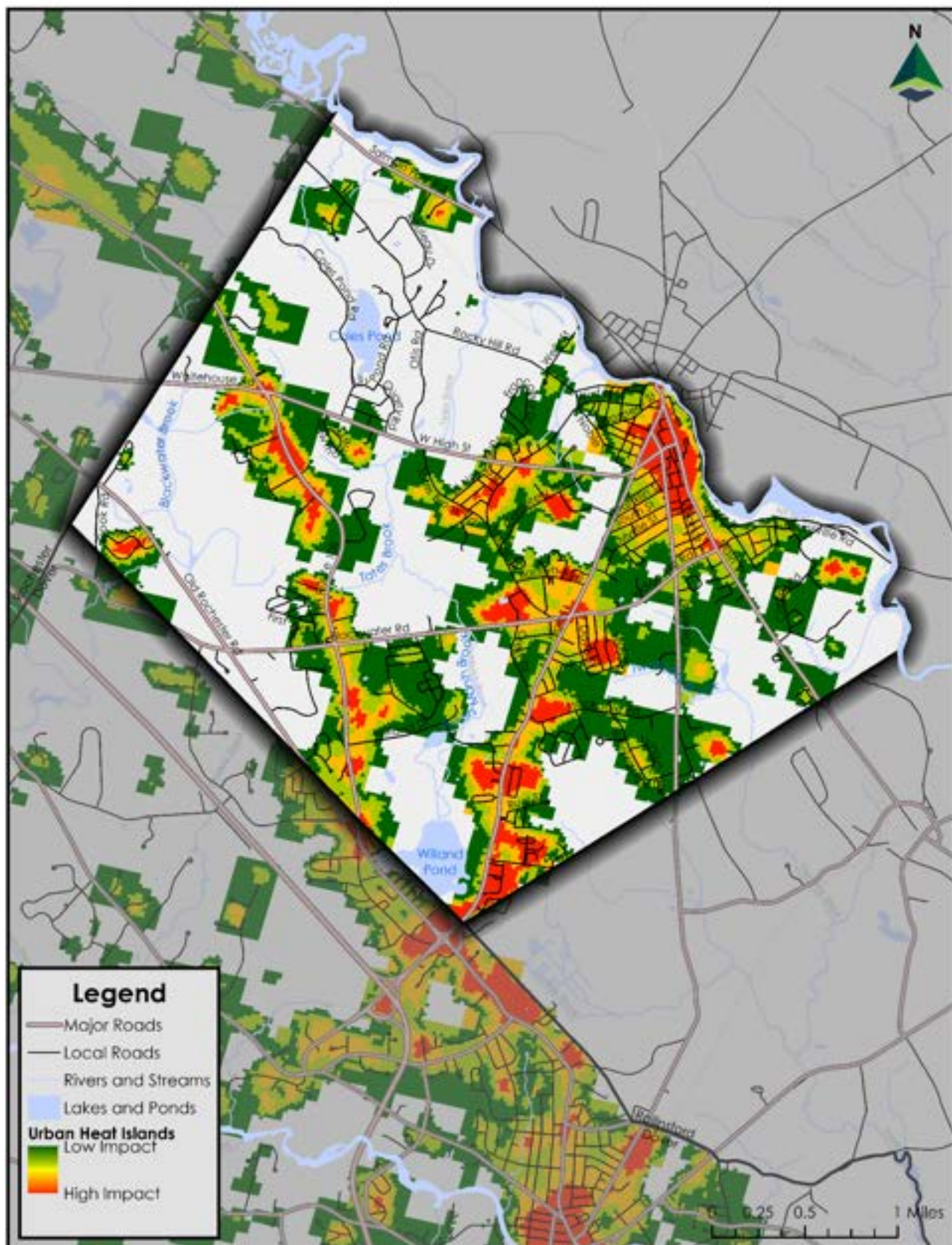
Fostering a community in Somersworth where all residents have access to opportunities, resources, and services that align with their needs and values can be pursued through equitable and inclusive development patterns and thoughtful land use priorities. This means that a diverse range of housing types, accessibility, equitable investments, and community engagement are present and prioritized.

An example of an aspect of land use planning where an additional equity focus may be placed relates to urban heat islands, which are areas that experience higher temperatures than their rural surroundings due to built infrastructure and pavement retaining heat and increasing the ambient temperature in an area. These heat islands disproportionately affect denser areas that are more likely to encompass low-income neighborhoods, where access to green spaces and cooling resources may be limited. Throughout Somersworth, this effect is present in the denser areas of the City (**Figure 5**). Promoting priorities including green infrastructure, parks in dense areas, and street trees along corridors and through dense neighborhoods help mitigate heat island effects and enhance overall community health and livability.

To prioritize equitable and inclusive development practices, the City can embark on several key efforts. Expanding public engagement processes and practices will further strengthen channels of communication between municipal leadership, residents, and other stakeholders. Ensuring all voices within the community are considered and included will help guide land use decisions reflective of the communities' priorities. Additionally, strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders and developers can lead to collaborations and create projects that benefit the whole community, and can result in the creation of new community gathering spaces. Fostering the channels of communication between City leadership, land use decision makers, and the community may also create opportunities for more thoughtful engagement and expand opportunities for residents to lead and share priority setting.

By engaging the community in meaningful ways, strengthening partnerships, fostering leadership, and supporting and creating thoughtful public spaces, Somersworth will be prioritizing equitable and inclusive land use and development decisions that will contribute to a more resilient and thriving community.

Figure 5: Somersworth urban Heat Islands (Source: SRPC)

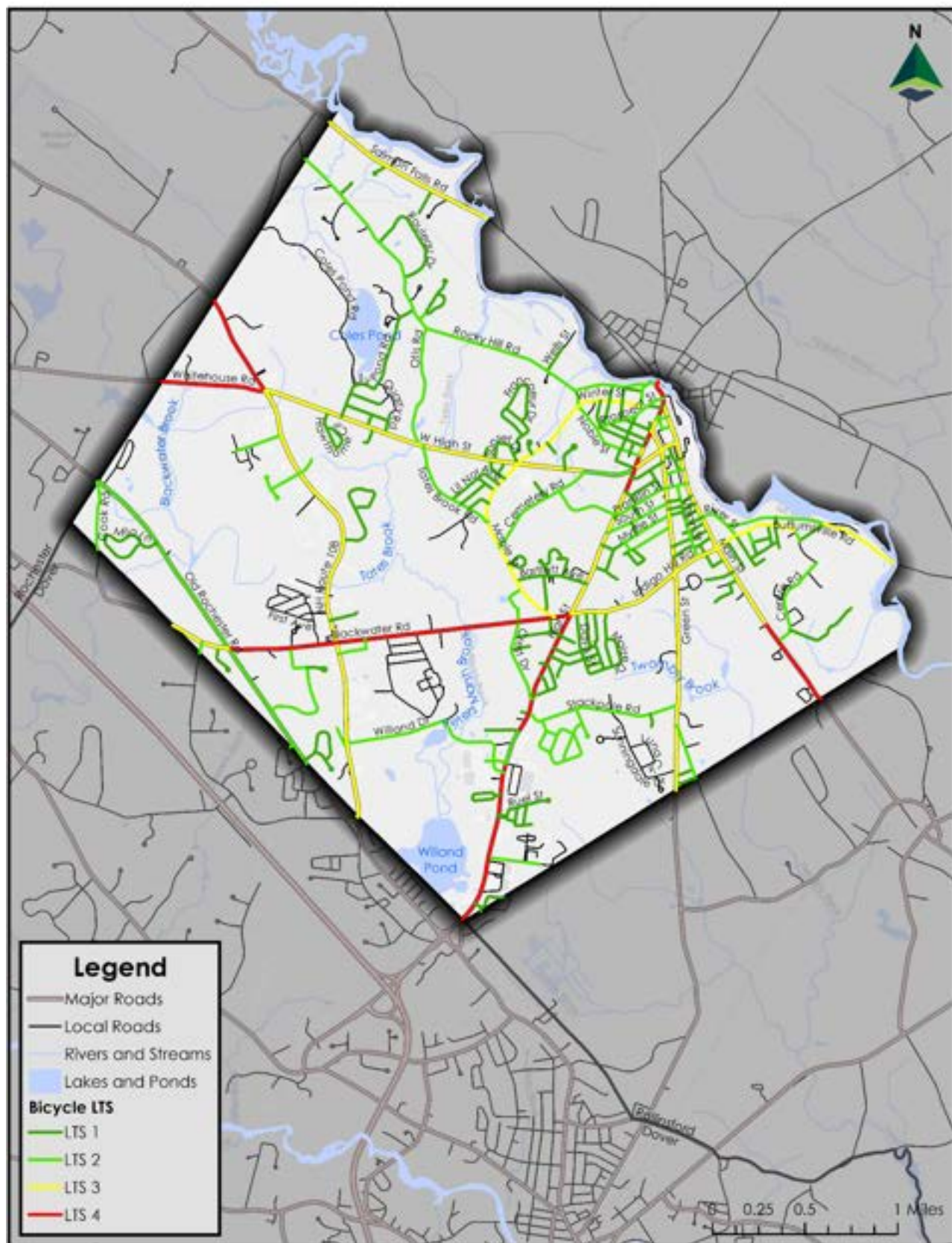


Theme 3. Access & Connectivity

Feedback from stakeholders throughout the community highlighted the need for improvements to community connectivity, including improved walkability, biking infrastructure, and transit services. Land use decisions and priorities that improve access to amenities and connectivity throughout the community are essential for enhancing the quality of life for all residents of Somersworth and supporting businesses in the community.

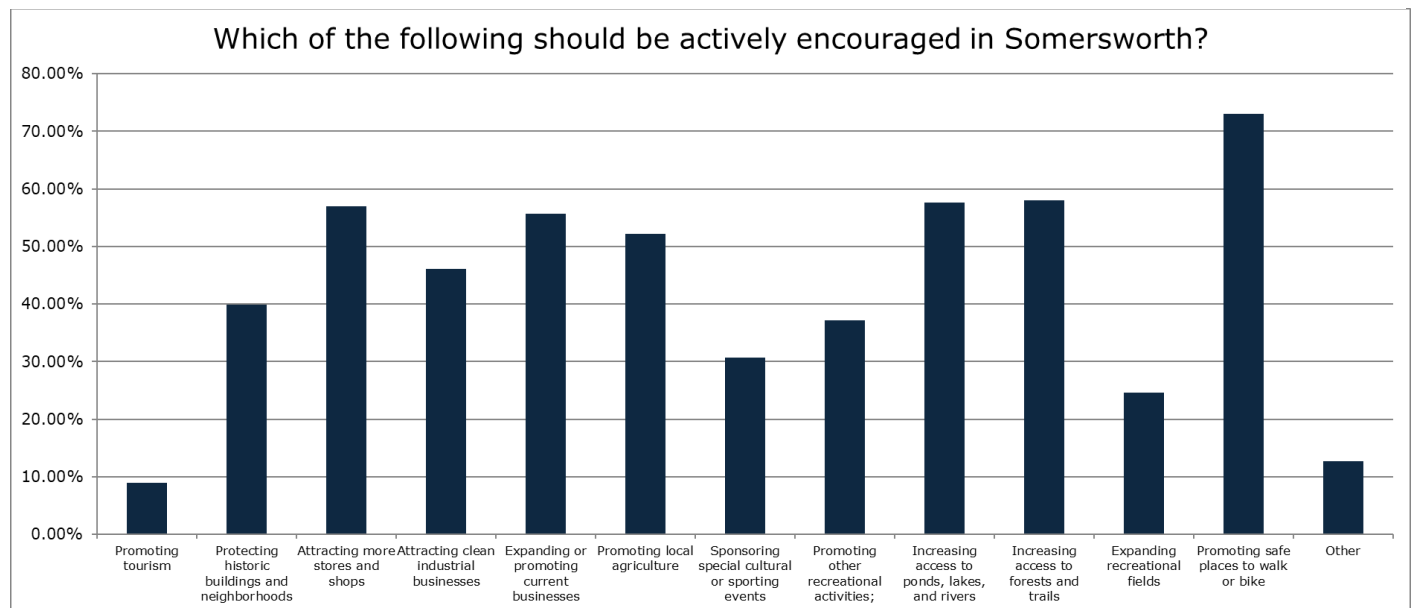
Studies conducted by SRPC have found that Somersworth has one of the largest portions of households that are located less than half a mile from a recreation site compared to the whole SRPC region.ⁱⁱ Additional analysis researching Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS), which measure the level of stress and discomfort a cyclist feels while riding on a particular route due to traffic, has found several areas throughout Somersworth with higher levels of BLTS. This indicates that, despite proximity to services and amenities, individuals and families who may have chosen to travel locally without a personal vehicle may not be. Heightened levels of BLTS may be due to the amount of traffic on a road, limited separation from traffic, and other factors that impact the safety cyclist feel on the roads hinders use of transportation alternatives like walking and cycling (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6: Somersworth Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (Source: SRPC)



Feedback gathered through community engagement efforts found that promoting safe places to walk and bike is a priority that should be actively encouraged in Somersworth, with nearly 73 percent of survey respondents highlighting this (**Figure 7**). To improve connectivity and access to amenities throughout Somersworth, which is essential to enhancing quality of life for residents and promote a vibrant business mix and connected community, several key actions can be prioritized.

Figure 7: Somersworth Land Use Survey Results – Promoting Safe Walking and Biking



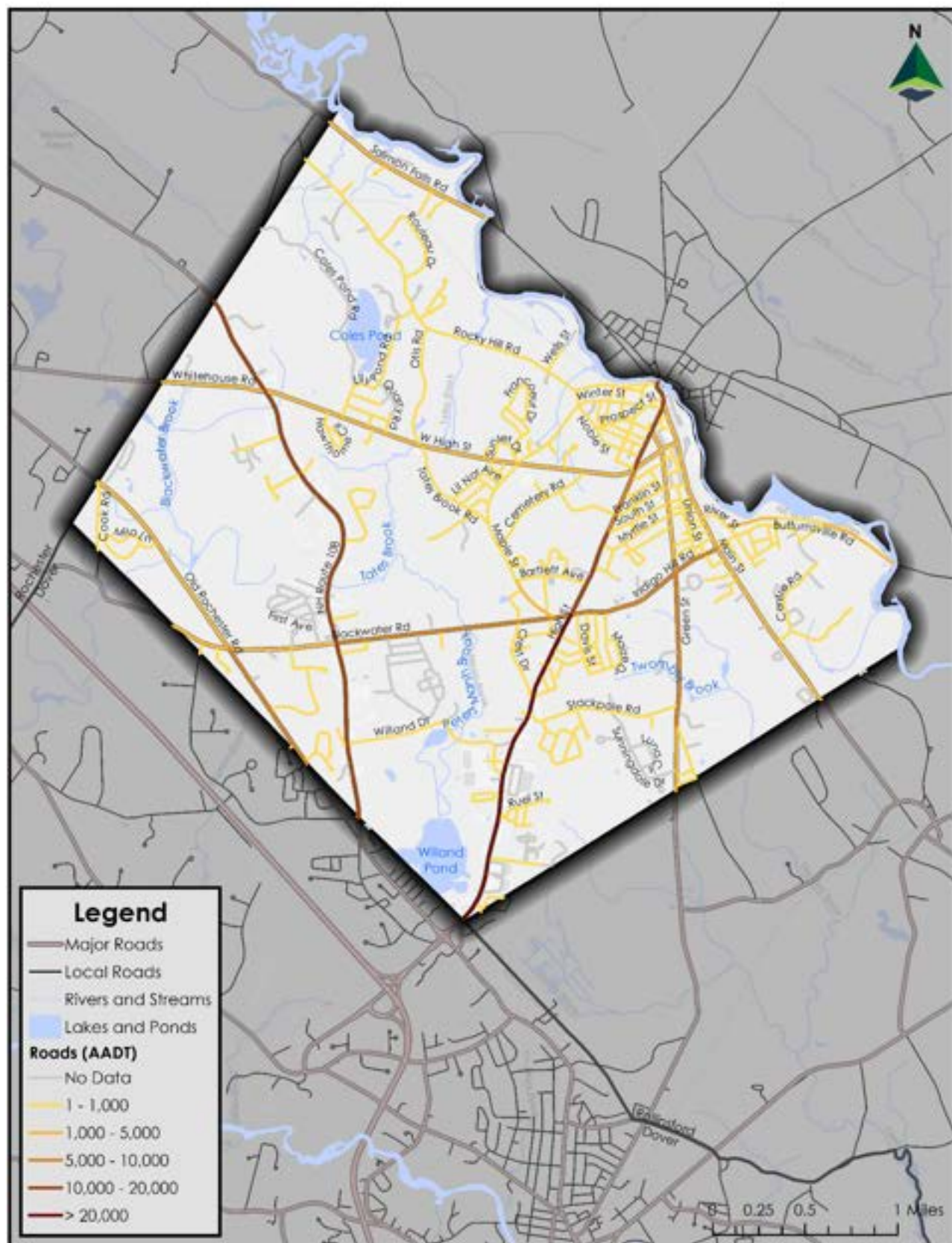
Improving pedestrian and biking infrastructure along key corridors, within dense neighborhoods, and near amenities will improve community connectiveness. Sidewalk upgrades and expansions that are accessibility-focused, along with dedicated bike lanes and the addition of multi-use off-road pathways connecting to schools and other high-traffic areas should be considered to expand opportunities for safe travel options when not using a personal vehicle. Implementation of Complete Streets principles, which prioritize upgrades related to the safety and accessibility of all users, should be explored. Transit improvements, including expansions to services offered by COAST, to help ensure that neighborhoods have access to transportation services by assessing transit needs, and adjusting routes and schedules where possible, will provide more opportunities for community members.

Theme 4. Infrastructure Resilience

Fostering infrastructure resilience is a key element of land use planning that is essential for ensuring the community can effectively respond to economic shocks and environmental impacts, and that the community is laying the groundwork for sustainable development patterns. By promoting and expanding mixed use-development and zoning, through both incentives and regulatory framework updates, economically and socially diverse areas of the City may better withstand various future economic challenges due to improved support for local businesses and more robust social cohesion amongst residents. Mixed-use areas also provide a higher level of access to services and amenities to residents, which may reduce reliance on personal vehicles for certain in-towns trips and in areas of already high traffic volumes.

Currently, Somersworth experiences significant traffic that impacts commuters passing through the City and residents. Due to the community's geographic location and it being home to the terminus of New Hampshire Route 108 into Maine, significant rush hour delays occur through the downtown area (**Figure 8**). Ensuring that future development patterns are mindful of the traffic bottleneck through the downtown core of the community will help inform consideration about land use decisions that improve connectivity for both residents and commuters through Somersworth. Expanded alternative transportation options like improved walkability and transit options will mitigate traffic impacts compared to development patterns that increase the reliance on personal vehicles for local trips.

Figure 8: Somersworth Traffic Volumes (Source: SRPC)



In addition to consideration for economic shocks and traffic when considering resiliency for the future, mitigating property and environmental impacts due to the increasing trend of storm intensity should also be evaluated. include upgrades to stormwater infrastructure.

Impervious surfaces like roads and parking lots are common along certain major routes in the City and throughout the downtown area (**Figure 9**). Runoff from these surfaces can impact the ecology and health of watersheds of several waterways including the Coheco and Salmon Falls rivers (**Figure 10**). Seeking additional funding opportunities from state and federal agencies and implementing upgrades to stormwater infrastructure, and the capacity to withstand elevated storm threats like flooding, will protect public health and property while enhancing community resilience. Several projects listed as priorities by municipal staff and in the City's Capital Improvement Plan include upgrades to critical infrastructure like the wastewater treatment plant, water tower, and water lines, along with updated stormwater regulations for subdivisions.ssⁱⁱⁱ

Prioritizing resiliency through infrastructure and land use changes will help the City better adapt to future challenges and manage impacts of economic and climate effects more effectively. Fostering resilient infrastructure and investments will contribute to a stronger, more sustainable community where all residents can thrive and feel secure in their environment.

Figure 9: Somersworth Impervious Surfaces (Source: City of Somersworth)

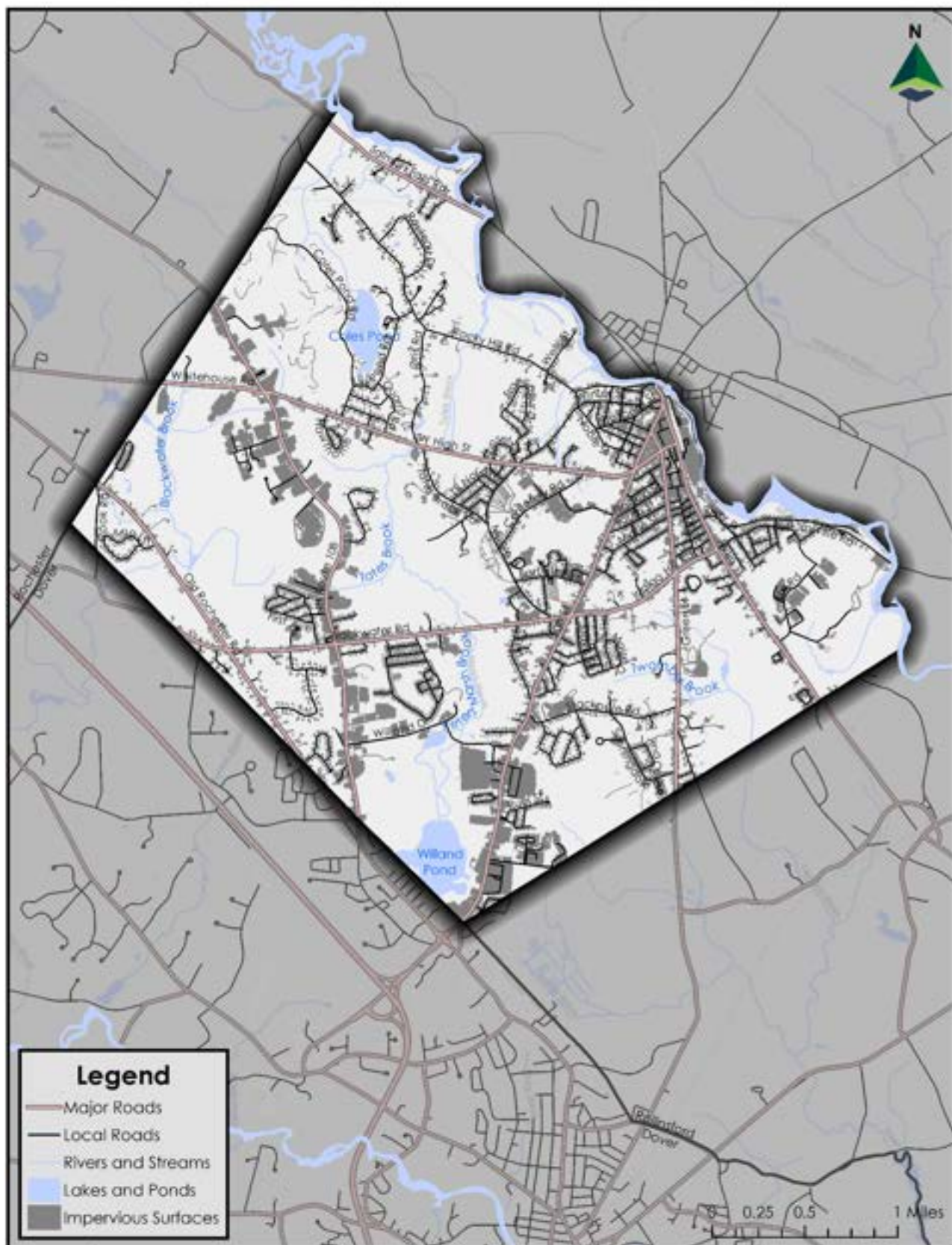
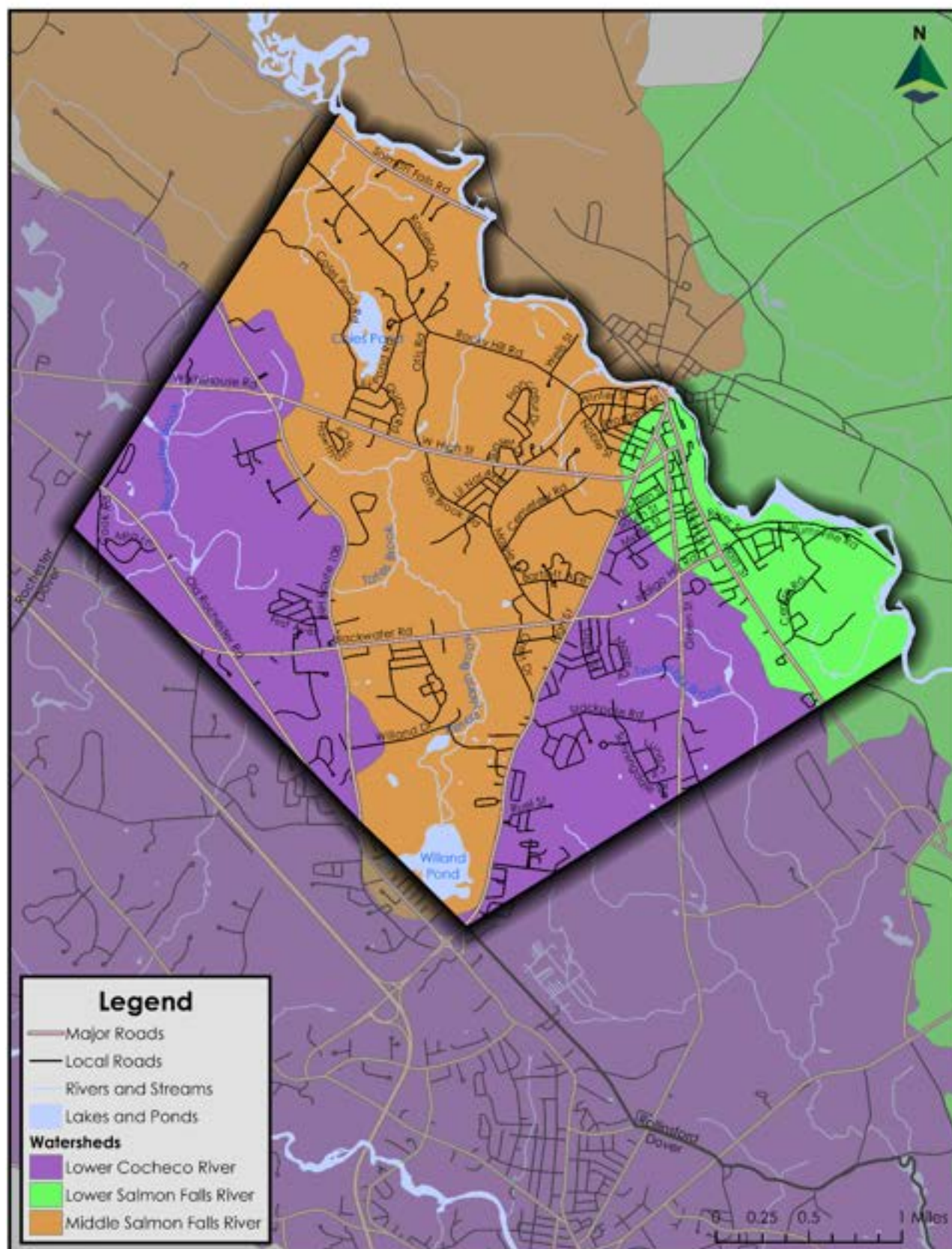


Figure 10: Somersworth Watersheds (Source: NH GRANIT)



Theme 5. Mapping Our Future

In looking towards the future, understanding the status of zoning, development patterns, and development constraints are key foundations to discussions of the future land use vision for the community. Across Somersworth, there are parcels, areas, and neighborhoods that will sustain their existing character and remain unchanged into the future, including parcels reserved for conservation, wetlands, and steep slopes. Areas like wetlands are subject to 50-foot setback buffers for structures and include other limitations for certain types of development near wetlands under current zoning.^{iv} These areas reserved for conservation, wetlands, and steep slopes make up over a quarter of the total acreage of Somersworth (**Figures 11 and 12**).

Figure 11: Somersworth Constraints to Development (Source: SRPC)

Category	Acres	% of Town
Conservation Lands	504.8	8.6%
Developed Land	2,896.5	49.2%
Wetlands	830.6	14.1%
Steep Slopes	152.7	2.6%
Total Land Area	5,891 acres	

Note: The area associated with surface waters has been excluded from the acreage calculations above.

Current zoning in Somersworth divides allowable uses for properties into various categories, ranging from low density housing to industrial uses (**Figure 13**). Analysis of buildable areas across Somersworth within these zoning categories found the City contains a total of 3,599 lots, of which 383 remain undeveloped. Out of these, only 286 lots are buildable. In terms of total acreage, Somersworth's total area is 5,891.03 acres. Of this, 3,993.67 are either built up already, or constrained in a way that will not allow development. The remaining 1,897.36, or 32.2 percent, of the acreage of Somersworth is considered buildable. Most of the buildable lots and acreage are within areas of the City zoned for Residential Single Family, 151 buildable lots across 659.09 buildable acres. Other zoning categories, including those that cover business, commercial, and mixed-use development are extremely limited in terms of buildable lots and land (**Figures 14 and 15**).

Current zoning ordinances may not adequately reflect the community's aspirations for resilient and connected community. Looking to the future, the City's land use strategy must align with the community's vision for a sustainable and interconnected Somersworth. A reevaluation of zoning regulations will be crucial to fostering mixed-use developments and adapting to the changing needs of residents. Enhancing the downtown area through flexible zoning can stimulate economic activity and support local businesses, addressing the community's desire for a vibrant urban core. Additionally, encouraging density and promoting infill development on underutilized lots should be considered. This approach will maximize the use of existing infrastructure, reduce sprawl, and help maintain the City's unique character.

Through comprehensive community engagement efforts and analysis of existing conditions and projections, the vision for Somersworth's future land use encompasses strategies for a more connected, resilient, sustainable, and accessible community. Key improvement to pedestrian

and bicycle infrastructure along key routes, along with off-road connection including trails and multi-use paths, with improve connectivity throughout the community. Fostering a regulatory environment friendly to mixed use development and greater levels of housing density in areas of the City where key infrastructure exists is key to reaching the future land use goals developed in this chapter. These areas include the downtown core of the community, High Street south of downtown, and areas of Route 108 and Main Street. Additionally, continuing to preserve areas of the City of green space and protected areas will be critical to ensuring that Somersworth continues to steward its natural resources **(Figure 16)**.

Figure 12: Somersworth Constraints to Development (Source: SRPC)

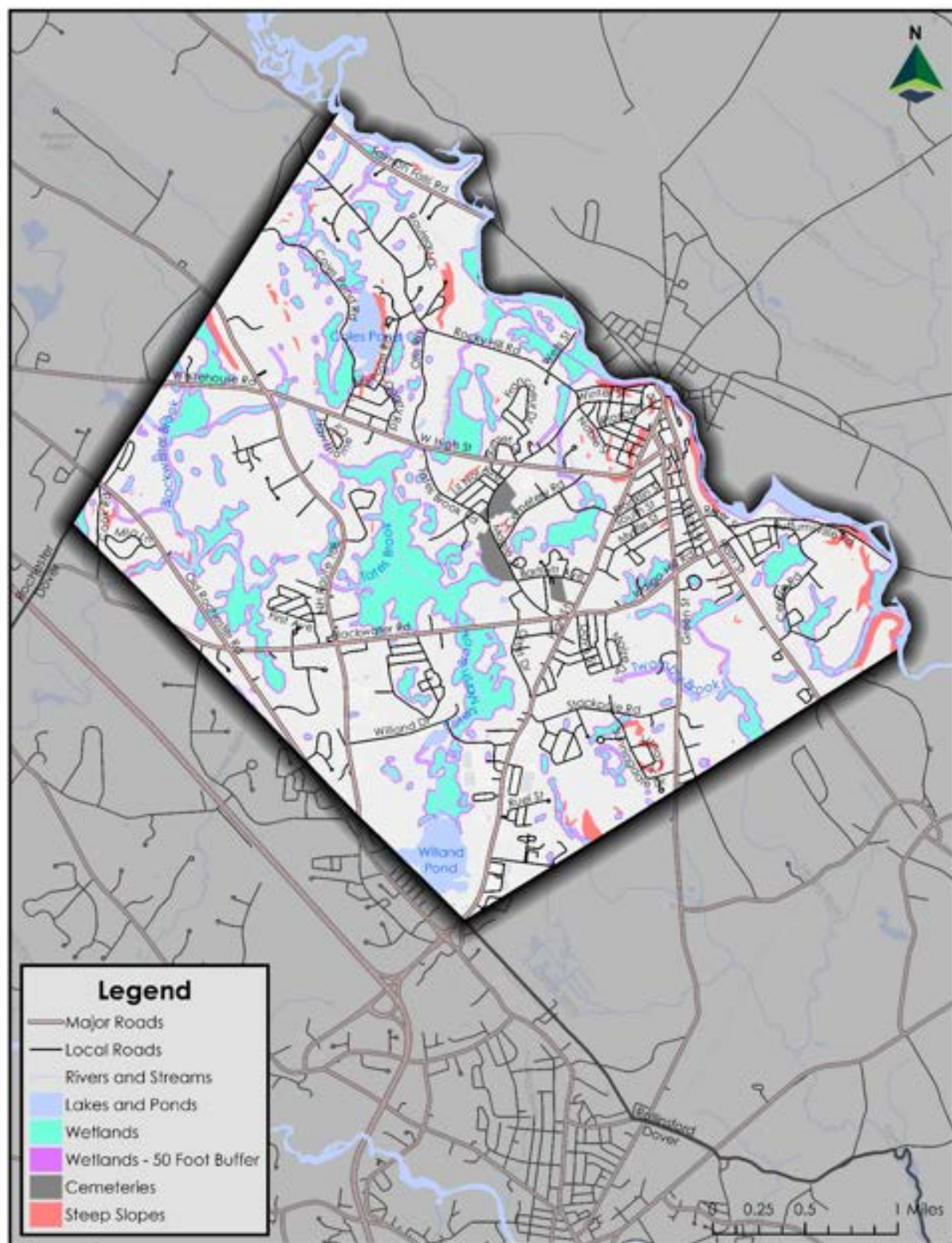


Figure 13: Somersworth Current Zoning (Source: City of Somersworth)

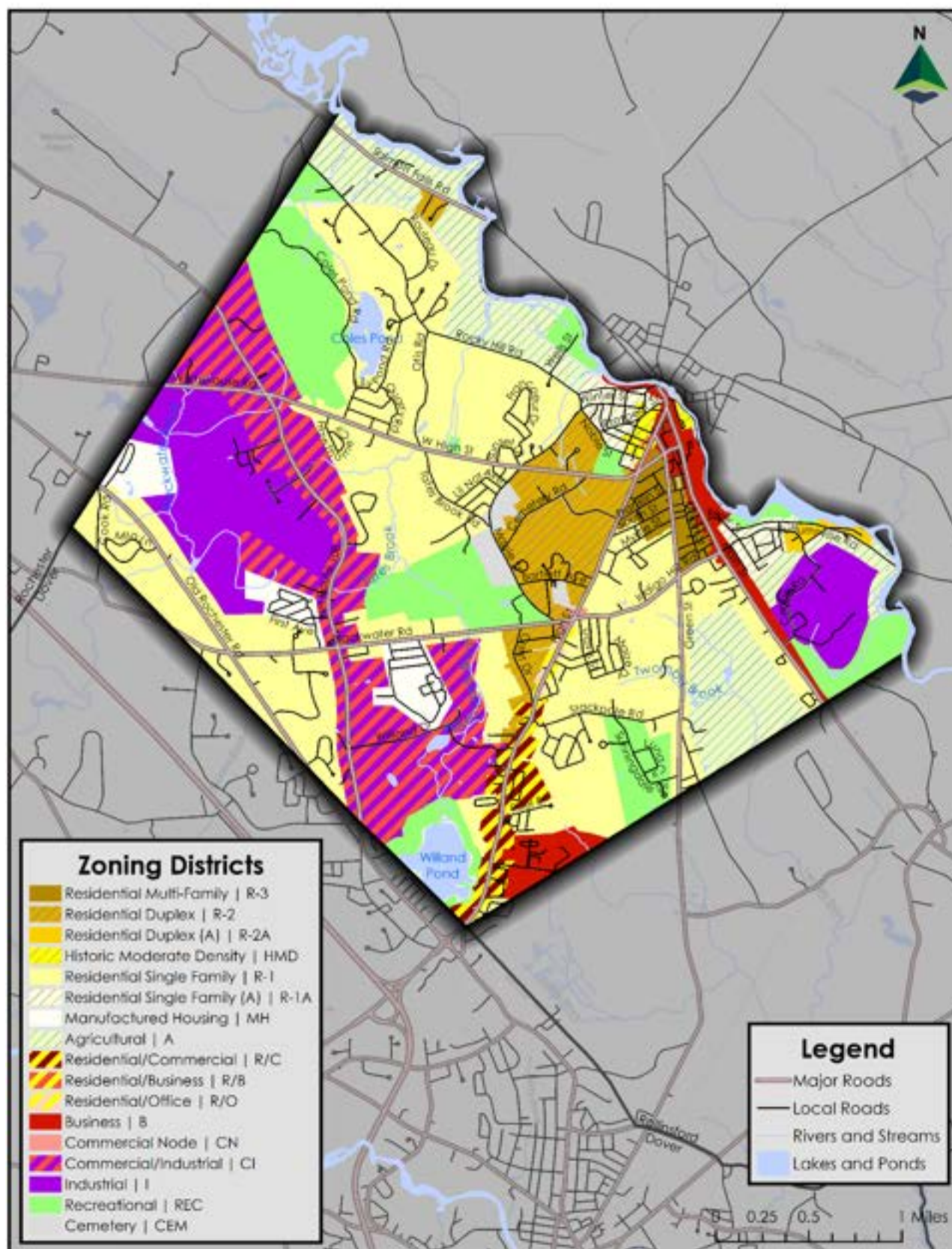


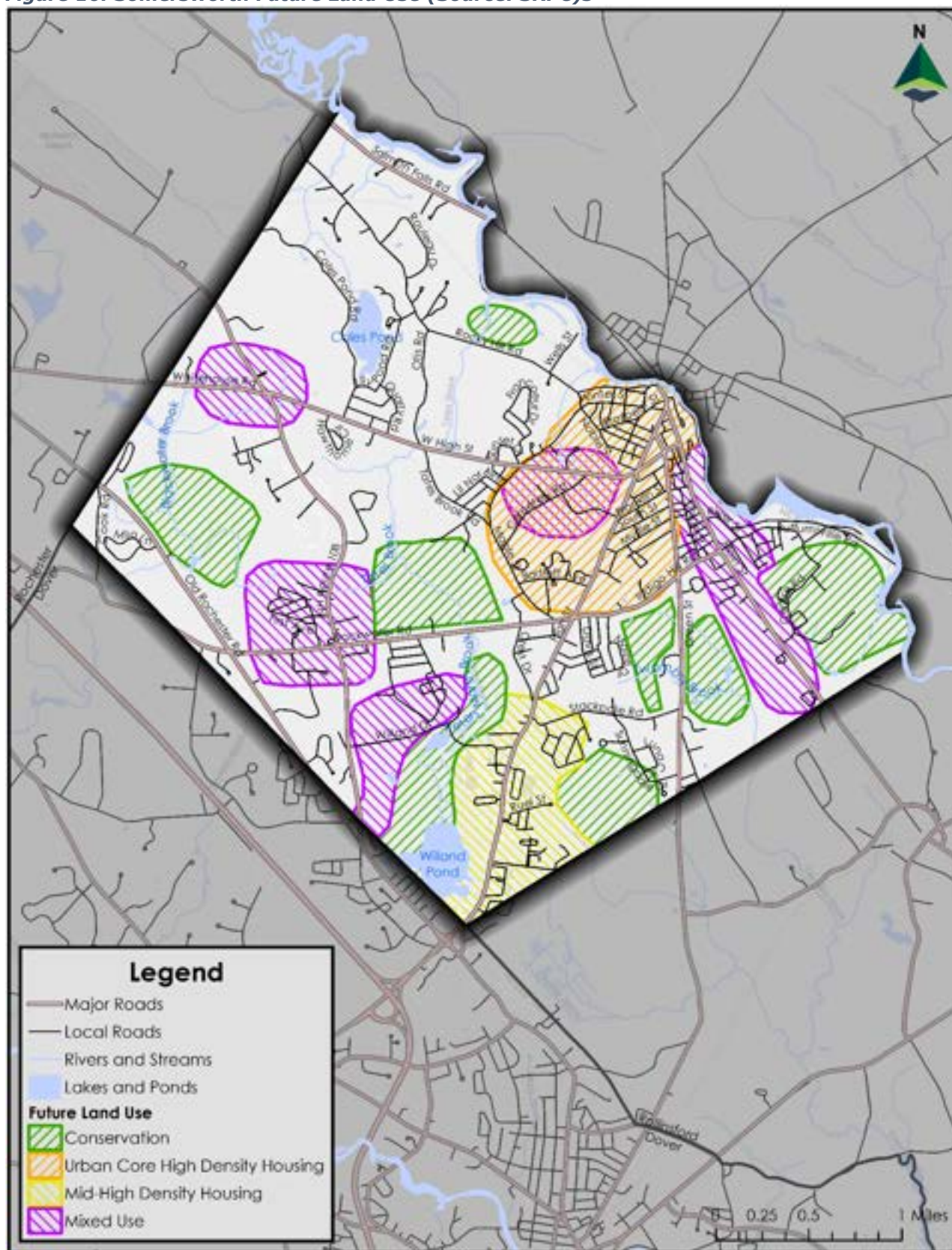
Figure 14: Somersworth Lots by Zoning District (Source: City of Somersworth)

Zoning District	Total # of Lots	# of Undeveloped Lots	# of Buildable Lots	% of Lots Buildable
Agricultural	102	36	22	21.6%
Business	186	11	8	4.3%
Cemetery	4	0	0	0.0%
Commercial Node	7	0	0	0.0%
Commercial/Industrial	151	40	31	20.5%
Historic Moderate Density	57	0	0	0.0%
Industrial	36	18	14	38.9%
Manufactured Housing	3	2	1	33.3%
Recreational	134	27	15	11.2%
Residential Duplex	385	38	35	9.1%
Residential Duplex (A)	26	1	0	0.0%
Residential Multi-Family	358	0	0	0.0%
Residential Single Family	1,705	198	151	8.9%
Residential Single Family (A)	327	8	6	1.8%
Residential/Business	24	0	0	0.0%
Residential/Commercial	63	4	3	4.8%
Residential/Office	31	0	0	0.0%
TOTAL (If Applicable)	3,599	383	286	7.9%

Figure 15: Somersworth Acreage by Zoning District (Source: City of Somersworth)

Zoning District	Total Acreage	Built or Constrained Acres	Land Acres Buildable	% of Land Buildable
Agricultural	594.91	309.34	285.57	48.0%
Business	168.26	124.61	43.65	25.9%
Cemetery	49.19	49.19	0.00	0.0%
Commercial Node	5.07	5.07	0.00	0.0%
Commercial/Industrial	776.68	513.14	263.54	33.9%
Historic Moderate Density	18.47	18.47	0.00	0.0%
Industrial	562.29	197.6	364.69	64.9%
Manufactured Housing	191.81	132.36	59.45	31.0%
Recreational	724.19	614.97	109.22	15.1%
Residential Duplex	326.90	224.91	101.99	31.2%
Residential Duplex (A)	23.76	20.69	3.07	12.9%
Residential Multi-Family	76.73	76.73	0.00	0.0%
Residential Single Family	2,135.43	1476.34	659.09	30.9%
Residential Single Family (A)	102.08	97.72	4.36	4.3%
Residential/Business	5.66	5.15	0.51	9.0%
Residential/Commercial	114.36	114.36	0.00	0.0%
Residential/Office	15.23	13.02	2.21	14.5%
TOTAL (If Applicable)	5,891.03	3993.67	1,897.36	32.2%

Figure 16: Somersworth Future Land Use (Source: SRPC)s



Land Use Goals and Actions

The following Goals and Actions were developed based on the themes that guide this chapter. These themes, goals, and actions, which structure this chapter, are established by the priorities identified through public and municipal engagement efforts and analyses of the existing and projected future conditions facing the City of Somersworth. Each of the Actions are ordered with the top items being identified as the highest feasibility and impact, as ranked by members of the Somersworth planning Board in September 2024.

Goals	Actions
Goal 1: Maintain balanced, sustainable development and smart growth.	Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized properties/parcels and encourage infill in areas already developed. Preserve history while accommodating future housing and commercial needs through regulatory updates. Conduct a comprehensive review of local land use regulations. Promote green infrastructure and sustainable development practices in new construction and redevelopment. Plan for equitable and sustainable growth through the lens of climate resiliency.
Goal 2: Maintain equitable and inclusive development that engages residents and ensures that projects meet community needs and reflect local values.	Expand upon public engagement processes and practices. Strengthen partnerships for development with businesses, nonprofits, community groups, and developers. Add space for farmer's markets, small music venue, etc. Foster community leadership through mentorship opportunities.

Goal 3: Improve access to amenities and connectivity throughout the community.

Implement the principles of Complete Streets for future and existing development; seek funding opportunities from state and federal agencies.

Expand pedestrian and biking infrastructure along key corridors, dense neighborhoods, public open space, and recreational sites.

Work with COAST Bus to ensure neighborhoods with dense housing have access to transit.

Add multi-use pathways around the schools.

Goal 4: Foster the need for resilient infrastructure through incentives and regulation.

Promote and expand mixed-use development and zoning to support economically and socially diverse areas more resilient to economic shocks or other challenges.

Seek funding opportunities from state and federal agencies to upgrade stormwater infrastructure to better meet heavy storm events. (NHDOT, NHDES, NHHSEM, FEMA)

Review and amend existing ordinances and regulations regarding stormwater management to increase capacity during heavy storm events.

Resources

- I. [Supporting Active Living Through Mixed-Use Developments](#)
- II. [SRPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment](#)
- III. [Pathways to Play Report](#)
- IV. [Pathways to Play Maps](#)
- V. [Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress](#)

Sources

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- ⁱ SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, https://strafford.org/uploads/documents/plans/rpc/rhna_2023.pdf
 - ⁱⁱ SRPC's Pathways to Play Project, <https://strafford.org/projects/pathways-to-play/>
 - ⁱⁱⁱ City of Somersworth, NH Capital improvement Program, Fiscal Year 2025-2030, https://www.somersworthnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1226/f/uploads/full_document.pdf
 - ^{iv} City of Somersworth, NH Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 19, https://www.somersworthnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1226/f/uploads/chapter_19_zoning_ordinance_2024-04-15.pdf



Somersworth Master Plan

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES CHAPTER

Adopted July 15, 2026

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Funding to develop this Master Plan Chapter was provided by the NH Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, Division of Historical Resources, Certified Local Government Grant Program

Historic and Cultural Resources

Introduction

Somersworth has been shaped by centuries of human activity from the earliest Native Americans and colonial settlements to the industrial revolution, periods of decline, through urban renewal and modern suburban growth. Somersworth's historic buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces have long been tied to community culture and identity.

The City has taken steps over the past several decades to maintain its unique historic character by conducting studies, developing regulations and guidelines, and providing opportunities for residents and visitors to learn about Somersworth's special places. While Somersworth maintains and celebrates its history, it also is active in planning for the future.

Community Engagement

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and Somersworth City staff developed a comprehensive community survey in the fall of 2025 to gather input on a range of topics, including historic and cultural resources. Survey respondents placed a high priority on Somersworth's historic neighborhoods and landmarks, which they value for their character and cultural significance. Events and activities promoting social connection were similarly rated as extremely important to Somersworth's community identity. Overwhelmingly, people want to have more opportunities to learn about Somersworth's history, and education about historic design and preservation techniques.

The survey responses informed the development of targeted questions for the community forum held in November 2025. At the forum, residents were asked to provide input on what types of community activities they would like to see more of in the future. The top responses were activities such as food truck festivals, farmers markets, concerts and music, as well as public art. During the breakout session, people discussed what types of structures they would like to see as infill or new development in the historic districts. These fell into categories such as traditional single-family homes, duplexes, and smaller residential buildings in the Hilltop District. Mixed-use and appropriately designed apartment buildings were favored in the Industrial and Commercial Historic District.

SRPC and City staff also designed a specialized survey for property owners, renters, and businesses located within the Historic Districts to gauge perception of Historic District boundaries and regulations and gather feedback about the Historic District Commission (HDC). The responses indicated a desire for more consistency in applying the regulations, and for the HDC to consider context-appropriate modern building materials.

Workshops with the Planning Board, members of the Historic District Commission, and other community members were held in the Spring of 2026 to help develop and prioritize goals and actions for the chapter.

Our Historic and Cultural Resources Story

The following sections of the Historic and Cultural Resources chapter are organized into two themes: *Celebrate Somersworth's Rich History and Community Culture* and *Understanding the Historic Districts*. These themes were informed by community engagement efforts as well as from input from the Planning Board, Historic District Commission, and city staff.

Theme 1. Celebrate Somersworth's Rich History & Community Culture

Somersworth's Rich History

Somersworth's identity is rooted in its historic neighborhoods and landmarks, which residents value for their character and cultural significance. Nearly 60% of survey respondents indicated that historic structures and places are "very" or "extremely" important to Somersworth's community character. Somersworth's built environment has evolved over time resulting in its present landscape nestled between the Cities of Rochester and Dover and adjacent to Rollinsford along the Salmon Falls River. A brief overview of this history is outlined in the timeline below.

Timeline

	Abenaki Native American sites (earliest evidence 11,000 - 9,000 before present)
1400 - 1500	Early European exploration
1600	English colonization and colonial settlements along the Seacoast and inland rivers including the Salmon Falls and Piscataqua Rivers.
1728	Settlers in the northeast part of the Town of Dover establish a church and meeting house in the area known as the "summer parish"
1729	Petition to the General Court to establish the distinct Parish of Summersworth
1754	Incorporated as a Town
1822 - 1840	First purchases of land and development of the Great Falls Manufacturing Company mills and village
1849	Rollinsford splits from Somersworth to form its own town
1840 - 1880	Influx of new immigrants create need to expand housing and commercial construction by private developers; development of additional civic institutions (schools, Forest Glade Cemetery, etc)
1893	Incorporated as a City
1920 - 1950	Construction on the last Great Falls Manufacturing structures began in 1921 but were never fully completed. These buildings were repurposed to support World War II efforts and taken over by General Electric to manufacture meters.
1950 - 1970	Suburban development begins; period of decline in downtown
1960s	Urban Renewal Projects – High/Main/Washington Streets
1980 - 2000	City becomes a Certified Local Government; applies for grants for historic preservation studies; develops Historic Districts and regulations
2000 - 2025	Design guidelines developed for Historic Districts; form-based code zoning established

The earliest settlers of Somersworth were small bands and tribes of Abenaki, Native Americans who came to the area following the abundance of natural resources they found in and along the Newichawannock (Salmon Falls) River, and other inland streams. There is evidence of early human habitation throughout the Seacoast, especially along waterways. Life for the Abenaki changed with the arrival of European settlers and subsequent colonization of the Seacoast region. Somersworth, originally part of Dover, remained primarily a farming community until the early 1800s with the beginning of the industrial revolution. Somersworth's built environment and its current identity were driven largely by the needs of manufacturing companies.

Downtown Somersworth is a prime example of the classic growth patterns and building forms that typify nineteenth century New England mill villages. The Great Falls Manufacturing Company (GFM) planned and built its facilities and village along the Salmon Falls River, constructing mills, housing, and businesses, and providing land for churches and other civic institutions including the Town Hall, Post Office and High School. As the mills flourished, new immigrants arrived and additional residential, commercial and civic construction occurred driven largely by private development.

Over time, textile manufacturing became less profitable, the New England industrial era waned and Somersworth's downtown saw decades of decline as growth occurred outside of the City's core. In the mid-1960s, the City embraced the opportunities and dollars that urban renewal brought to revitalize its empty buildings. The Somersworth Housing Authority (SHA) was founded in 1961 to spearhead the City's urban renewal program. The project acquired downtown properties and redeveloped areas deemed blighted to create a business plaza as well as low-income and senior housing.

Figure 1: City of Somersworth 1964 Annual Report



The City's 1964 Annual Report features a section on urban renewal and highlights the efforts to replace blighted areas on Bartlett Avenue and the Triangle Urban Renewal Project located near High, Main and Washington Streets (**Figure 1**).

These projects, as well as damage from fire and neglect, resulted in the loss of many of the original GFM construction along Main and Elm Streets. The concentration of nineteenth century mill village architecture that remains in Somersworth is significant and unique – qualities that many residents see as an asset. At the heart of this heritage is the Hilltop neighborhood, the mill buildings along the Salmon Falls River, buildings such as the Old Train Station, Forest Glade Cemetery and Furber Chapel, Summersworth Historical Museum, and other historic sites such as Willand Pond, the Grand Army Republic (GAR) building, and the Post Office.

As the City reflects on its historical roots, residents have emphasized the importance of preserving the historic area of the Hilltop neighborhood and feel its integrity should be preserved. Conversely, community members expressed mixed opinions about the Industrial and Commercial Historic District. Residents have conveyed a strong desire to know more about

Somersworth's history and support efforts to educate the public about historic design and preservation techniques that conserve and protect historic places.

Recognizing and Celebrating Somersworth's Historic Resources

As discussed in the second theme below, the City has been actively engaged in maintaining the historic nature of the Hilltop and Industrial and Commercial areas by enacting zoning regulations and implementing design guidelines. In addition to regulatory activity, the City also coordinates and supports projects that acknowledge and celebrate Somersworth's historic assets.

The House Plaque Program was launched in 2025 as a collaboration between the Historic District Commission, Summersworth Historical Museum, and Somersworth Career Technical Center. Applications are evaluated by Summersworth Historical Museum and aim to recognize the City's architectural and cultural heritage. The plaques are prepared by students at the Somersworth High School Career Technical Center. In 2025, three Historic District properties received the first plaques: 45 Market Street, 50 Maple Street, and 315 High Street.

Historic Markers –The City has installed seven historic markers highlighting key heritage sites. The locations include 45 Market Street, Somersworth Library, City Hall, Noble Pines Park, Summersworth Museum, Citizens Place, and General Electric. A total of ten are planned throughout the City's ten-square-mile area. In addition to the City's historic markers, there are two State Historic Markers located at Forest Glade Cemetery (Marker #287) and Hilltop School (Marker #280). **(Figure 2)**

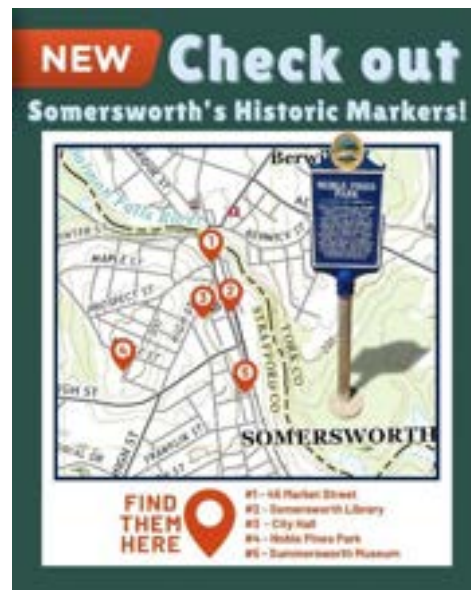
Historic District Street Signs – the City has created distinctive street signs throughout the Historic Districts with plans to expand the program to additional locations.

The Summersworth Historical Society and other organizations are also active in promoting and celebrating Somersworth's history. Master Plan survey respondents noted that events such as Grave Tales, held in Forest Glade Cemetery, was a popular community event.

Celebrating Somersworth's Community Culture

Somersworth is known for its vibrant cultural history of embracing immigrants—from Irish, French-Canadian, and Greek workers who came to work in the mills, to the more recent arrivals from Indonesia, who now make up nearly 20% of Somersworth's population. Respondents to the community survey ranked cultural events and activities as central to Somersworth's community identity. Favorite events included the Children's Festival, Indonesian Festival, the Hilltop Classic Car Show, Pumpkin Festival, 4th of July festivities, Grave Tales, and passport restaurant event. These and other community events are highly valued, and people would like to see more activities centered around food, history, music, and other performing arts. In

Figure 2: Historic Marker Flyer



addition, residents have a desire for more events and activities that promote social connection within the community.

"Events bring people together. And that's how communities grow and thrive. Give people things and spaces to have shared experiences. We've become so distant from our neighbors because we don't have to interact with them face to face. We need more of that. The Library Programming is a great example - they are always packed because people are craving it."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Somersworth has been active in promoting and celebrating its culture through public art.

In September 2024, the City was awarded an Arts for Community Engagement Grant from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts to develop a mural to enhance the vibrancy and beauty of the city and the greater Seacoast. With oversight from the Mayor's Commission on Culture, Ethnicity, and the Arts, the City selected a mural design celebrating Somersworth's Little League Baseball Field and the greater Somersworth community. The mural visually enhances the area as it is located on the well-traveled, highly visible corridor of Blackwater Road in a residential neighborhood adjacent to the local Fire Department, Maple Wood Elementary School, and elderly housing. **(Figure 3).**

Figure 3: Somersworth Little League Baseball Field Mural (photo credit: city staff)



The City was also recently awarded a Climate Impact Grant from the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership. The goal of this project is to identify urban heat islands, flooding, and climate change impacts in Downtown Somersworth using geospatial tools, and to bring awareness to these issues through art. This project aims to install two to three pieces of permanent art focused on climate change. As global climate impacts become increasingly visible at the local level, leading to an urgent need for collective action, art serves as a tool for increasing awareness, fostering emotional connections, and motivating efforts to tackle the climate change crisis through visualization.

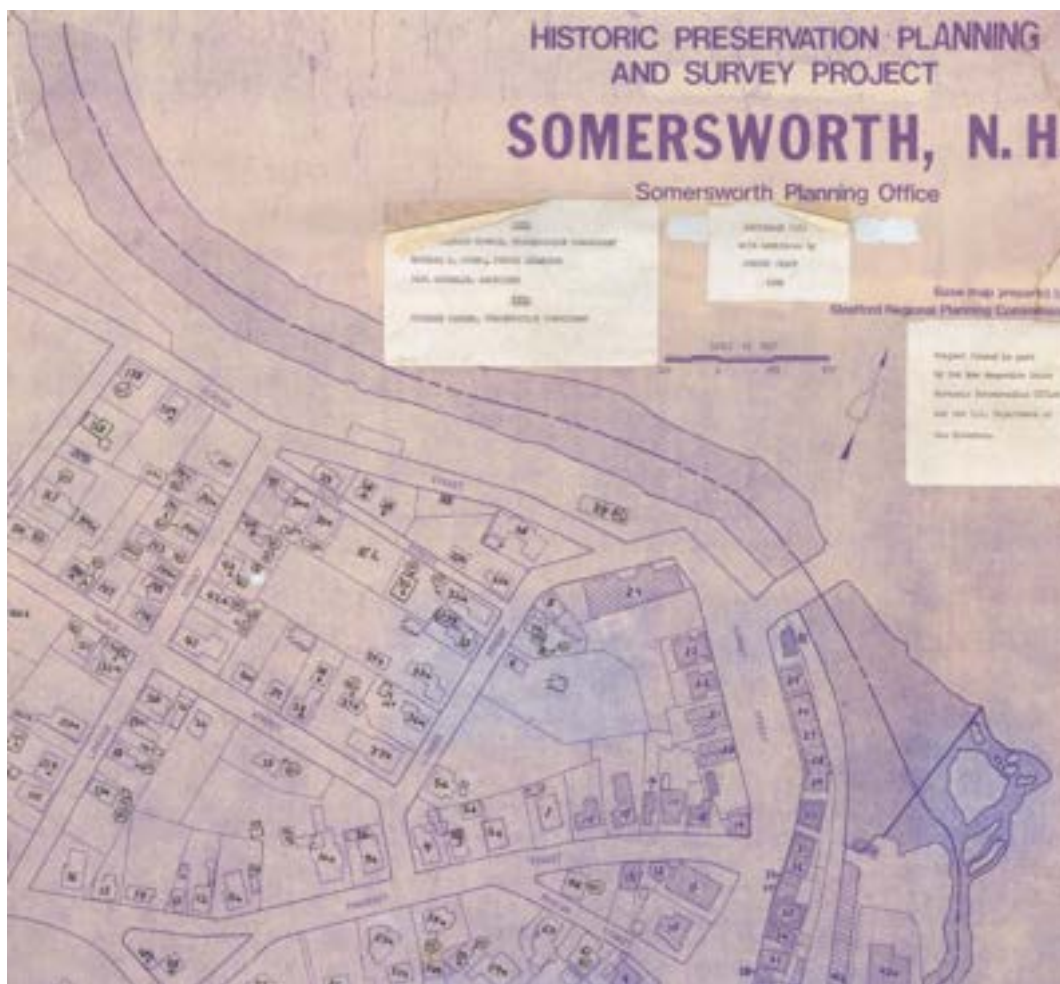
Theme 2. Understanding the Historic Districts

While public sentiment toward historic resources is generally positive, people perceive that the Historic District Regulations are applied inconsistently. Residents support reviewing and amending the boundaries and regulations of the Historic Districts and want to see the City encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of historic structures. There is an overwhelming desire for education to create a common understanding of historic resources and what can be done to preserve them.

Purpose and background of Somersworth's Historic Districts

Somersworth has been actively engaged in historic preservation planning since the 1970's. In 1979, the Strafford Rockingham Regional Council conducted a study of Somersworth's historical and architectural significance through its Historic Preservation Program. In 1982, the City developed a Historic Preservation Plan which identified buildings eligible for the individual National Register nomination (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: 1986 Historic District Survey Plan



This plan was augmented in 1986 with a wider survey of historic resources. The Phase 1 Report of the survey recommended that the city apply for a National Register of Historic Places designation of “The Great Falls Industrial and Commercial Historic District”. The Report also proposed that the lands and buildings developed by GFM, together with building lots sold by the company to churches, businesses, and others who constructed buildings that served the working population of the city, be included in the district.

Ultimately, the City created two historic overlay districts in the zoning ordinance: the Hilltop Historic District, which is more residential in nature, and the Industrial and Commercial Historic District, which largely mirrors the historic GFM area recommended in the Phase 1 Report. Only handful of individual properties were listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see Appendix A).

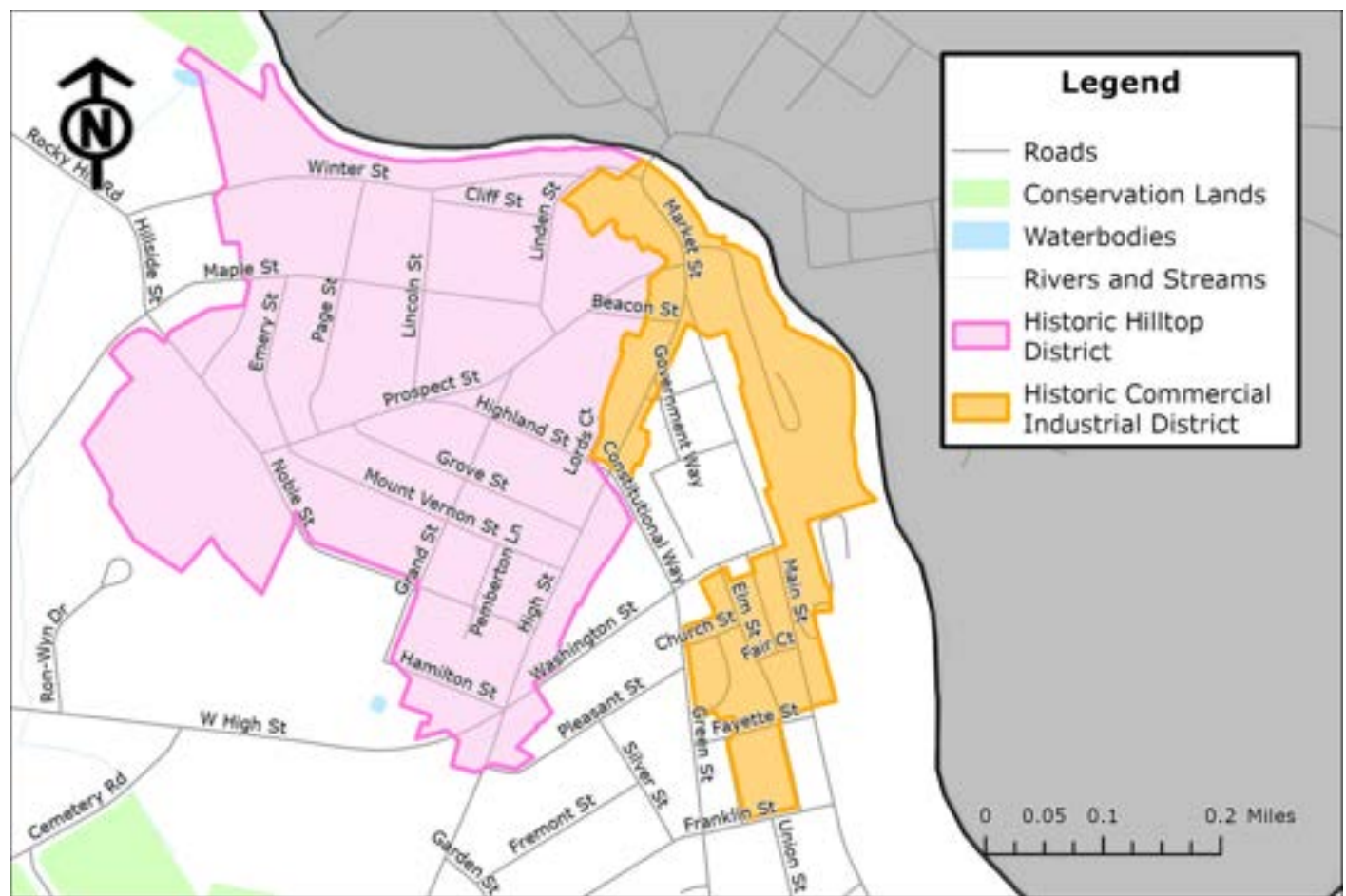
In 1989, Somersworth was designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG), which is a national program designed to provide an opportunity for local governments to become more directly involved in identifying, evaluating, protecting, promoting and enhancing the educational economic value of local properties of historic, architectural, and archeological significance. CLGs are endorsed by the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service to participate in the Historic Preservation Planning Program and maintain standards consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Somersworth has actively pursued grant funds through the CLG program, most recently receiving grants to develop Design Guidelines, create this Historic and Cultural Resources Master Plan, and to develop infill standards for new construction.

Historic Districts

The Hilltop and the Industrial and Commercial Historic Districts are zoning overlay districts created in 1987 (**Figure 5**), currently including 305 properties and covering 130 acres. The districts were created to recognize, preserve, enhance, and encourage continued use of historic structures and sites, and areas with architectural, cultural or design significance. The regulations aim to enhance the visual character of the City, foster public appreciation and civic pride, strengthen the economy by protecting and enhancing historic and cultural attractions, as well as to stabilize and improve property values. The underlying zoning districts are designed to maintain the historic character of the neighborhoods and include Residential/Single Family A, Residential Duplex A, Millyard, Residential/Business, and Historic Moderate Density District. The Planning Board is currently reviewing these zoning districts and regulations and revising to modernize and align them with the City’s vision of the future.

Section 14 of the Zoning Ordinance establishes the Historic District Commission (HDC) and sets forth its powers and duties, as well as application review and approval procedures. The Somersworth Historic District Standards for Review, adopted in 2020, provide guidelines for the HDC in reviewing applications.

Figure 5: Historic Districts



Responses about the Historic Districts from the targeted survey are mixed. While people have a generally positive feeling toward historic preservation, there are also people who have negative opinions (18% Very Positive; 30% Positive; 20% Neutral; 17% Negative; and 15% Very Negative). Survey respondents characterized the Historic Districts as ranging from “run down, outdated, restrictive and expensive”, to “older homes with character, improving, charming mill town, nice neighborhoods, pride and culture”. Some historic buildings have been successfully repurposed, while others face neglect, underscoring the need for stronger preservation and revitalization efforts.

There are also mixed opinions about whether the Historic District regulations protect the unique identity of Somersworth. Over 40% of the respondents agreed that the Historic District regulations help protect the unique character of the community, while nearly 30% disagreed. Similarly, 40% of respondents felt that the Historic District Boundaries are appropriate, while 35% thought they should be smaller. The community wants to see vacant and underutilized historic buildings developed using authentic appearances and appropriate context but allowing for modern materials. Nearly 43% of respondents were in favor of less strict regulations.

City staff have been active in discussions and engaging residents about the Historic Districts and continue to work on refining standards and regulations. The City received a CLG grant to create *Historic Infill Design Guidelines for the Historic District* and *Downtown Form-Based Codes*. These guidelines for new construction and nonconforming buildings will provide developers, planning staff, HDC, and the Planning Board with a concise framework outlining architectural requirements for infill projects and will support informed decision-making.

Historic District Commission

The HDC reviews projects of major impact to construct, alter, modify, repair, move, or demolish any building, structure, or improvement within a Historic District. In the case of a project of minimal impact, the Planner, Code Officer (CO), and the HDC Chair review and evaluate the application. There have been hundreds of permits issued under the Historic District regulations since they were enacted. As with any land use applications, there are easy and straightforward cases and those with more complex and sensitive issues. The HDC evaluates how well the proposed project conforms to the Somersworth HDC Standards for Review, and issues either a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of Denial.

The Historic District survey revealed that there are mixed opinions about the Historic District Regulations and their application by the Historic District Commission (HDC). Nearly 70% of the respondents to the Historic District survey had applications before the HDC. Open-ended survey comments indicate concerns about inconsistent implementation of the regulations, as well as a range of positive and negative experiences depending on the scope of the project. The length of the approval process and the cost of having to utilize original or historically appropriate materials were the most cited issues.

Many respondents also felt that communication from the HDC could be better and more frequent. Across the board, people wanted more education about all topics including the history of the community, maintaining and repairing historic buildings, energy efficiency, HDC guidelines and procedures, and grant programs for historic preservation. In addition, people wanted to see consistency in how the regulations are applied.

"Be consistent with standards to all property owners, but also realistic with the cost of building materials and repairs. Consider subsidies of the city wants specific historical standards that the property holders can't afford."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

The HDC continues to work with City staff to refine and improve public outreach and education about the Historic Districts regulations and guidelines as well as the application process.

Historic and Cultural Resources Goals and Actions

Goals

Goal 1: Maintain and celebrate Somersworth's historic and cultural resources.

Actions

Promote Somersworth's historic resources by offering engaging educational activities, such as walking tours and other events in partnership with the Historical Museum, schools and other organizations.

Create a historic resources guide for Somersworth.

Clean up and improve Horne Cemetery (Lord's Court) and add an Historic Marker with a description.

Expand and modernize the Historical Museum.

Expand opportunities for food trucks, markets and vendor-type offerings.

Use digital platforms to promote historic and cultural resources, including maps and virtual tours to showcase historic landmarks and stories.

Celebrate Somersworth's 300th Anniversary by conducting a video competition and holding a festival centered on the City's history.

Collaborate with Rollinsford to highlight shared history.

Support additional community activity programming offered through the Public Library, Historical Museum, and other cultural organizations.

**Goal 2: Review Somersworth's
Historic Districts**

Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings by encouraging adaptive reuse projects that maintain architectural integrity while supporting economic development.

Build on form-based codes

Explore eliminating use-based zoning.

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

Review and amend the Historic District Boundaries, Regulations and Design Guidelines as needed for items such as alternative materials, infill and new construction, and accessory structures.

Sources

City of Somersworth, New Hampshire, Historical and Architectural Significance. Strafford Rockingham Regional Council, Historic Preservation Program, June 1979.

Downtown Somersworth Cultural Resource Inventory, Fall 1982

Historic Preservation Plan Map, 1982 – Identified buildings eligible for the individual National Register nomination

Historic Preservation Planning and Survey Project Map, Somersworth Planning Office, 1982 (1986 additions by Historic District Survey Staff)

Somersworth. An Historical Sketch, Hon. William D. Knapp, 1894.

Somersworth Architectural and Historical Survey Project Report. Dr. Richard M Candee, Preservation Consultant

Appendix A – Summary of Historic Resources

National Register of Historic Places Listings

- December 26, 1979 – Lehoullier Building
- March 7, 1985 - Green Street School
- July 17, 1986 – US Post Office Somersworth Main
- April 10, 1987 – Queensbury Mill
- September 29, 2015 – Somersworth High School
- January 17, 2017 - Forest Glade Cemetery

National Register Eligible Properties

- Vatcher Property
- City Hall
- Pumping Station Building
- Somersworth National Guard Armory
- Union Street Railway Employee Housing
- Union Street Railway Employee Housing
- Boston & Maine Railroad Station
- Industrial and Commercial Historic District

City of Somersworth Historic Markers:

- 45 Market Street – Great Falls National Bank
- Somersworth Library – Highlights the Great Falls Manufacturing Co
- City Hall – Summersworth or Somersworth?
- Noble Pines Park – Acknowledges John Noble's contributions
- Summersworth Museum – Commemorates Fred Herbert Brown
- Citizens Place
- General Electric

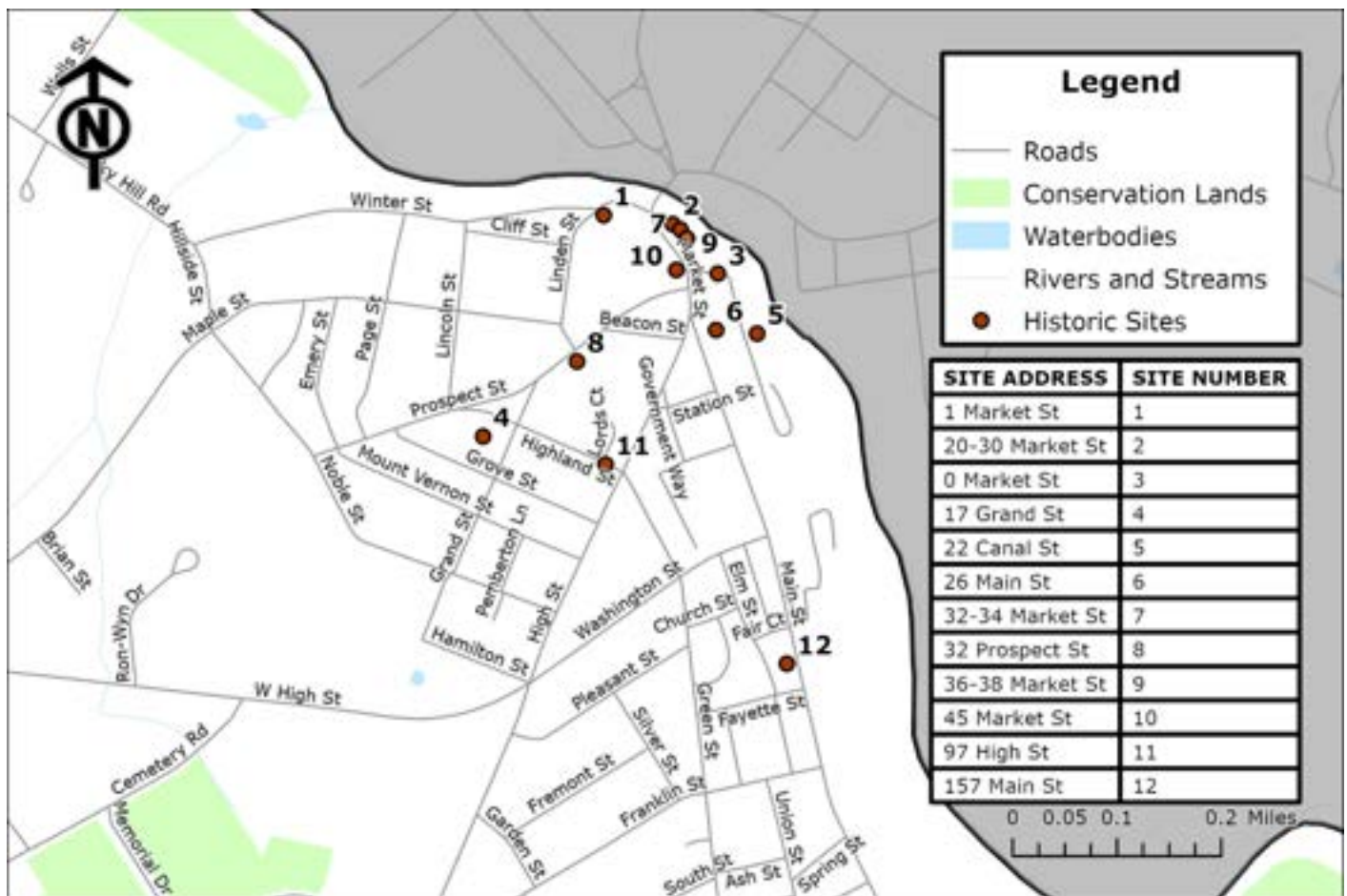
LCHIP Grants received for preservation projects

Somersworth Historic Sites Map Viewer

The interactive map features twelve properties within the Somersworth Historic Districts.

straaffordpcnh.gov/maps/somersworth-historic-sites-map-viewer/

1. Gatehouse & Water Power Canal – 0 Market Street
2. George M Coburn & Co. Shoe Factory – 1 Market Street
3. Mill Restaurant – 157 Main Street
4. Hilltop School – 17 Grand Street
5. 20-30 Market Street – Market Street
6. Mills #1 & 6 – 22 Canal Street
7. Boston & Maine Railroad Station – 26 Main Street
8. DH Buffman – 32 Prospect Street
9. 32-34 Market Street – Market Street
10. Hirsh Building – 36-38 Market Street
11. Great Falls National Bank – 45 Market Street
12. GAR Memorial Building; Littlefield Post No. 8, Dept. of NHGAR – 97 High Street

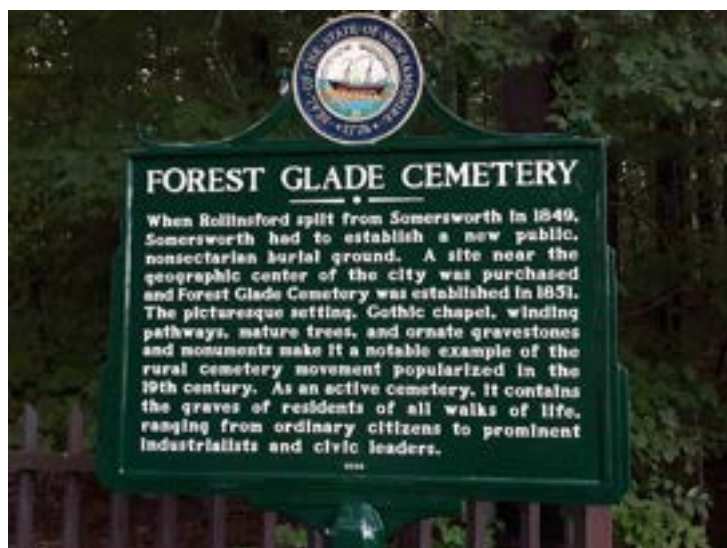


State of New Hampshire Historic Markers:

Hilltop School (Marker #280)



Forest Glade Cemetery (Marker #287)



Appendix B - Tools and Resources to Aid in the Preservation of Historic Assets

Federal Resources

National Park Service

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties** - The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties are common sense historic preservation principles in non-technical language. They promote historic preservation best practices that will help to protect our nation's irreplaceable cultural resources.
- **Preservation Briefs** - provides information on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings. These publications help historic building owners recognize and resolve common problems prior to work.
- **Preservation Tech Notes** - provides practical information on traditional practices and innovative techniques for successfully maintaining and preserving cultural resources.
- **National Register of Historic Places** is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives - encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. It creates jobs and is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. It has leveraged \$127.12 billion in private investment to preserve more than 50,000 historic properties since 1976. The historic rehabilitation tax credits are available for any qualified project that the Secretary of the Interior designates as a certified rehabilitation of a certified historic structure. Federal income and estate tax deductions for charitable contributions of partial interests in a historic property designated as a certified historic property are also available. To qualify for these tax incentives, property owners must complete the appropriate part or parts of the Historic Preservation Certification Application.

State Resources:

NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, NH Division of Historical Resources

- Preserves and celebrates New Hampshire's historic resources through programs and services that provide education, stewardship, and protection. The DHR develops and maintains the Statewide Preservation Plan, and offers resources for research and education for Historic District and Heritage Commissions, including stewardship and best practices.

- **NH State Register of Historic Places** is an honorary listing that encourages the protection of significant buildings, districts, sites, landscapes, structures or objects that

are meaningful in the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or traditions of New Hampshire residents and communities. Since 2000, nearly 500 properties owned by private citizens, organizations, municipalities, and the State of New Hampshire have been listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

- **Emmit+** New Hampshire's advanced Geographical Information System and online project management system for historic resources.

Other Resources

New Hampshire Preservation Alliance - strengthens communities and local economies by supporting and encouraging the revitalization and protection of historic buildings and places. Provides educational and technical resources to maintain old houses and barns.

Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) - is an independent state authority created by the Legislature in 2000 to ensure the perpetual contribution of natural, cultural and historic resources to the economy, environment, and quality of life in New Hampshire.



Somersworth Master Plan

TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER

Adopted July 15, 2026

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Transportation

Introduction

This Master Plan chapter establishes Somersworth's vision for its transportation system. It lays out actions the City can take over the next few decades to safely connect residents to the places they need to go by the mode they choose. A multimodal transportation system is vital to Somersworth's economy by connecting it to the region. An effective transportation system is one in which people can access the destinations they need, regardless of their age, ability, or income. This is an ambitious goal that can't be achieved overnight, but accessibility is a primary consideration for Somersworth as it improves the local transportation network.

Community Engagement

Somersworth residents provided direct input to the development of this chapter in multiple ways. The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and City of Somersworth staff developed a comprehensive community survey in the fall of 2025 to gather input on a range of topics. A community forum was held at the Career Technical Center on November 13, 2025 to engage community members and hear their priorities and vision for the City. Attendees discussed economic development, transportation, and historic and cultural resources. Master Plan chapters were developed with planning board members through multiple workshops in 2025 and 2026.

The 2025 survey received 307 responses. Somersworth residents expressed a wide range of viewpoints on the questions asked. Increases in public bus service, improvements to bus routes, and more shelters were prioritized by many people. Community members also expressed a desire for improvements to pedestrian facilities with better sidewalks around downtown, connecting neighborhoods and pathways to neighboring communities. They noted that travel by wheelchair is nearly impossible outside of areas like downtown. There are multiple locations where people shared concerns about safety for driving and pedestrians.

"Better sidewalks and fewer shopping centers. A little mini walkable "main street" with some local businesses would be awesome."
Source: Community survey respondent

Many residents also said the City should invest in aesthetic improvements to underutilized areas adjacent to the downtown segment of High Street, as enhancements such as improved lighting, landscaping and trees, and repainting existing murals or installing new public art can make a big difference in attractiveness and boost economic activity.

Existing Transportation System

In addition to the local and regional road network, the Greater Seacoast contains the widest range of transportation options in New Hampshire. The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast

Transportation (COAST) operates fixed-route bus service directly through the City and provides connections throughout the region. COAST service connects with the University of New Hampshire Wildcat Bus system via neighboring Dover. As Somersworth hosts a COAST route, residents who live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of this route are eligible for door-to-door “paratransit” service if they are physically unable to reach the nearest bus stop. Several additional demand-response transportation services for medical, shopping, and other trips are available to residents through the Alliance for Community Transportation (ACT).

Other inter-regional transit services are also available nearby to Somersworth. C&J Bus Lines operates out of Dover and provides intercity service to Boston and New York City. The Amtrak Downeaster operates passenger rail service connecting Somersworth residents north to Portland and Brunswick, Maine or south to Boston, Massachusetts. Commercial flights are available from Portsmouth International Airport. New Hampshire Northcoast operates one of the state’s few active freight rail services which runs through Somersworth.

Somersworth has a total of 76.81 miles of roads; 32.3 miles are federally or state owned, 43.89 miles are locally owned, and just 0.62 miles are on unmaintained roads. High Street (NH Route 9) has the highest traffic volumes often reaching an evening peak of nearly 1,000 vehicles per hour. **(Figure 2)**

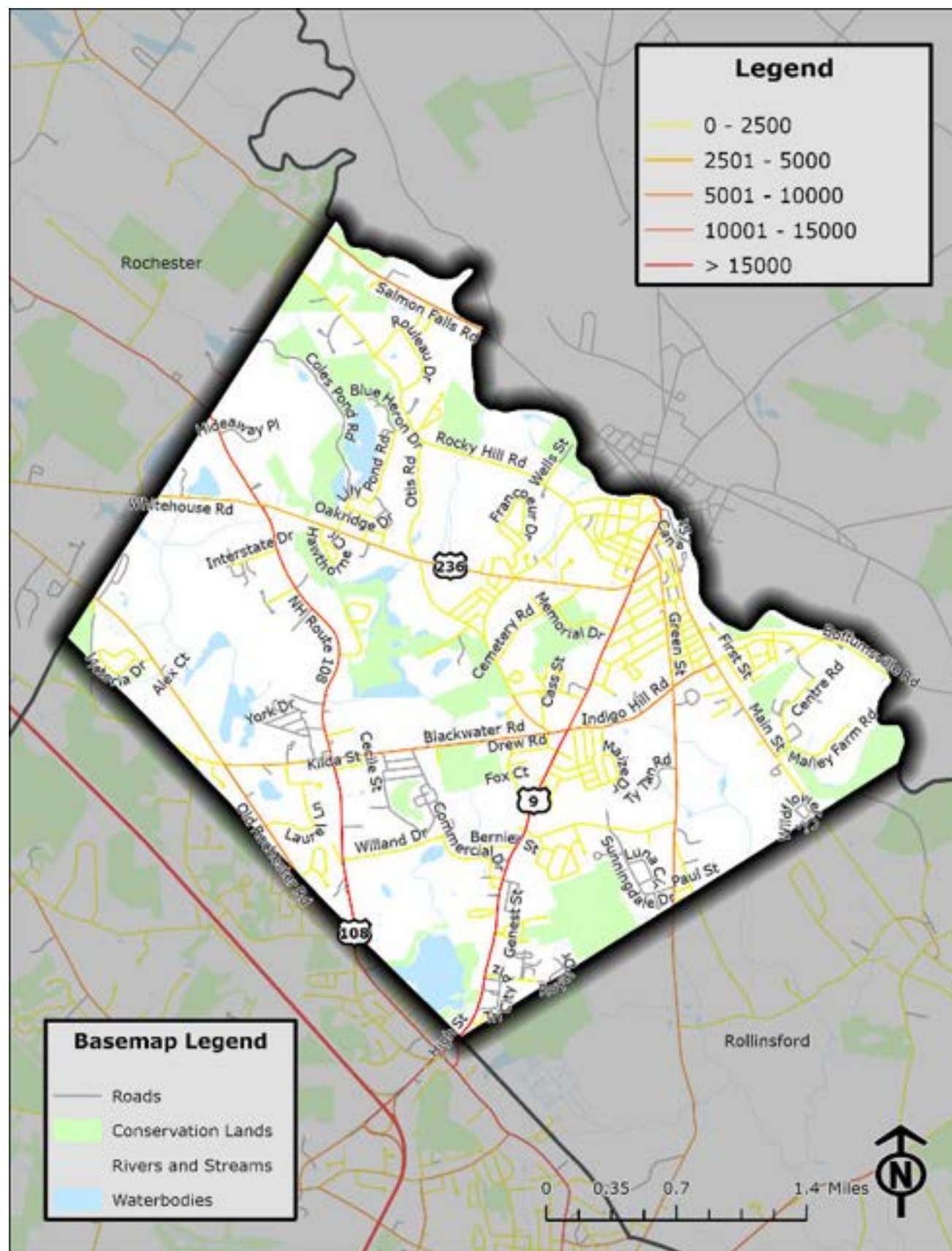
The City has an extensive, 26-mile sidewalk network, however, sidewalk conditions vary across the city and may affect peoples’ ability and comfort with using them. Outside of neighborhood streets, local and state roads in town are generally unsafe for bicycling. Those neighborhoods where bicycling is more comfortable and safer are separated by higher volumes roads that act as barriers to non-motorized users.

Vehicle traffic volume data are collected regularly on multiple roads in Somersworth and are readily available for local planning purposes. The city can also request supplemental traffic counts on local roads from Strafford Regional Planning Commission. **(Figure 1)**

Figure 1: Select Traffic Volumes (Average Annual Daily Traffic) in Somersworth (Source: NHDOT)

Location	Most Recent Count		% Change Since 2018
	2024	2025	
Market St to Berwick		14,722	17% Increase
Main St at Rollinsford line.		2,231	1% Increase
West High St (NH236) @St James Ave.	4,217		0% change
NH108 south of West High St		13,087	3% increase

Figure 2: Map of Traffic Volumes (AADT) in Somersworth (Source: SRPC)



Commuting to Work

The census has data on the employment destination of people living in Somersworth. Somersworth residents who work out of town primarily travel to Dover and Portsmouth, but 10.4% of Somersworth residents work in the City. Approximately 4,000 people travel to Somersworth for work. **(Figures 3 and 4)**

Figure 3: Employment Destinations of Somersworth Residents (Source: U.S. Census)

Community	Average 2020-2023	
	Count	Share
Portsmouth, NH	1,020	16.5%
Dover, NH	972	15.8%
Somersworth, NH	641	10.4%
Rochester, NH	452	7.3%
Manchester, NH	192	3.1%
Concord, NH	149	2.4%
Durham, NH	139	2.3%
Nashua, NH	106	1.7%
Exeter, NH	63	1.0%
Boston, MA	64	1.0%
All other locations	2,371	38.4%

Figure 4: Demographic Data and Work Sectors for Somersworth Workforce (Source: U.S. Census)

Lives...		in Somersworth	in Somersworth	outside of Somersworth
and works...		outside of Somersworth	in Somersworth	in Somersworth
All Workers.....		4,891	704	4,000
Jobs by Worker's Age	29 and under	1,128	146	929
	30-54	2,536	327	1,856
	55 and over	1,227	231	1,215
Jobs with Earnings (per month)	\$1250 or under	789	156	771
	\$1,251 to \$3,333	990	196	866
	Over \$3,333	3,112	352	2,363
Jobs by Sector	Goods Producing	874	134	601
	Trade, Transportation, Utilities	898	137	1,329
	All Other Services	3,119	433	2,070

Our Transportation Story

The following themes are based on input from the public gathered during the outreach phase of the master plan development and the professional judgment on Somersworth and SRPC staff. They were reviewed by the Somersworth Planning Board and Council. These themes inform the recommendations and actions at the end of this chapter.

Theme 1. Safety is Priority One

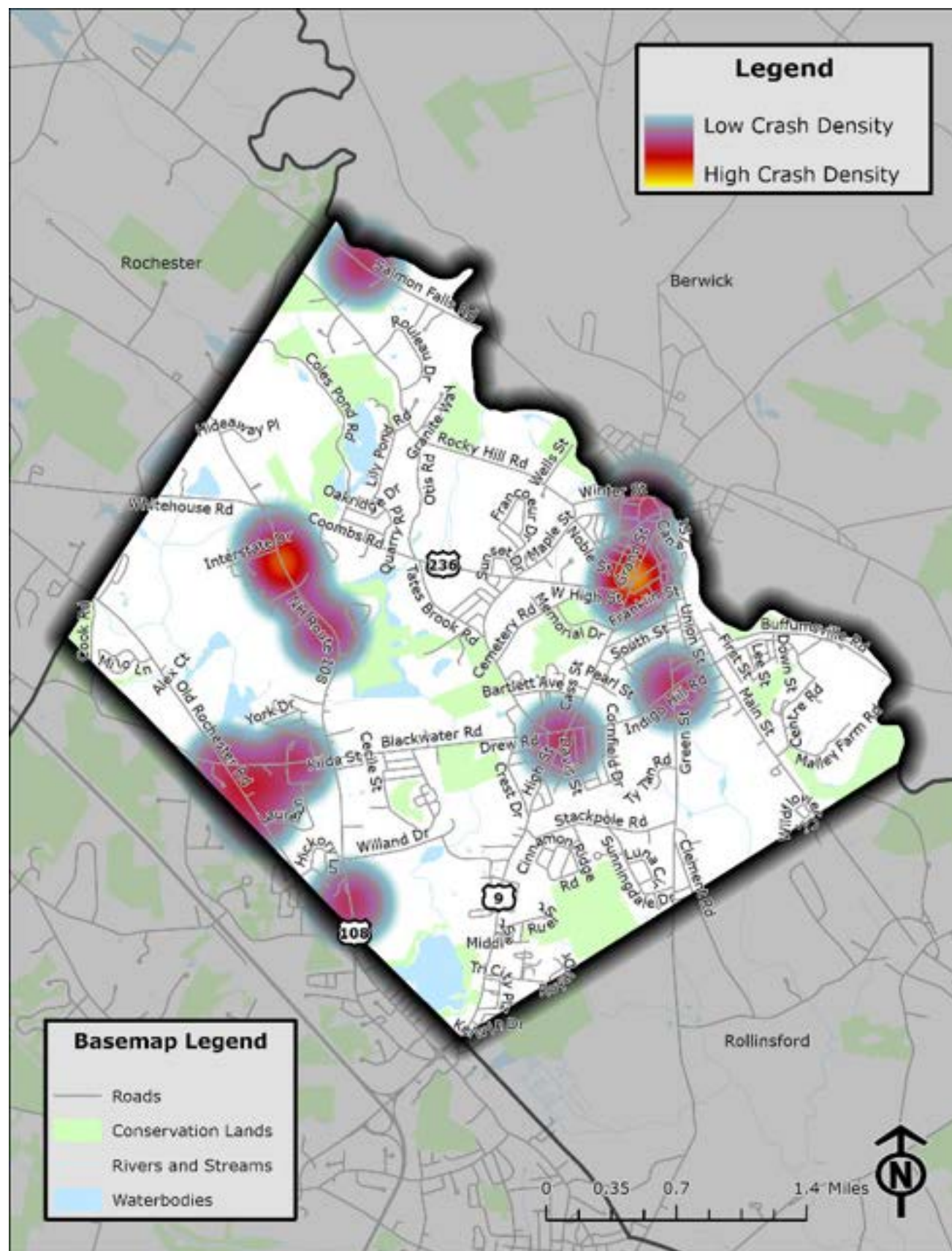
Safety is a universal concern for Somersworth and is a primary consideration in the development and improvement of Somersworth's transportation network. The City must balance the different modes of travel on the network's different road types. Somersworth's use of the complete streets approach and many pedestrian-focused projects in recent years speak to the City's dedication to safety.

Safety In Context

Between 2013 and 2023, crashes in Somersworth caused five fatalities and 30 serious injuries (**Figure 5**). Additional crashes occurred in 2024 and 2025 (including a pedestrian fatality), but the official reporting process is lengthy and there can be a gap before this data is available publicly. Vehicle speed and human behavior are the primary factors affecting safety.ⁱ

Different streets have different purposes that should guide design considerations. The downtown segment of High Street accommodates a wide range of users and high traffic volumes, including freight deliveries for downtown businesses. A thriving commercial center needs safe sidewalks and crossings for pedestrians visiting businesses. The design of High Street should be replicated as downtown expands onto adjacent streets. Streets in dense residential neighborhoods should prioritize pedestrian safety with physical infrastructure that encourages vehicle speeds of 20 mph or lower to allow for the free and safe movement of people. West High St (NH Route 236) and High Street, away from the denser downtown areas, need to balance higher vehicle volumes and speeds with pedestrian activity. Somersworth will be developing a local guide with context-specific street design standards to be implemented in future development or road reconstruction. This guide will have implications for differences between streets that are intended to move traffic, streets with a strong mix of uses (such as in a dense commercial area like downtown), and streets intended for residential neighborhood activity.

Figure 5: Crashes in Somersworth, 2020 to 2024 (Source: NH Dept. of Safety)



The Safe System Approach

The Safe System Approach (**Figure 6**) is a way to frame development of a transportation network with safety in mind. It can be the basis for policies and actions taken by Somersworth and focuses on eliminating crashes that result in fatalities and serious injuries. The following principles comprise the Safe System Approach:

Death and Serious Injuries are Unacceptable: Focus on the types of crashes that kill and injure people.

Humans Make Mistakes: Human behavior is mostly responsible for crashes. The transportation system should be designed with this in mind. Paint and signs do far less than physical structures like road width and curbs.

Humans Are Vulnerable: Human bodies can tolerate very little impact trauma before permanent injuries or death occur. A pedestrian hit by a vehicle traveling at 40mph has a 15% chance of surviving. (**Figure 7**)

Responsibility is Shared: All members of the community should pursue safety. It is not just the responsibility of those who design the roads or enforce laws.

Safety is Proactive: Actions should and can be taken before tragic crashes occur.

Redundancy is Crucial: Many parts of the transportation system can be strengthened to reduce the risk of fatal or serious crashes.

Somersworth may prioritize safety improvements that have low implementation costs but high safety impact that can be easily deployed throughout the community. Flashing pedestrian beacons (technically known as Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, or RRFBs) are a good example: they are relatively inexpensive, solar-powered, highly visible at crossings, and can be deployed in a range of locations (**Figure 8**). Data and tools exist to analyze the entire transportation network and identify systemic safety hazards and low-cost, high-impact countermeasures.

Figure 6: The Safe System Approach (Source: FHWA)



Figure 7: Higher Vehicle Speeds Increase the Chance of Pedestrian Injuries and Fatalities (Source: FHWA)



Maintenance is often overlooked in safety management and improvement. Roads and signs in poor condition may affect driver behavior (e.g. swerving to avoid potholes or missing warnings due to signs that have lost their reflective coatings). Unmaintained sidewalks may force pedestrians onto the shoulder or into the travel lane, or to avoid the sidewalk altogether. Unreliable equipment, such as a traffic signal or a rail crossing, poses a significant risk of serious crashes. Maintenance is an unglamorous but critical part of transportation safety that can't be ignored. Upgrades and improvements to the transportation network should include plans for continued maintenance and replacement of infrastructure and systems.

Figure 8: A Typical "Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon" for Pedestrian Crossings (Source: FHWA)



Theme 2. Design a Walkable, Bikeable Somersworth

Walkability is key to enhancing Somersworth’s small-town feel, where local shops, parks, and friends’ houses are an easy walk away. Walking through the City is also a way to connect to Somersworth’s history. Historic buildings, small town streets, an active downtown core, and dense neighborhoods are Somersworth hallmarks. Walkable streets and paths should continue to be prioritized to preserve Somersworth’s historic tight-knit nature as a New England Mill City.

The City’s Approach

The City fosters a “complete streets” approach to developing the local street network. This approach emphasizes designing transportation infrastructure to equally balance the safety and mobility of motorized and non-motorized users as much as possible. The City also prioritizes improving utilities in tandem with road construction projects.

The Sidewalk Network

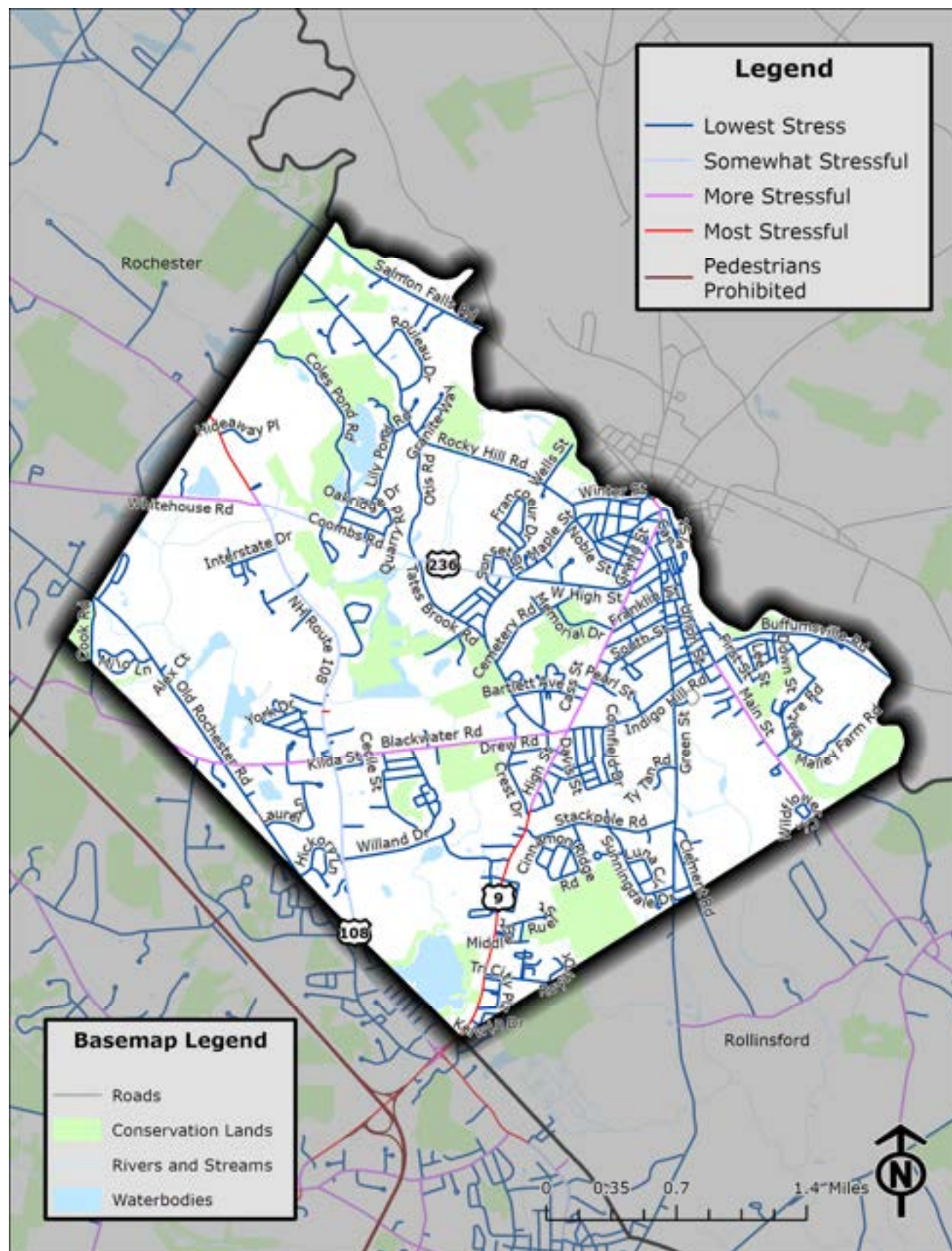
Somersworth’s transportation network includes 26 miles of sidewalk that connect throughout the downtown and denser neighborhoods south of downtown. They continue down High Street to Weeks Crossing in Dover. The City sidewalk network requires regular monitoring to maintain its condition and to identify locations where gaps or poor conditions separate people from important destinations. Monitoring includes regular counts of pedestrian activity at locations throughout the city (**Figure 9**).

Not all sidewalks are equal. Pedestrians’ age and physical ability, sidewalk condition of sidewalks, how many cars pass on the adjacent road, how fast those cars travel, and many other factors affect whether people use a sidewalk. “Level-of-Traffic-Stress” is an approach to analyzing the sidewalk network for its level of comfort and safety for both pedestrians and bicyclists (**Figures 10 and 11**). The City and SRPC maintain data that helps Somersworth identify opportunities to improve the condition and connectivity of the sidewalk network. This includes data on the condition of sidewalks. The City should prioritize segments of sidewalk that have significantly deteriorated and target them for rebuilding. Where sidewalks are significantly deteriorated on both sides of the street, the City may consider updating the street design with reconstructed sidewalks on a single side of the street and additional traffic calming and enhanced pedestrian crossings.

Figure 9: Sidewalk Counts in Downtown Somersworth, 2023-2026 (Source: SRPC)

Location	Spring/Summer Weekday Avg.	Spring/Summer Weekend Avg.	Winter Weekday Avg.	Winter Weekend Avg.
Canal Street/Railroad Footpath	74	68	31	15
Aclara Stairway	71	11		
Main Street in front of Library	95	85		
Main Street opposite Library	312	366		

Figure 10: Analysis of Somersworth Roads and Their Level of Comfort for Pedestrians (Source: SRPC)



Legend

- Least Stressful
- Somewhat Stressful
- More Stressful
- Most Stressful

Basemap Legend

- Roads
- Conservation Lands
- Rivers and Streams
- Waterbodies

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 Miles

North Arrow

Separating pedestrian paths from vehicle traffic where possible is one of the best ways to increase safety and comfort for pedestrians. The non-motorized paths connecting Somersworth schools are a perfect example of connections between neighborhoods and critical local destinations. A parking lane or a simple vegetated buffer between a road and a sidewalk can significantly increase pedestrian comfort. Broad Street is an excellent example of a neighborhood street that provides a protected area for pedestrian travel and recreation. As the sidewalk network is upgraded, neighborhood streets should be redesigned to minimize vehicle speeds and maximize protected pedestrian zones.

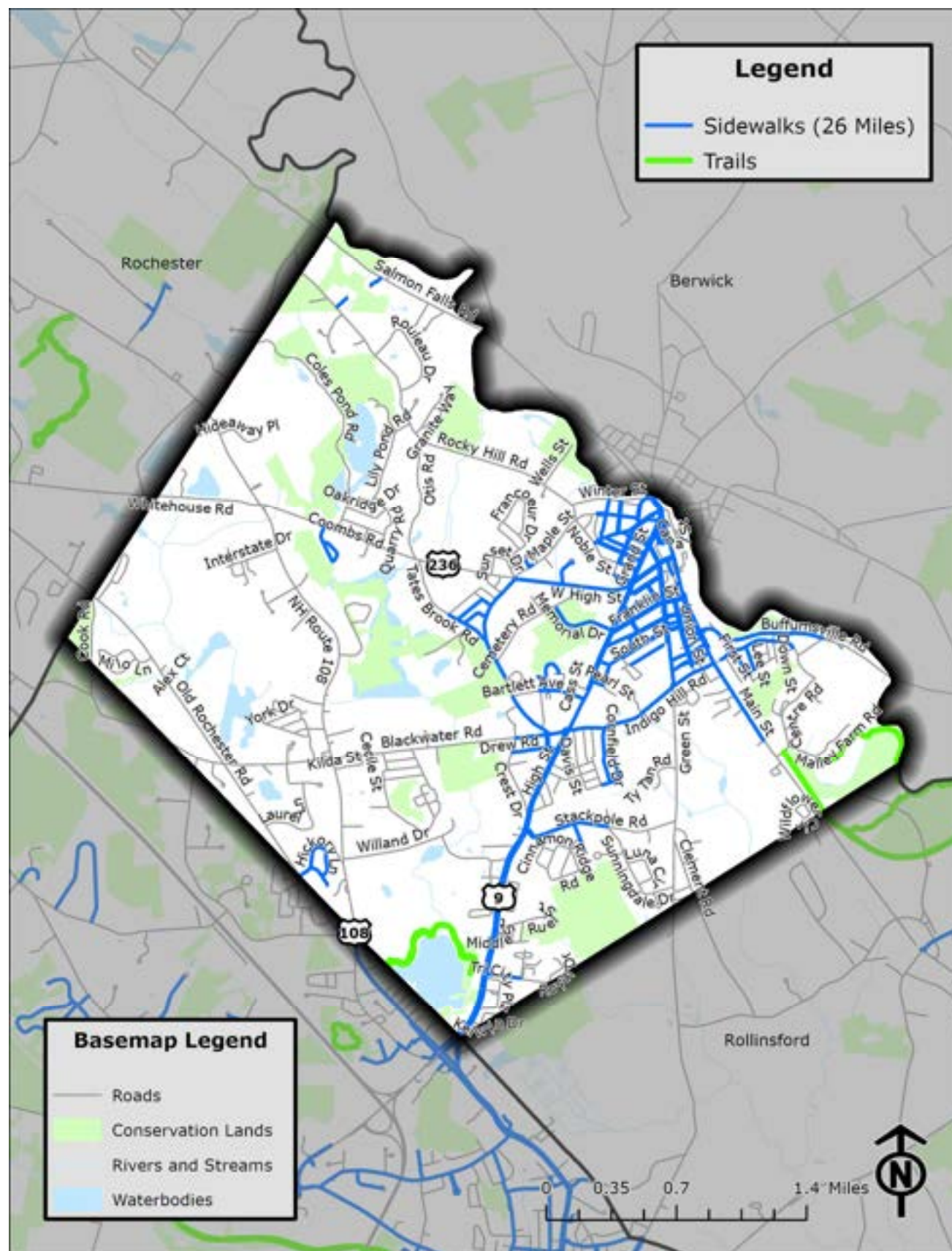
Local Trails

Somersworth has a local trail network that forms an informal, connection to the Town of Rollinsford to the south. The City assessed potential improvements and expansion of trails around Malley Farm in 2023. Multiple projects and cost estimates were identified in the assessment. The Malley Farm trail network has potential connections to existing sidewalks and neighborhood streets for a direct link to downtown. There is interest in expanding of the network to Berwick and South Berwick, which would require additional assessment and investment but could create a major community asset that supports economic development. The city has conducted multiple counts of pedestrian activity on local trails **(Figure 12)**. **(Figure 13)** below shows the trail and sidewalk network together.

Figure 12: Trail User Counts 2024-2026 (Source: SRPC)

Location	Spring/Summer Weekday Avg.	Spring/Summer Weekend Avg.	Winter Weekday Avg.	Winter Weekend Avg.
Mast Point	36	48		
Riverwalk	40	54	17	19
Willand Pond	180	174		
Scoutland Main Entrance	67	83	66	92
Scoutland Greenview Terr.			28	50

Figure 13: Local Sidewalk and Trails Network (Source: SRPC and Somersworth)



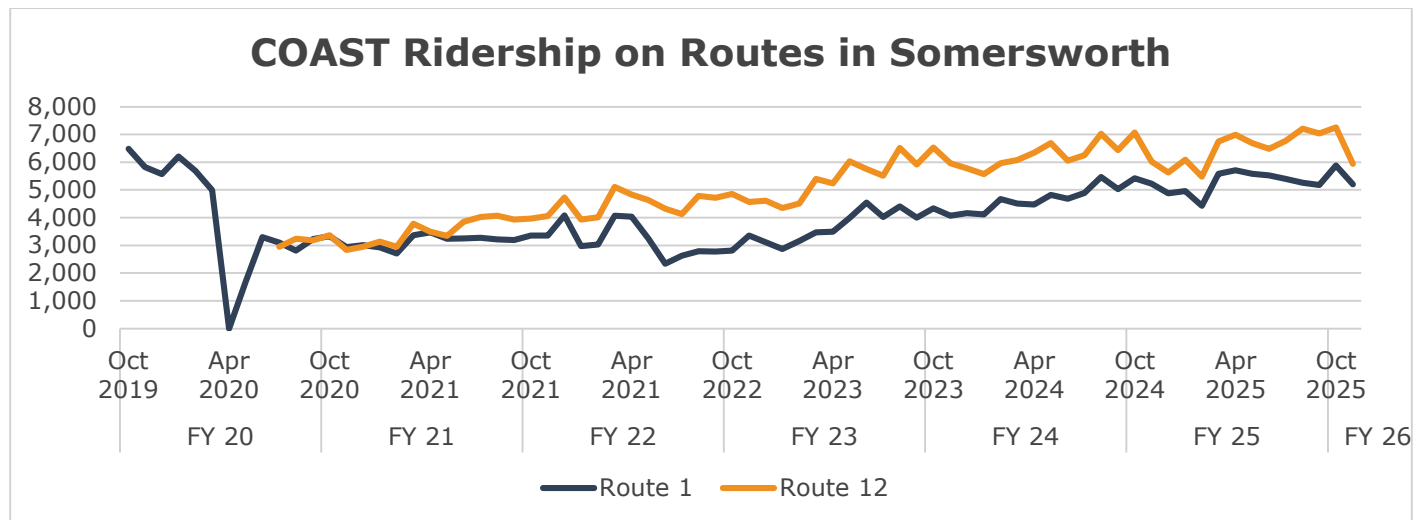
Theme 3. Build Transportation Connections

The regional highway network ties the Tri-Cities of Somersworth, Dover, and Rochester together as the heart of the economic and cultural center of Strafford County. There is more to Somersworth's transportation connections than the visible roads. Public transit serves residents and visitors, regional bus and passenger rail are nearby, and regional freight rail regularly passes through the City.

Public Transit

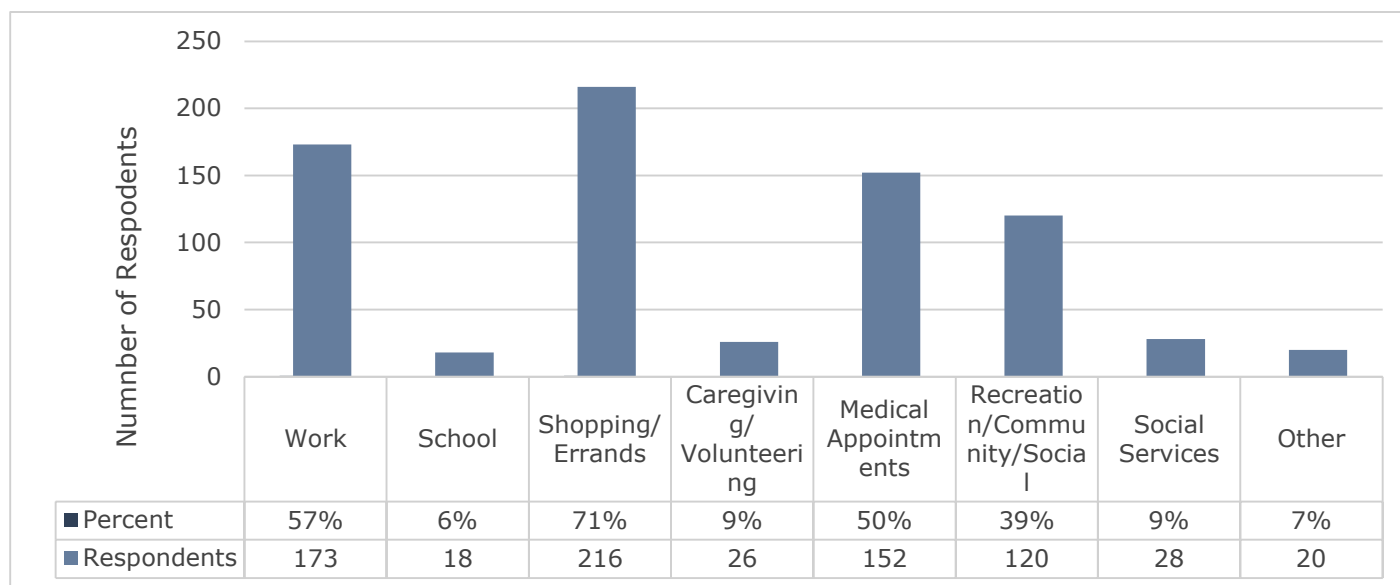
The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) operates two fixed bus routes through Somersworth: Route 1 travels along High Street (NH Route 9) connecting to Dover, and Route 12 travels along NH 108 from Rochester to Dover (**Figure 14 and 17**). Public transit plays a major role in connecting Somersworth residents to the regional economy and serves many trip purposes (**Figure 15**). COAST made the difficult decision to cease the operation of Route 100 that served Berwick and neighboring York County communities in 2025. In 2019, SRPC and Rockingham Planning Commission conducted a study of the regional economic impact of COAST. COAST operations yield over \$4.00 for every \$1.00 and have an estimated regional economic impact of \$31 million¹¹X

Figure 14: COAST Ridership on Routes in Somersworth (Source: COAST)



COAST's service is also important for Somersworth residents with disabilities. Those who live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of a bus stop and cannot reach it because of a physical or mental disability are eligible for door-to-door service to destinations along COAST routes.

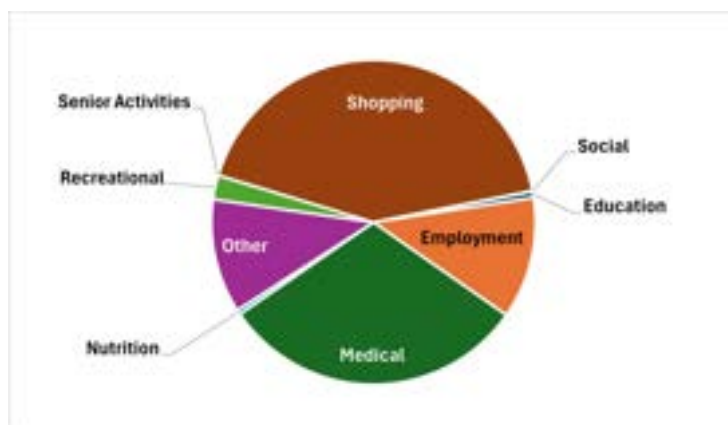
Figure 15: Trip Purposes on COAST Fixed Route Bus Lines (Source: SRPC)



Several other “demand-response” transit services are available to Somersworth residents for specific trip purposes. These services are coordinated through the Alliance for Community Transportation’s (ACT) TripLink and are used by people to reach critical destinations. Some services provide trips for specific purposes, such as non-emergency medical appointments. Somersworth residents may be eligible for multiple services and can apply through a single “common application” hosted by ACT. For COAST’s paratransit services, Walmart, the Somersworth Housing Authority complex, and Tri-City Plaza are the top destinations in Somersworth. These destinations are also the top destinations in Somersworth on the “mainline” fixed-route network as well. Additionally, Fresenius Dialysis in neighboring Dover is the top paratransit destination for the entire COAST network, illustrating the critical need for paratransit services in the region.

Between 2023 and 2025, Somersworth residents took 10,853 trips utilizing on-demand services. Those trips, which included destination within and outside of Somersworth, were primarily for shopping, medical appointments, and jobs **(Figure 16)**.

Figure 16: Trip Purposes for People Using Demand Response Services to and from Somersworth (Source: COAST)



Passenger and Freight Rail

Southeast New Hampshire hosts three of the state's four passenger rail stations. The Amtrak Downeaster is very popular with commuters and tourists. With a total of 197,500 boardings in 2024, the Downeaster is returning to pre-pandemic ridership levels. Somersworth is also one of very few New Hampshire communities to have an active freight rail line through the city. New Hampshire Northcoast freight rail travels directly through downtown and holds economic potential for Somersworth.

CSX recently purchased New Hampshire rail infrastructure from PanAm and has been making improvements to rails and crossings. With continued rail investment, Somersworth and the region are poised to benefit from increased capacity for freight and passenger rail services. Somersworth would need to collaborate with other municipalities and CSX to advocate for future regional rail improvement projects. Such projects include additional parallel tracks in strategic locations (known as "siding") that increase capacity by allowing trains to pass each other. Regional rail improvements will come with economic benefits and greater rail traffic. The City will need to develop safer crossings of the tracks which separate the Mills district from the rest of downtown.

Across the River

There is incredible potential for collaborative efforts between the Town of Berwick, Maine and Somersworth. Coordinating the development of Somersworth's Main Street and the mill building complex with Berwick's downtown renewal can make them a combined destination in the region. The two communities are neighbors across the river and residents can easily walk between them. Somersworth's 2010 Master Plan prioritized improving the bridge connection to Berwick, and Berwick's own comprehensive plan update in 2026 calls for a pedestrian bridge in the future. The bridge was reconstructed in 2015 and remains the sole connection between the downtowns of Somersworth and Berwick. Significant traffic congestion fills the downtown segment of High Street, particularly with evening commuters. As the two downtowns develop, the bridge will become more of a traffic bottleneck, requiring careful street and intersection designs on either side of the river. As new dining, entertainment, and employment opportunities emerge in each community, ensuring pedestrians can walk safely and easily from one community to the other will be essential – and mutually beneficial – for both local economies.

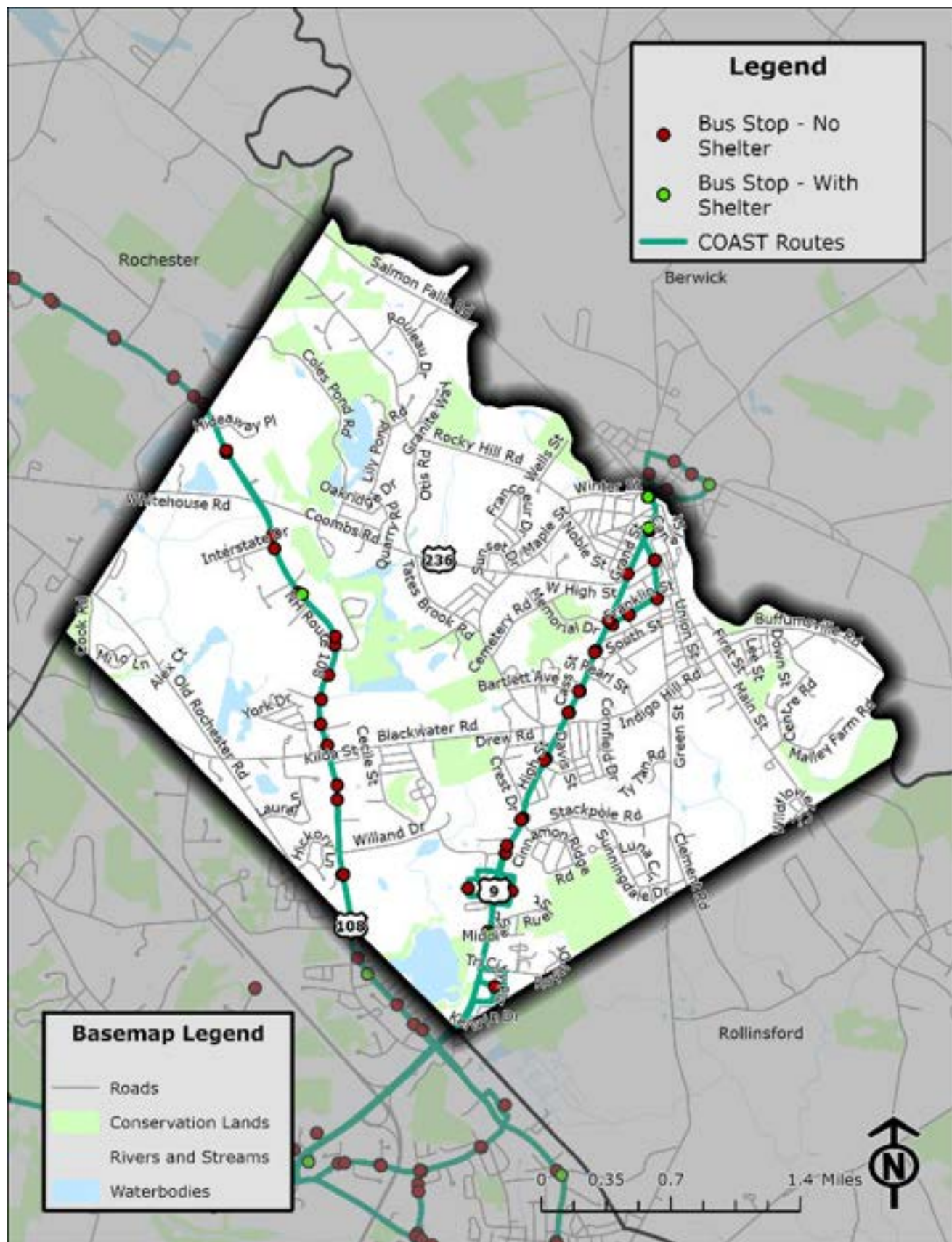
Primary Routes

Two routes guide most vehicle traffic in and out of Somersworth's downtown – West High Street (NH Route 236) and High Street (NH Route 9). These connect to NH Route 108 to complete a triangle. High Street has sidewalks and a COAST bus route, offering a multimodal route through dense residential and commercial areas, connecting to the City of Dover. Enhancing safety and comfort along High Street for a wide variety of transportation modes is important for the future of this route. NH Route 108 has significant economic potential for Somersworth, and the City is committed to transforming the route into a modern, multimodal corridor. Like High Street, NH Route 108 has a COAST bus route, but lacks comprehensive sidewalk coverage. Development along NH Route 108 is advancing rapidly and transportation infrastructure improvements are necessary to maintain safety and support continued development. People also perceive NH Route 108 as a distinctly separate part of Somersworth. Developing NH Route 108 as a modern,

multimodal corridor should work toward incorporating this area as a growing part of Somersworth's identity.

In 2024, Somersworth completed upgrades to the traffic signals along High Street from Blackwater Road to Kelwyn Drive. The modern signals are better coordinated to improve traffic flow along this important corridor. These and other transportation technology improvements can be implemented to improve travel efficiency and safety in Somersworth.

Figure 17: Primary Routes and Public Transit Facilities (Source: COAST)



Theme 4. Downtown and Somersworth's Identity

In outreach for the Master Plan update, people expressed pride in their community with a desire to see its appearance improved. The High Street segment of downtown is a success story for Somersworth, with a modern streetscape, unique restaurants and stores, and a growing residential housing presence. The 2015 High Street development project was extremely effective in revitalizing Somersworth's downtown (**Figure 18**). The City paired streetscape upgrades with the implementation of community revitalization tax relief incentives under state law (RSA 79-E:3). The incentives could support further revitalization of the Main Street corridor.

Adjacent commercial and residential areas south of High Street have unmet potential where aesthetic improvements could incentivize redevelopment or revitalize them as community spaces. The pedestrian-friendly design of the downtown segment of High Street should be replicated as the downtown expands along Main Street.

Somersworth Plaza holds great potential as a renewed community and commercial center. Because of its central location, residents could walk to it if redevelopment includes attention for accessibility and connections to High Street and Main Street.

Figure 18: Before and After the 2015 Downtown High St Improvement Project.



The Mill District

Mill buildings are a key part of New England's history and Somersworth's mill buildings represent exciting opportunities to advance economic development, housing, and quality of life. The current mill district could be a hub with residential and commercial developments, as well as parks and community space. Achieving this will require improved access for vehicles and pedestrian traffic, including freight vehicles. The mill area is currently separated from the downtown by a historic canal and freight rail line, which limit vehicle and pedestrian access to the waterfront. There is currently only one official, dedicated pedestrian access way across the canal and railroad opposite Fair Court. This parallels a vehicle access route to the mills. There

is a pedestrian footbridge over the canal across from the Public Library, however, it includes no safety improvement for crossing the rail line.

The ongoing development of Somersworth's downtown has increased parking demand. Overall, the City still has ample parking available to meet current demand. A 2025 parking study showed that on average, up to 38% of all marked parking spaces in the downtown were occupied. However, downtown parking spaces along High St and Market St were 100% occupied during peak periods. Parking regulations and organization will be required as the Downtown develops and adjacent housing increases. Somersworth will need to develop a dedicated funding source for parking improvements. Improved walking routes and connections to available parking will also reduce future parking capacity challenges.

Transportation Goals and Actions

Below is a set of goals and actions to advance Somersworth's transportation system to connecting residents within the community and linking the City to the regional economy.

Goals

Actions

Goal 1: Enhance Somersworth's Connection to neighboring municipalities and the region.

Collaborate with Dover and Rollinsford on Rail improvement projects.

Enhance regional public transportation options and promote current services.

Collaborate with Berwick to build multimodal transportation connections and improve traffic flow.

Goal 2: Enhance the transportation network for multimodal travel.

Develop a local Complete Streets policy.

Develop a local wayfinding plan.

Develop a local Intelligent Transportation Systems plan to implement transportation technology improvements.

Improve streetscapes for walkability and business access on streets Somersworth is looking to revitalize.

Goal 3: Eliminate fatal and serious injury crashes in Somersworth.

Complete a road network safety screening.

Use physical infrastructure to reduce vehicle speeds in neighborhoods and along residential and commercial corridors.

Develop a local street design guide that establishes consistent street configurations based on use context, emphasizing safety, and encouraging drivers to match posted speed limits.

Goal 4: Improve access to essential services for residents who can't drive.

Improve connections between neighborhoods and to important local destinations via parks, sidewalk, trails, or other paths.

Strive for major destinations being fully accessible by wheelchair.

Develop local ADA transition plan.

Increase demand-response transportation options.

Goal 5: Revitalize underdeveloped sections of town with new streetscapes.

Replicate downtown core streetscape to maintain consistency as downtown core expands.

Increase locations and businesses geared to kids and young families.

Incorporate more green space in streetscape design.

Improve pedestrian facilities in conjunction with housing and commercial development. Improve streetside dining opportunities for restaurant businesses.

Implement actions outlined in the 2025 parking study.

Resources

- I. [SRPC Regional Data Snapshot](#)
- II. [Somersworth Community Profile](#)
- III. [Economic Benefit of Transit Study](#)

ⁱ NHDOT crash data

Economic Impacts of COAST – 2019 <https://straaffordrpcnh.gov/docs/economic-benefit-of-transit-study-final-report/>



Somersworth Master Plan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER

Adopted July 15, 2026

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Economic Development

Introduction

Somersworth is a distinctive place in the region and state, with many existing strengths and opportunities that can be harnessed to ensure progress for residents, businesses, and the community as whole. As a place with rich history and a demonstrated history of resilience, the City can leverage its existing strengths, built infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources to strengthen its local economy and the wellbeing of individuals, families, and businesses that compose it.

Somersworth's Economic Past

The evolution of transportation, architecture, industry and economy, national and local policies, and culture shaped Somersworth's core downtown and neighborhoods. Throughout the 19th century, the community developed similar to other places in New England. Leveraging the power of the Salmon Falls River, Somersworth became a hub of manufacturing and textile processing, with mills along the river employing residents from the community and beyond, and spurring additional growth. Textile and shoe manufacturing continued into the 20th century. As regional, national, and global trends shifted, so did preferences toward personal vehicles and investment priorities in transportation networks. Like many places around the country, manufacturing began to decline as an industry while areas beyond the downtown developed into large-scale retail and service offerings more easily accessed by car. As a result, the downtown core experienced decline as commercial activity moved to outlying areas, and was subsequently reshaped through Urban Renewal initiatives.

Community Engagement

Several outreach activities and events were developed by the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and the City of Somersworth. Surveys, interviews, and a community forum were all conducted over several months to gather feedback to support the creation of the Economic Development chapter. A primary goal of these outreach efforts was to reach a comprehensive array of community members to share their views on the community and their perspectives on the future of the City. This chapter was informed by community members including local residents, business owners, city staff, Somersworth School District leadership and, Planning Board members.

The community-wide survey was distributed throughout various channels, including social media, the City's website and newsletters, SRPC newsletters, posters throughout the community, and flyers that were included in mailings from the City to local addresses. 303 people responded to the survey, which included questions about the City's current economic identity, its vision for future economic development, and economic challenges and opportunities facing the community.

Many respondents answered the question from a positive, aspirational perspective with words like "up and coming", "on the mend", "balanced", "hardworking", and "still looking", while other

respondents used terms such as “impoverished”, “underdeveloped”, “rundown”, “struggling”, and “lacking.” Overall, there seems to be a clear divide between respondents about the economic identity of Somersworth.

Respondents to the survey discussed several key businesses they believe Somersworth needs, including more large employers, local grocery options, more local businesses, cultural spaces, more restaurants and grab and go food options, bookstores, coffee shops, and manufacturers. Survey respondents identified several areas of the City with unmet economic potential that need additional investment and revitalization, including Main Street and the downtown generally, the riverfront, the Aclara property, Green Street area, and the Franklin Street area.

A Community Forum was held on November 13, 2025, at the Somersworth Career Technical Center. Dozens of community members, students, local board members, business owners, and elected officials attended to provide additional feedback and input. Attendees engaged in several activities to support the development of the Economic Development chapter and shared insights on areas of the City where attendees were interested in seeing increased economic revitalization, their feelings on business and commerce in the city, and input on strengths, opportunities, and aspirations for the community as it relates to economic development.

In addition to the community wide survey, a separate survey was distributed directly to businesses in Somersworth in late 2025. This survey, along with follow-up interviews with businesses who volunteered for additional conversations, gathered input on the challenges and opportunities of operating a business in the City, as well as ways in which the City could support existing businesses.

The Superintendent of the Somersworth School District provided unique insights to support the development of this chapter. He emphasized the significant workforce opportunities that exist thanks to the presence of the Career Technical Center in the City. Moreover, he highlighted the importance of stewarding relationships to better align education, career training, and skill-building initiatives with the needs of businesses to support a robust workforce pipeline.

The Somersworth Planning Board ensured that this chapter represents a vision of economic development in the City that is both aspirational and realistic. Planning Board members provided feedback and perspective throughout the development of this chapter at several meetings and workshops over the course of several months.

Economic and Community Profile

The City of Somersworth’s population has experienced modest but steady growth, remaining relatively stable at around 12,000 residents over the past decade and expected to reach roughly 13,000 residents by 2035. Within the Seacoast region, Somersworth is located in proximity to Dover and Rochester in New Hampshire and Berwick in Maine. Somersworth benefits from strong regional connections and integration into the broader regional economy, while also maintaining its own history, neighborhoods, and commercial corridors.

The City’s economy has continued to evolve and grow over time. Today the community is home to a mix of businesses and industries, including retail trade, manufacturing, and education. As of 2025, the largest employers include: Walmart Supercenter, ContiTech, and Target. Other major employers include General Linen and Uniform, J-PAC Medical, the Strafford Learning

Center School, and the various education facilities that make up Somersworth's Public School System.ⁱ These large employers contribute significantly to the local economy and provide employment opportunities for residents of Somersworth and the broader region.

While detailed employment by industry data is only available at the county level, Strafford County's industry composition closely reflects the economic structure of the City of Somersworth. As of 2024, the largest employment sectors include healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, educational services, manufacturing, and accommodation and food services (**Figure 1**). Looking ahead, projections from NH Employment Security show that these patterns are expected to continue. At the SRPC region level, the industries projected to experience the largest employment growth by 2035 include social services, business, legal, and personal services, retail trade, and educational services.ⁱⁱ

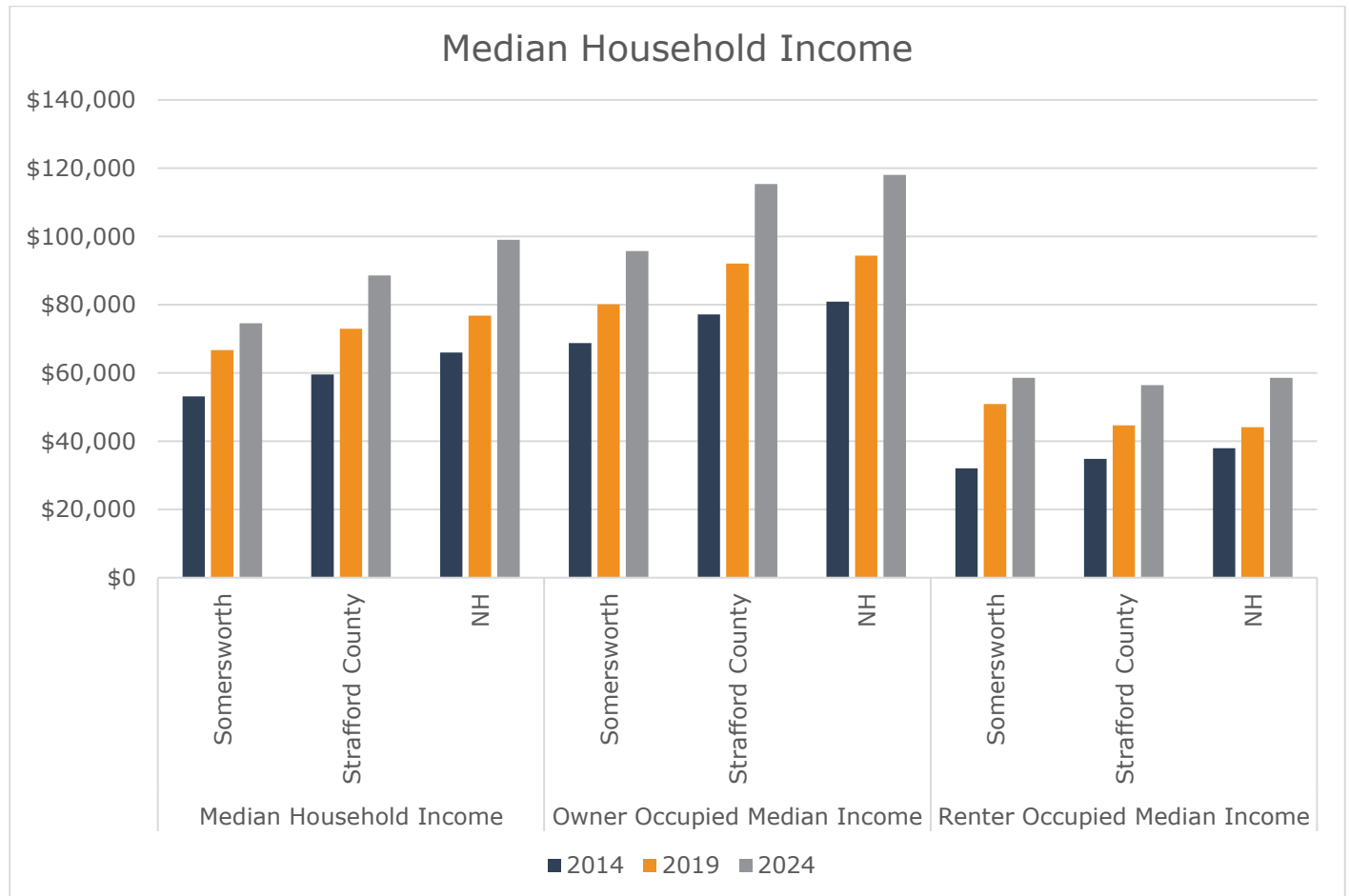
Figure 1: Employment by Industry; SRPC Region; 2024 (Source: NHES Covered Employment and Wages)

Industry	2024 Employment
Total, All Industries	93040
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	0
Mining	0
Utilities	11
Construction	1726
Manufacturing	5054
Wholesale Trade	1230
Retail Trade	7000
Transportation and Warehousing	1094
Information	316
Finance and Insurance	1425
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	378
Professional and Technical Services	1966
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0
Administrative and Waste Services	2160
Educational Services	6422
Health Care and Social Assistance	8233
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	845
Accommodation and Food Services	4441
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	1643
Public Administration	2070
Unclassified	0

Demographic and economic trends are reflective of the opportunities and challenges in the community. At \$74,504, the 2024 median household income in Somersworth was lower than Strafford County's (\$88,570) and New Hampshire's (\$99,031). Income levels also varied significantly by housing tenure. Renters had a median household income of \$58,596, compared

to \$95,673 for homeowners (**Figure 2**). Additionally, in 2024, 11% of the population was living below the federal poverty threshold.ⁱⁱⁱ

Figure 2: 2014-2024 Median Household Income for Somersworth, Strafford County, and NH (Source: US Census Bureau ACS)

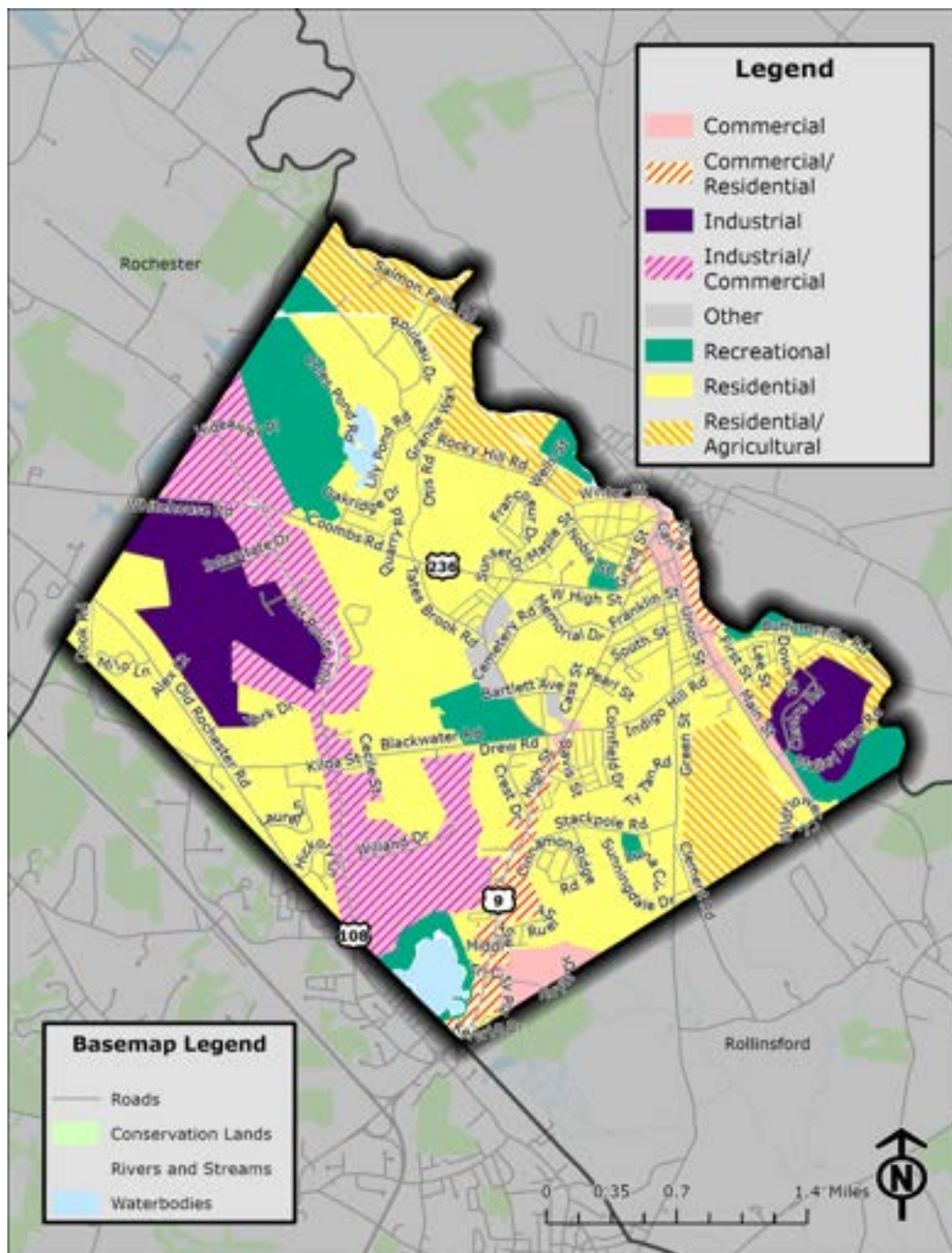


In 2024, 45% of residents over the age of 25 held an associate's degree or higher, while 25% had some college, 24% held a high school diploma, and fewer than 6% had not completed high school.^{iv}

Our Economic Development Story

The following section of the Economic Development chapter is organized into four themes that collectively represent the vision for economic development in the City of Somersworth. These discussions aim to represent how prioritizing economic development is impactful throughout the entire community. The City currently allows business and industrial uses across large areas of the community, including in the downtown core and along various corridors that connect Somersworth to its neighboring communities (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Commercial, Business, and Industrial Zoning; Somersworth; 2026 (Source: City of Somersworth)



Theme 1. A Thriving and Distinct Downtown Economy

Throughout nearly all conversations with community members, businesses, and other stakeholders, economic development related feedback consistently gravitated towards Somersworth's downtown core. Downtown Somersworth can be loosely defined as the area of the community along and adjacent to High, Main, and Market Streets. This area is comprised of higher density businesses and residences, as well as mixed used buildings. The downtown is identified as the heart of the City's economic identity, despite the significant commercial section of High Street (NH 9) near the border with Dover.

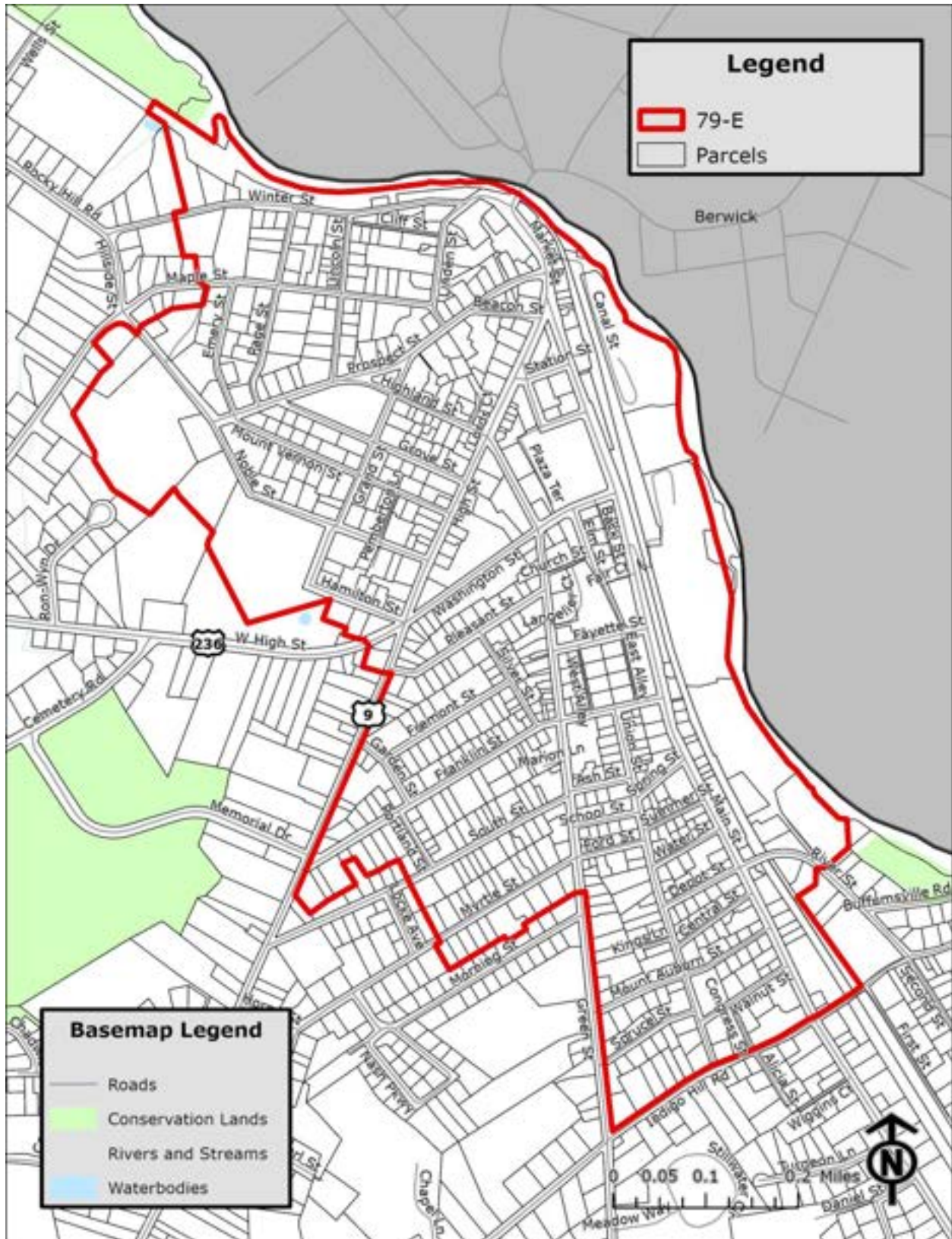
Residents and businesses consistently pointed to convergence of Downtown Somersworth, the riverfront, and sites such as the downtown Plaza and Aclara property as areas to target investments and implement economic development strategies to promote vibrancy and strengthen the City's identity. Fostering vibrancy in Somersworth's downtown can be supported through a variety of strategies, initiatives, and useful tools to promote the area as a place people want to visit and live.

Development and Local Investment Tools

Many of the buildings and sites within the downtown are older properties that may require significant rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements, or remediation before redevelopment can occur. These factors can be barriers for property owners and developers. As a result, key economic development tools may play a key role in encouraging reinvestments in downtown Somersworth.

Programs including Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs), RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Incentives, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts, Opportunity Zones, Central Business Service Districts, and small business assistance initiatives may help reduce barriers to redevelopment and encourage additional investment in older or underutilized properties downtown. These tools may be particularly useful for projects involving historic buildings, infrastructure upgrades, redevelopment of vacant sites, or adaptive reuse of older commercial buildings. Somersworth has several existing ERZs in the community, and a 79-E area as well (Error! Reference source not found.).

Figure 4: 79-E District Boundaries; Somersworth; 2026 (Source: NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs)



Smaller scale improvement programs may also support the downtown's appearance and vibrancy. Façade improvements, outdoor seating, and public gathering spaces all help to create a more welcoming and active downtown area, supporting new businesses, and encouraging additional investment.

The City's adoption of form-based code in sections of the downtown area may also help support redevelopment efforts and future investments in ways that encourage and reinforce the desired character. In addition to form-based code, flexible parking requirements specific to the downtown area, including shared parking arrangements, reduced parking minimums for certain developments, improved pedestrian connections, and enhanced signage between parking areas and various downtown destinations can support commercial activity, development, and investments in the downtown.

Placemaking Tools and Initiatives

Throughout the outreach process, people emphasized the creation of a downtown environment that people want to spend time in.

"We have so many abandoned and empty spaces but very few of those spaces are financially practical for a new business. Lack of people out shopping. We need some small businesses that draw people in, make families want to visit the downtown area."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

A vibrant downtown requires investment in creating a place where people want to spend time, gather, walk, shop, dine, and participate in community events. The success of the downtown segment of High Street demonstrates the value and economic return of investing in placemaking. The recently redeveloped downtown streetscape will require continued maintenance, and its success should be replicated in adjacent sections of downtown (such as the Plaza). Vibrant communities also arise from non-infrastructure improvements including public art, outdoor dining opportunities, and community events which create a stronger sense of place and vitality.

Increasing Foot Traffic

Promoting activity and foot traffic in the downtown was a consistent subject across the outreach process. Residents and other stakeholders expressed the importance of a downtown that feels active throughout the day and evening, with businesses, services, restaurants, events, and other spaces that encourage people to spend time in the area.

"The downtown does not look inviting so why would anyone want to come here?"

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Encouraging a broad mix of uses downtown, including dining, entertainment, retail, arts, and community spaces help increase vibrancy and support local businesses. Community events and programming downtown can draw people to the area and strengthen social connections. Efforts to promote housing development in proximity to downtown may also support foot traffic by bringing more residents within walking distance of local businesses and services. Additionally, improved wayfinding, directional signage, and stronger connections between parking areas,

businesses, community assets, and neighborhoods can help increase visits to downtown area businesses and community spaces.

"Mixed use is important to this community. It fosters closeness. Density is important because we have water and sewer, we should allow small lots so as to preserve open space elsewhere."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Theme 2. Supported Local Businesses and Workforce

Somersworth hosts a diverse range of local businesses, including many small and locally owned businesses, throughout the downtown area and the broader community. Many community members identified existing small businesses in Somersworth as one of the City's biggest strengths. However, many business owners identified barriers such as regulatory complexities, infrastructure, hiring difficulties, and rising costs.

The City's labor force totaled 7,350 in 2024 and has maintained an unemployment rate of below 3.4% for nearly a decade since 2015, apart from 2020 when pandemic impacts resulted in a 6.8% unemployment rate. By 2024, the unemployment rate had fallen to 2.3%. Roughly half of the labor force (51%) consists of residents who work outside the City, while 42% live elsewhere but work in Somersworth. Only 7% of the labor force both live and work within the City. Its proximity to nearby cities positions it as an attractive place to live while working in other major destinations. Rochester and Portsmouth are approximately 7 and 16 miles away, respectively, while Manchester, Concord, and Portland, ME are all roughly 40 to 45 miles away. As of 2024, 50% of employees in Somersworth commute between 10 and 24 minutes to work, while 10% of employees in Somersworth had shorter commutes to work and 40% had longer commutes to work.

From 2001 to 2018, average annual wages in Somersworth steadily rose (growing 47% during that time), but from 2018 to 2024 (the most current available data), wages increased at a significantly higher rate. During that period, wages increased by 42%. In 2024, the average weekly wage for all industries was \$1,102, or \$62,868 annually. Meanwhile, annual average employment in the City grew steadily from 2001 through 2017, then began to decline in 2018. As of 2024, employment levels still had not returned to their 2017 peak.^v

Figure 5: Home Locations of Somersworth Workers; 2023 (Source: US Census Bureau LEHD)

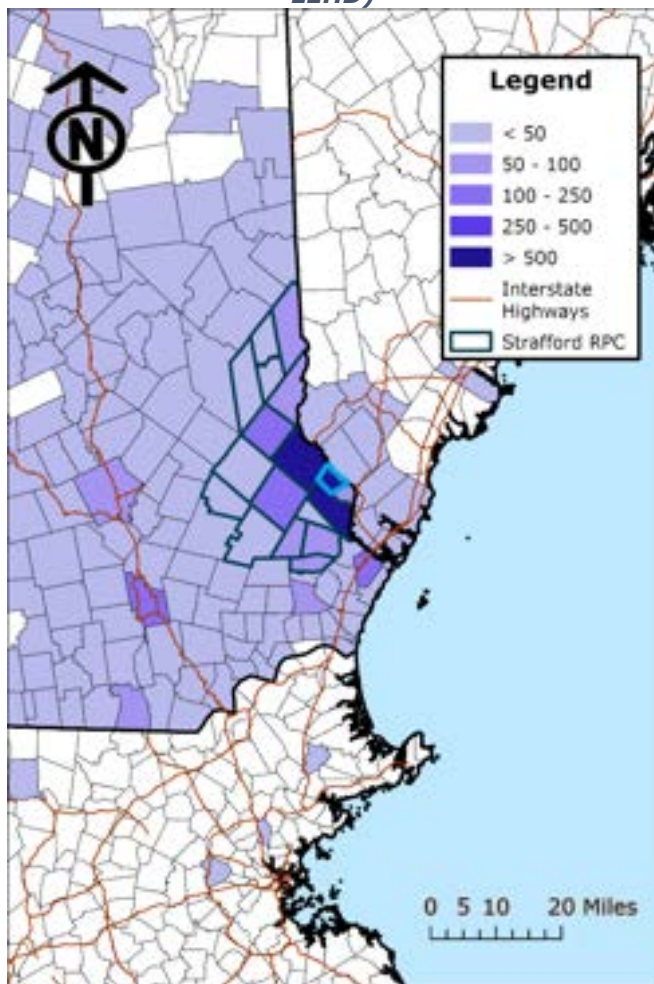
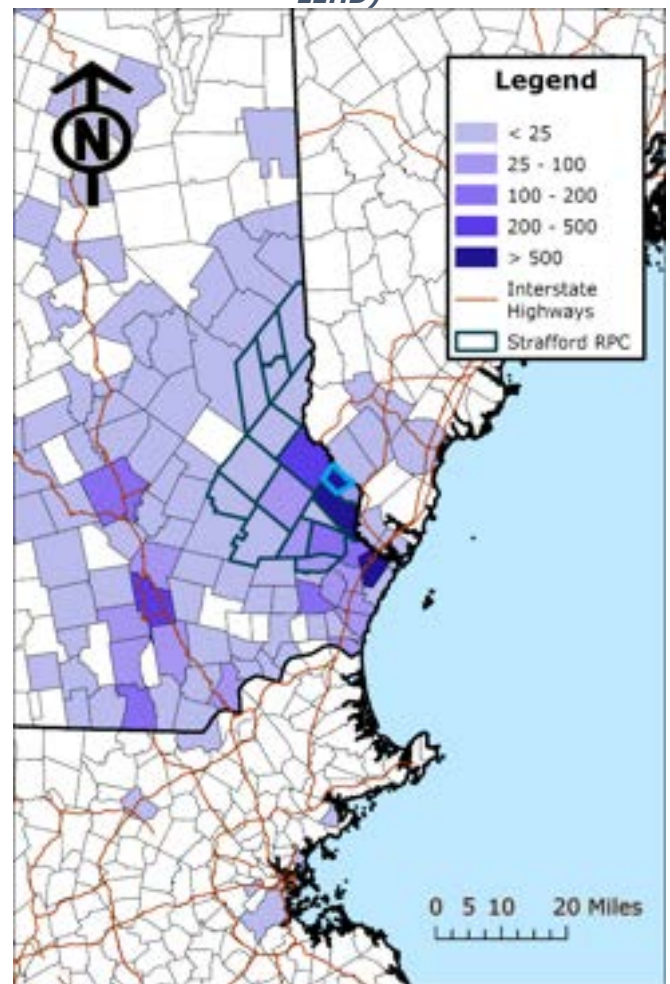


Figure 6: Work Locations of Somersworth Residents; 2023 (Source: US Census Bureau LEHD)



Supporting Existing Businesses and Entrepreneurship

During the outreach and engagement process, business owners noted that additional coordination and clarity on navigating regulations and permitting processes was a way to better support local businesses in the community. Processes such as these can be particularly difficult for small or new business owners looking to establish or expand in the City. Continued evaluation of permitting procedures, applications, and review processes at the municipal level can help identify opportunities for improved clarity for businesses going through these processes. Additionally, improved guidance materials for applications, such more robust online resources, may help new business owners understand and navigate local requirements and opportunities.

"Keep zoning/permitting simple."

Source: 2025 Business Survey

People also identified the importance of helping businesses navigate financing opportunities and technical assistance to support business development and expansion in the City. Strengthening coordination and collaboration with the Somersworth Community Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Strafford Economic Development Corporation

(SEDC), and state agencies could help improve the resources and information available to support businesses in the community.

Communication, Coordination, and Business Support

Some feedback highlighted the value of having a clear point of contact within the City to assist with business development, attraction, and marketing. Additionally, a designated economic development point of contact within the City may assist businesses through the local permitting and approval process, aid in identifying financing or other funding sources, and coordinate support with external organizations, such as the Small Business Development Center or the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), that can provide additional technical assistance. Additionally, a designated point of contact can act as the liaison between the business community and the City, so that the needs, concerns, and capacity of local businesses are well understood and more strongly considered in municipal decisions and efforts to support local economic development.

"Know your businesses. Taking the time to come in and connect with the businesses in the city."

"Better outreach from city economic committee talking with businesses about their needs."

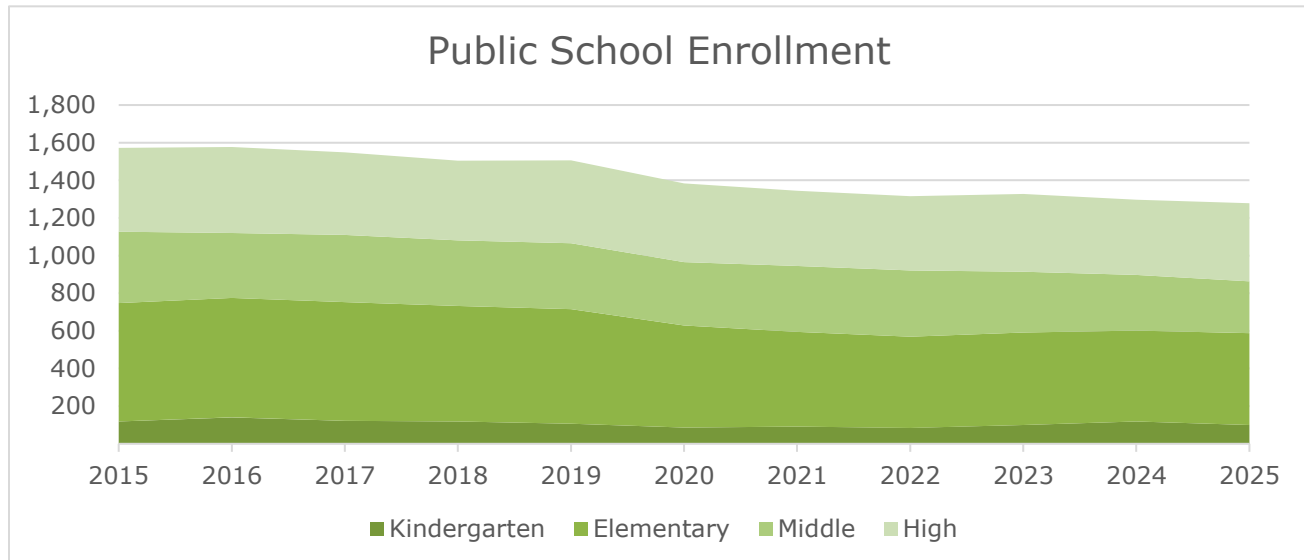
Source: 2025 Business Survey

Workforce Development and Retention

Throughout the region, workforce challenges are impacting businesses. In Somersworth, local business owners discussed hiring challenges and workforce availability as key concerns that impact the local economy. Aligning with these concerns, other community members discussed the key assets in the community that can support local workforce development, including the Somersworth Career Technical Center which provides specialized vocational and technical education and career paths. Strengthening coordination between the school district and local businesses can help align educational and workforce training opportunities with business and industry needs. Trends around the K-12 population group indicate a steady decline in public school enrollment over the past decade (**Figure 7**),^{vi} which could be attributed to several

factors including an overall decline in the number of children¹, or the introduction of Education Freedom Accounts in 2021 that allow public funds to be used for alternative education options.

Figure 7: Public School Enrollment; Somersworth; 2015 - 2025 (Source: NH Department of Education)



In addition to fostering relationships to strengthen the alignment of education, career pathways, and employer needs, feedback gathered also identified how other factors may be constraining the local economy and limiting workforce availability, including housing and childcare affordability and availability.

¹ US Census Bureau ACS shows a decline of over 250 children under 18 from 2014 to 2024.

Theme 3. Growth and Vibrancy Beyond the Downtown

Somersworth has well-established large commercial entities along key corridors including NH Route 108 and High Street (NH Route 9), which are main connections to neighboring communities and the Downtown. These key corridors and economic nodes provide significant employment within the community and contribute to the City's tax base, while also enhancing the diversity of businesses in Somersworth. Ensuring that investments in these areas continue to support existing businesses and promote new development and redevelopment are central to this theme.

Supporting Commercial Corridors

Commercial and industrial development outside of the City's downtown plays a key role in supporting the existing tax base and employment opportunities in the community. Corridors including NH Route 108 and southern portions of High Street (NH Route 9) provide significant large-scale retail and services that draw a substantial number of visitors and consumers to this area. Major commercial and industrial entities in these corridors include retailers such as Walmart, Target, and Home Depot; manufacturers including Velcro Companies; and many other businesses of all sizes providing goods and services. While these corridors provide significant employment, services, and commercial activity for residents and the broader region, feedback gathered highlighted the importance of ensuring that future development and redevelopment in these areas contribute to the overall character of the community. Supporting reinvestment and redevelopment along these corridors can help strengthen economic activity while utilizing existing infrastructure such as roads and utilities.

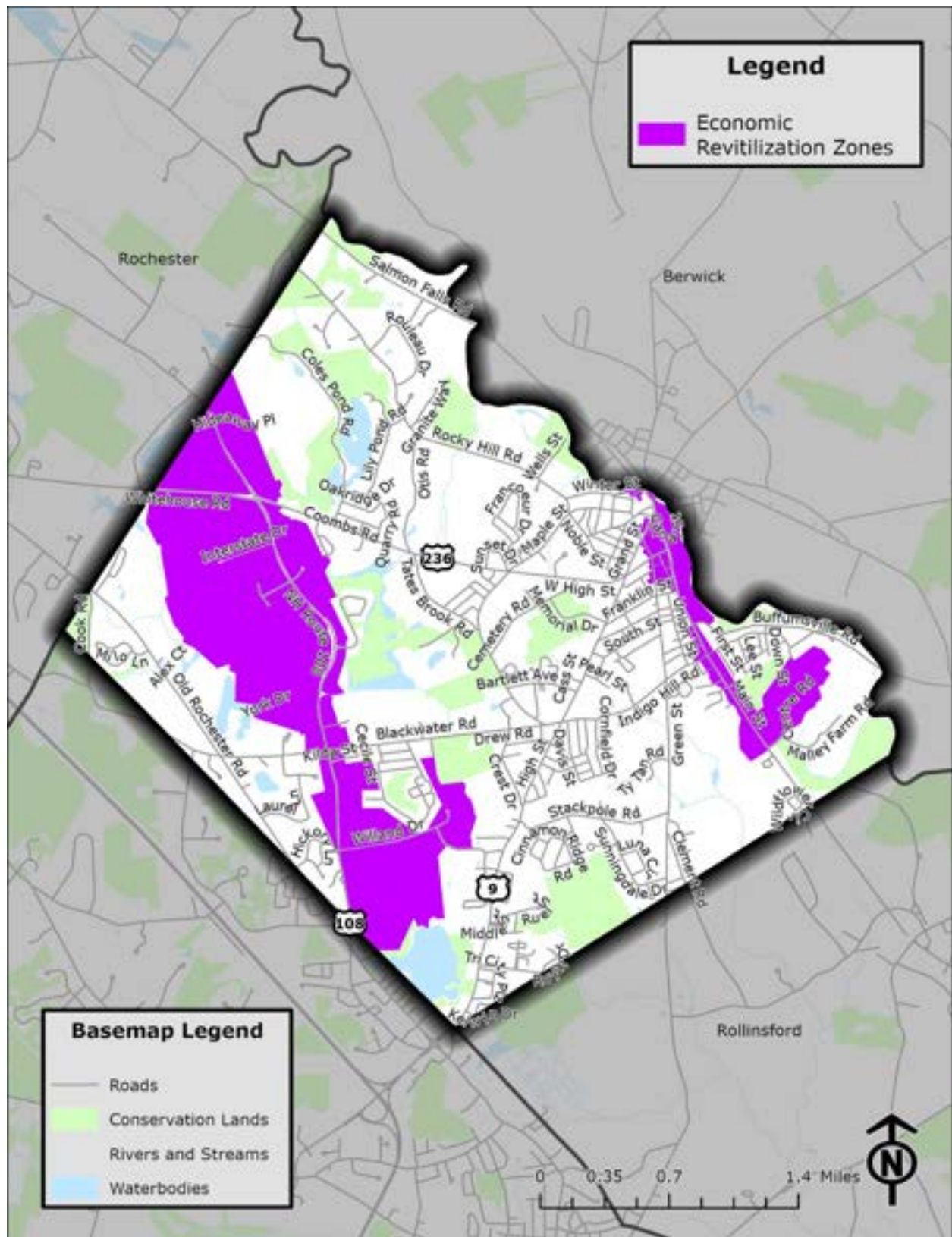
Connectivity to Commercial Corridors

Community members highlighted the importance of improving connections between neighborhoods, the Downtown, and the City's key commercial corridors. Improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle connections, and transit access can help strengthen connectivity and access in the community while reducing the significant vehicle traffic pressures in these areas, especially along sections of High Street (NH Route 9).

Economic Development Tools

Supporting redevelopment along these corridors can help improve economic activity in underutilized or vacant parcels. Economic development tools like those mentioned in theme one can be leveraged in these commercial areas as well. The City currently has several designated ERZs including outside of the downtown core, that can be leveraged to attract business growth and expansion (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8: Economic Revitalization Zones; Somersworth; 2026 (Source: NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs)

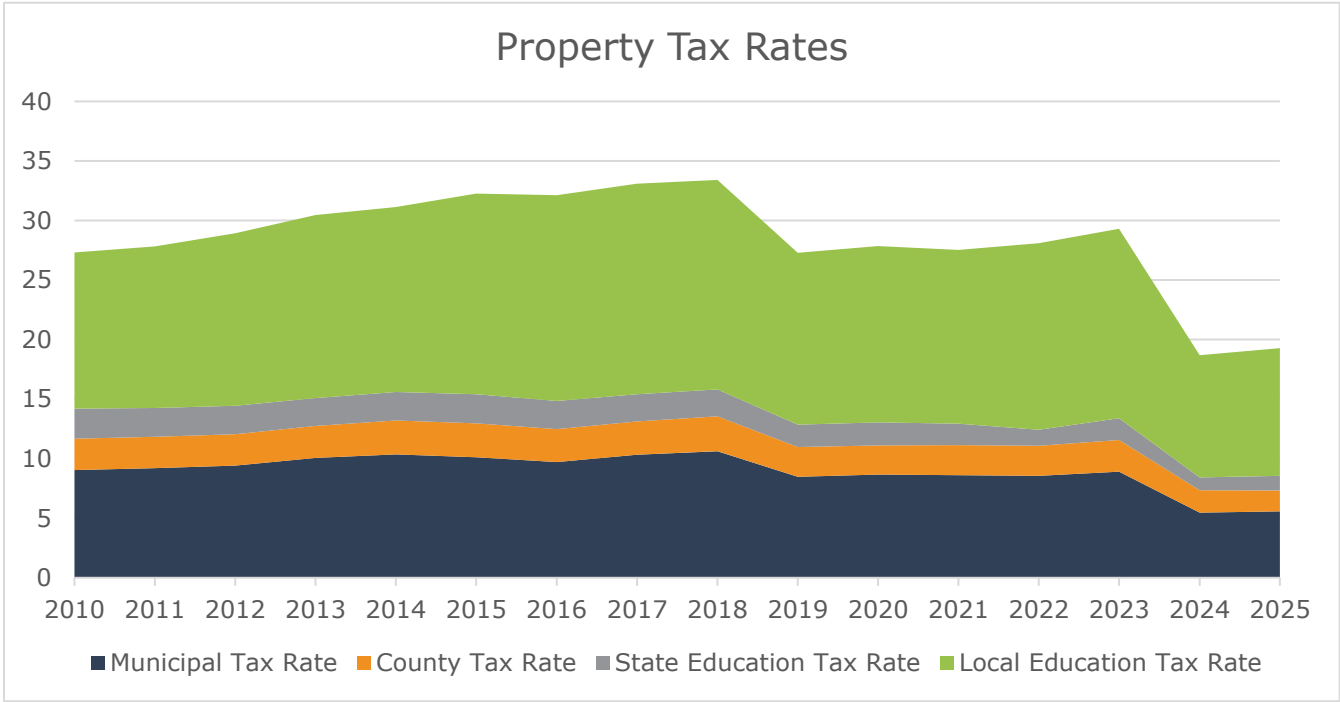


Tax Base Diversification

Similar to many communities in the region, property tax rates in Somersworth have been declining since 2018, even as total assessed valuation has continued to rise. This trend is largely a reflection of increasing property values, rather than an expanding commercial base, underscoring the importance of broadening the City’s tax base **(Figure 9)**.

Areas beyond the downtown core are home to Somersworth several major employers that play a significant role in the local economy, including Walmart Supercenter, ContiTech, and Target. These employers not only provide substantial employment opportunities for residents of Somersworth and the surrounding communities, but they also represent some of the largest contributors to the City’s property tax base. Based on the City’s 2024 assessed property values^{vii} and the 2025 rate of \$19.27 per \$1000 of assessed value^{viii}, these three businesses generate an estimated \$760,000 per year in property taxes, the majority of which supports local services (City, School District, County). Strengthening and diversifying the commercial base beyond the Downtown through targeted economic development strategies, infrastructure investments, and land use planning will help the City achieve long term resiliency and fiscal stability, while reducing reliance on residential property taxes for individuals and families.

Figure 9: Property Tax Rates; Somersworth; 2010-2025 (Source: NHDRA and NH Public Finance Consortium).

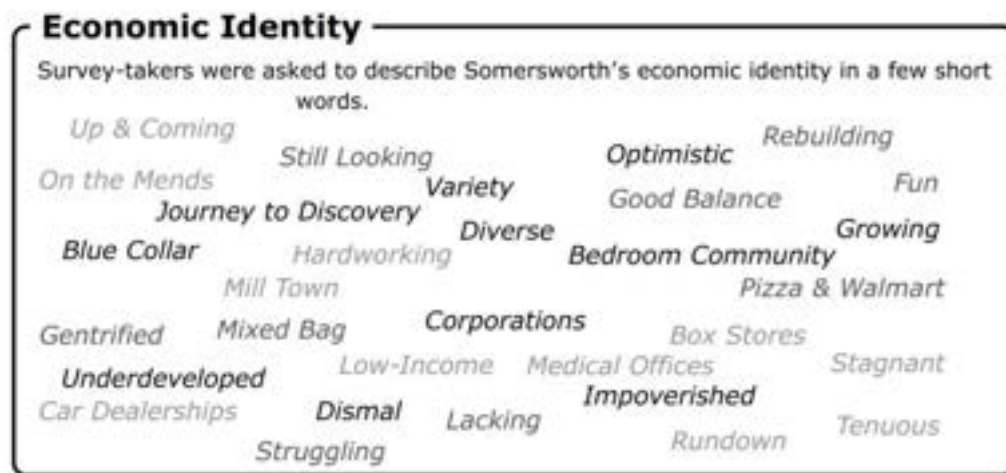


Theme 4. Strong Identity and Regional Economic Partnerships

As one of the communities making up the “Tri-Cities”, and its proximity to Berwick, Maine, Somersworth is uniquely situated for collaboration and coordination for growth and development. Community members noted that establishing stronger regional relationships would strengthen Somersworth’s position and identity for greater vibrancy and investment.

Community Identity and Promotion

Throughout the outreach process, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders expressed pride in Somersworth history, affordability relative to neighboring communities, and a strong sense of community. However, many discussed outdated perceptions of the City that continue to impact how Somersworth is viewed within the region and by some in the community.



Source: Somersworth Master Plan Survey 2025

Residents expressed the need for Somersworth to clearly identify the community’s identity. Highlighting Somersworth’s assets, including its historic character, downtown, local businesses, redevelopment opportunities, riverfront, and housing developments are key to promoting community growth. Developing a strong, consistent, economic development narrative for the City, by stressing past and current efforts in new business development, public investments, and community events, can help support the identification of Somersworth’s identity and continued progress that is being made, highlighting it as a desirable, adaptable, and prudent place for investment and development.

Regional Partnerships and Collaboration

Residents, workers, and visitors frequently travel between Somersworth, Dover, Rochester, Berwick, and other surrounding communities for employment, shopping, recreation, and more, highlighting the importance of regional relationships and coordinated efforts for economic development. Community members identified how opportunities to strengthen relationships with Berwick, Maine, whose downtown is located directly next to downtown Somersworth across the Salmon Falls River connected by a bridge, are critically important. Downtown Berwick is undergoing significant redevelopment, bringing new business and housing into their community’s center. Stronger relationships with Berwick, through coordinated efforts for

wayfinding, transportation improvements, and community events, can benefit Somersworth and the broader region.

Community Engagement for Economic Development

Several underutilized or previously developed sites in the City might present opportunities for future redevelopment. Community members identified places such as Main Street and former Aclara properties as places with potential for future housing, mixed-use development, or community spaces.

"Main St. The old GE. The Plaza. Driving down Main St you can tell what a thriving area it once was. It is a tough area of town to change. With the buildings all being privately owned. The apartments feel congested while the area across from them feels abandoned."

Source: Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Economic Development Goals and Actions

The following goals and actions were developed based on the themes that guide this chapter. These themes, goals, and actions are established by the priorities identified through public and municipal engagement efforts, and analyses of the existing and projected future conditions facing the City of Somersworth. For each goal, actions are listed in order of highest priority and potential impact, based on a ranking exercise conducted with Planning Board members in April 2026.

Goals

Actions

Goal 1: Strengthen downtown Somersworth as a vibrant center for local businesses, arts, dining, and everyday services that cater to the needs of residents and visitors.

Support the revitalization and adaptive reuse of underutilized and vacant properties in the downtown and riverfront areas.

Attract destination businesses and cultural spaces that provide services and activities that promote the downtown as a place to gather and spend time.

Coordinate City Departments, NH DOT, and other stakeholders in discussions to route additional traffic on Main Street through traffic pattern adjustments.

Identify and prioritize downtown areas with physical, social, and economic conditions conducive to the establishment of third spaces, such as underutilized plazas or publicly accessible indoor spaces.

Highlight opportunities for redevelopment and new development downtown that may utilize the City's adopted form-based code standards.

Ensure streetscape, parking, and historic preservation efforts directly support downtown businesses.

Seek out facade improvement programs, small-scale grants, or low-interest loans to assist local businesses and property owners with visible improvements.

Develop a plan for the proposed Riverwalk and identify funding and partnerships to

develop a publicly accessible riverfront space.

Develop a strategy for enhanced wayfinding throughout the downtown, including connections to businesses, neighborhoods, parking, and natural and cultural assets.

Goal 2: Retain and help strengthen existing local businesses and attract new businesses to the community.

Identify local regulatory barriers facing business establishment and expansion.

Strengthen business attraction efforts.

Establish new tools and strengthen existing resources that provide support with navigating the process of establishing a business in Somersworth.

Designate a city staff liaison to serve as a single point of contact to provide guidance and support to businesses.

Goal 3: Strengthen and retain the existing workforce, and promote workforce attraction.

Develop a targeted marketing campaign designed to attract workforce by promoting the quality-of-life assets that the City has to offer.

Promote and carry out housing, transportation, historic and cultural resource, and other relevant Master Plan actions to ensure that Somersworth is an affordable, accessible, and connected community that is attractive and affordable for individuals and families.

Coordinate efforts to collaborate and share information on workforce needs and educational and training opportunities between businesses, the Somersworth Community Chamber of Commerce, the Somersworth School District, and other stakeholders.

Goal 4: Encourage continued development and investments along key corridors in the City, such as NH 108, High Street (NH 9), and industrial areas.

Identify and prioritize underutilized parcels along key corridors for commercial or mixed-use development potential.

Ensure that efforts to attract, retain, and expand businesses along key commercial corridors are prioritized alongside ongoing economic development initiatives within the downtown.

Identify economic development tools and incentives (such as Opportunity Zones, Economic Revitalization Zones, Central Business Service Districts, etc.) that can help catalyze development or redevelopment in underutilized areas to enhance employment opportunities and expand the city's tax base.

Collaborate between city departments, local and regional organizations, and the public to identify multi-modal connections to economic nodes outside of the downtown area.

Goal 5: Establish an economic identity for Somersworth.

Regularly engage with the community to identify Somersworth's unique cultural and social strengths.

Leverage community input and vision in planning and implementation initiatives to steward local pride.

Review past accomplishments in the community to improve conditions and regularly promote past and ongoing projects with residents.

Goal 6: Identify shared opportunities and goals with neighboring communities, particularly downtown Berwick, Maine, to promote shared growth and community vitality.

Strengthen relationships with Berwick, Maine to collaborate in efforts to better connect the two communities and compliment respective downtown offerings.

Engage in regular conversations with town staff in neighboring communities.

Resources

- I. [Economic Revitalization Zones](#)
- II. [RSA 79-E Guide](#)
- III. [Tax Increment Financing](#)
- IV. [Opportunity Zones](#)
- V. [Central Business Districts \(See RSAs 31:120-125\)](#)
- VI. [Small Business Development Center](#)
- VII. [Somersworth Community Chamber of Commerce](#)
- VIII. [Strafford Regional Planning Commission](#)

Appendix A – Supplemental Data and Maps

Figure 10: Form Based Code; Somersworth; 2025 (Source: City of Somersworth)

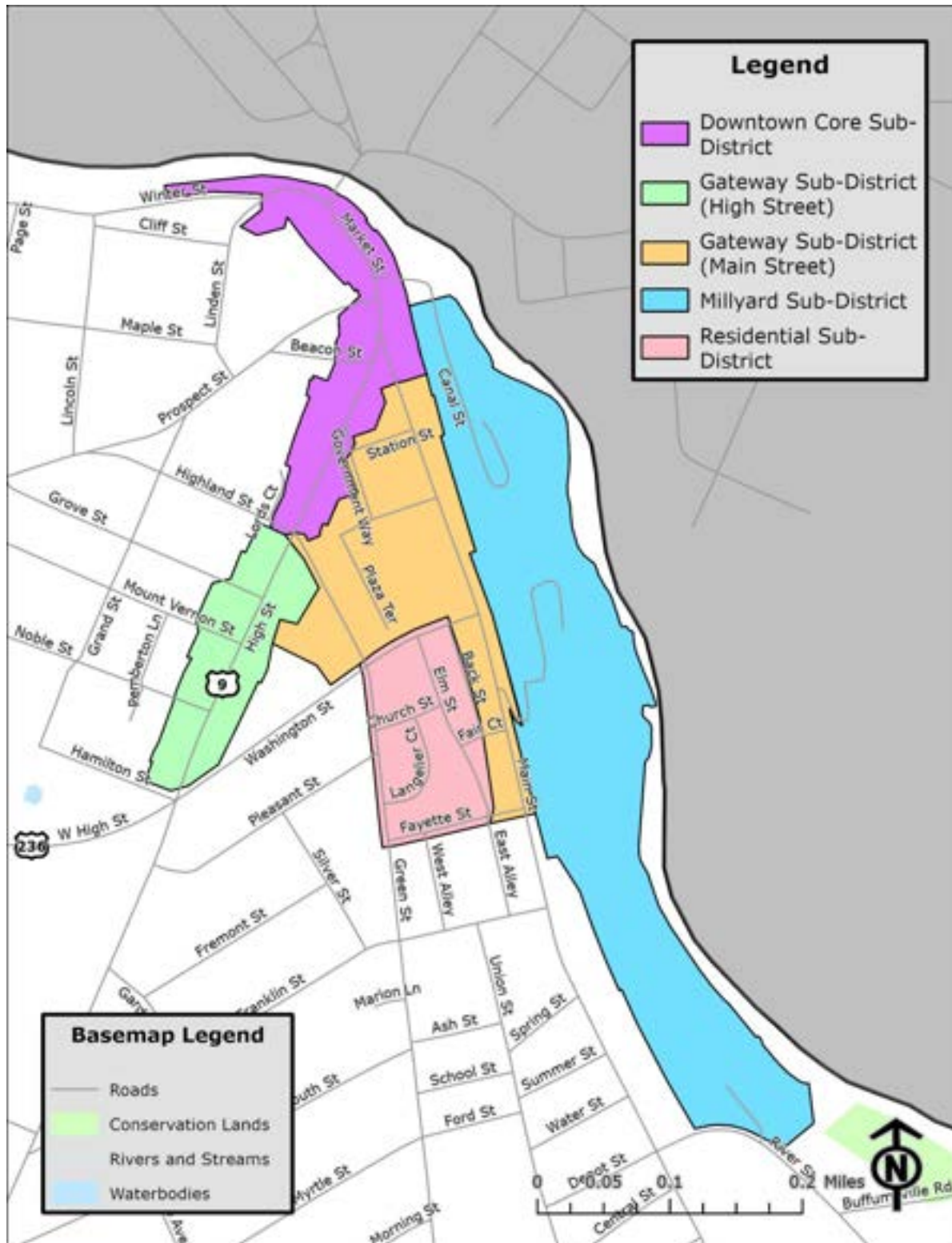
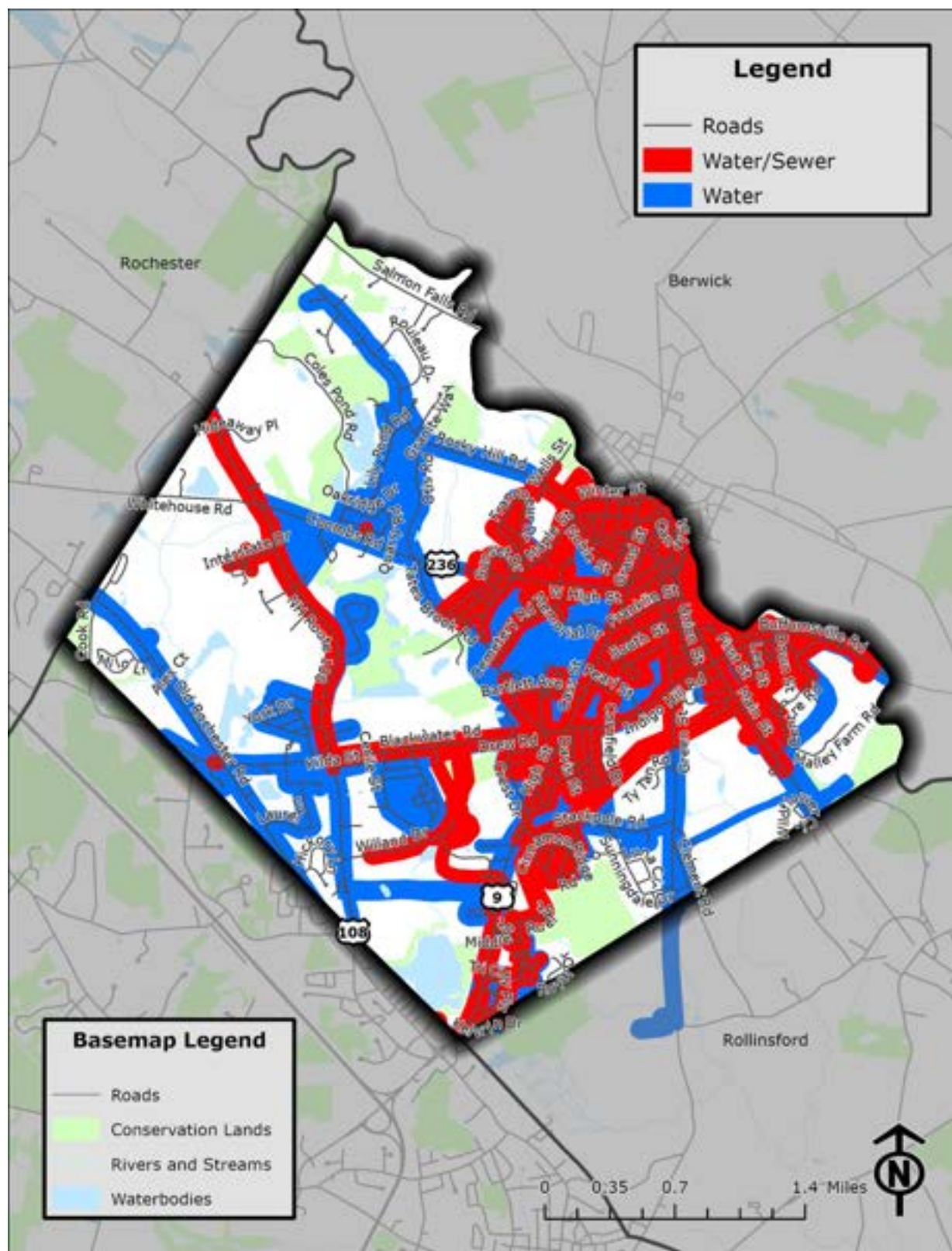


Figure 11: Water and Sewer; Somersworth: 2026 (City of Somersworth)



ⁱ NH Employment Security

ⁱⁱ NH Employment Security

ⁱⁱⁱ US Census Bureau ACS

^{iv} US Census Bureau ACS

^{vv} NHES Covered Employment and Wages, (QCEW), 2001-2024

^{vi} NH Department of Education

^{vii} https://www.somersworthnh.gov/system/files/uploads/2024_preliminary_values_by_address.pdf

^{viii} https://www.somersworthnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif1226/f/uploads/copy_of_2025-updated_tax_rate_summary_for_website.pdf



Somersworth Master Plan

VISION CHAPTER

Adopted July 15, 2026

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A Vision for Somersworth

Introduction

The City of Somersworth's Vision Statement and Chapter is part of a comprehensive series of updates to the City's Master Plan in 2025 and 2026. This Vision Statement and Chapter were informed by analyzing the existing conditions of Somersworth, organizing the goals and visions of related plans and recently completed Master Plan chapters, and most importantly, incorporating the community's voice.

The Vision Chapter captures the long-term aspirations for the community and is built on the collective input and feedback from residents, business owners, and others with a stake in Somersworth's future. Throughout 2025, surveys, workshops, and other engagement opportunities gathered insights from people connected to Somersworth to develop three key themes for shaping the future of the City.

1. Strengthening Our Future Identity
2. Sights and Assets
3. Somersworth and the Greater Seacoast

Community Engagement

A survey and community forum ([Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)) were developed for the Vision chapter, with questions and activities focused on the community's perceived character and anticipated changes to both Somersworth as a community and the region. The development of the Vision chapter coincided with the Transportation, Economic Development, and Historic and Cultural Resources chapters. This allowed discussion of many topics to build off one another organically. For instance, the survey included questions about the future of Route 108. Many individuals spoke broadly to the types of businesses that are found there currently, but some individuals responded with requests for specific infrastructure improvements that would improve the corridor as a place to walk or bike, and others were curious about opportunities to enhance the greenspace found at Willand Pond.

Figure 1: Community Forum welcome sign at the black box theater within the Somersworth Career Technical Center (Source: SRPC)



Excerpts from survey responses are found throughout this chapter. A total of 307 responses were collected in the survey conducted in August and September 2025. The community forum, held in November 2025, attracted over 30 attendees.

Conversations with the Mayor's Housing Task Force, the Planning Board and Planning Department staff, and Superintendent of Schools proved invaluable to the Vision chapter. The Mayor's Housing Task Force provided multiple accounts of the evolution of Somersworth's neighborhoods, giving a historical context to the physical appearance of different areas in the city. The Planning Board and Planning Department offered current building and development trends in Somersworth and how they have impacted demand for city services. The Superintendent of Schools held the perspective of wishing to foster a civically minded and engaged student population in Somersworth. The K-12 school system is often one of the most diverse sections of a community, capturing a spectrum of income ranges, cultures and speakers of languages other than English, ages, and abilities. Somersworth is no exception.

Figure 2: City Councilor David Witham and City Engineer Mike Bobinsky Discuss Modes of Transportation with Community Members (Source: SRPC)



Our Vision for the Future

The Somersworth community is at a crossroads – a mill town with a historic main street that is anxious to reinvigorate itself with a diverse range of people, businesses, activities, celebrations, foods, and cultures, to evolve from the “bedroom community” role it took on in the twentieth century. The community has an opportunity to create a new, defined identity for Somersworth as it progresses through the 2020s and into the 2030s.

Whether through city branding, new events, diverse business types, or improved connectivity – all suggestions made throughout the Master Planning process – it is clear that Somersworth has many tools at its disposal to distinguish itself within the state and region.

The competitive housing market in the Greater Seacoast has shaped much of the description of Somersworth in decades past – the housing market is something that has happened *to* Somersworth, rather than Somersworth independently being a *driver*, a *leader*, and a community with *pull* factors.

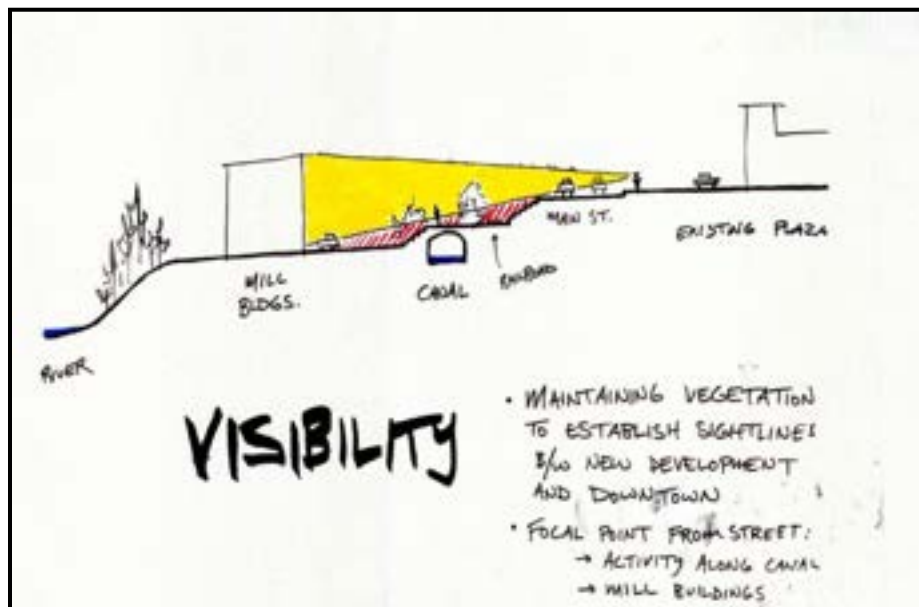
Somersworth's Vision

The Hilltop City will be a forward thinking and right-sized destination that serves, accommodates, replenishes, and inspires the widest range of ages, abilities, backgrounds, and cultures.

Theme 1. Strengthening Our Future Identity

The City has made strides on several fronts to make Somersworth an *attractor*, with planned expansions to the trail network, innovative zoning that emphasizes the look and feel of the downtown, and a charretteⁱ to reimagine Somersworth Plaza since the previous Master Plan (**Figure 3**). The recently adopted Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan promotes “a more connected, resilient, sustainable, and accessible community.” Coordination and integration of planning efforts, along with a consistent branding of community vision and future land use objectives will help to create a cohesive future identity for the City. For placemaking efforts to appear integrated within the community, the City government’s own branding and image is beneficial for stoking economic development and building excitement for physical spaces, as well as the dissemination of information.

Figure 3: Illustration Produced from the Results of the 2017 Charette (Source: City of Somersworth)



Attention-grabbing wayfinding signage in both downtown and along Route 108 would be instrumental for local businesses and city attractions, as well as for parking management and other safety concerns. A prior planning studyⁱⁱ that assessed access to and utilization of several of Somersworth’s parks found that many residents were not aware of nearby amenities. Signage is a cost-effective way to increase awareness of local businesses and city attractions, which in turn drives economic benefits to the community. A plan for wayfinding signs and their dispersion across an area can be fine-tuned to a community’s size and budget needs, where key attractions, points of interest, encouragement of safe driving, and parking management can be prioritized. A reassessment of the current logo, color scheme, slogan, and other markers may be valuable when paired with these potential additions to the cityscape.

"[Somersworth is] Currently reliant on corporations, I would love a transition to unique small businesses."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Civic Engagement

Inside city halls nationwide, citizen representation is a growing focus, and municipal leaders are exploring engagement formats that cater to populations that may not be able to attend traditional meetings or may feel uncomfortable in similar public feedback settings. Local governments are learning that social media is a tool for boosting civic engagement. Short-form content is one way to illustrate the City's projects and long-term vision in an unobstructive, digestible manner, as well as being informative during inclement weather and for public safety.

For Somersworth, engaging with children and families is a priority, as the current Public Schools Superintendent has indicated a desire to bring the planning process to his students. Strengthening the relationship between civic readiness and the schools, the current Mayor also serves as a middle school science teacher in the Somersworth school system. School enrollment has plateaued if not fallen since the pandemic, and Planning Board members have highlighted families as a particular demographic to attract to the City through encouraging family-sized housing.

Neighborhood and Landscape Variety

The community is characterized by its distinct landscapes creating what has been referred to as "Two Somersworths," broadly recognized as the historic downtown with its mills and surrounding neighborhoods, and the more recently developed Route 108 and High Street corridors. They are representative of different phases of Somersworth's evolution. Originally, the mills, and later the General Electric meter factory, made Somersworth a daytime hub. Many commuted into the city for much of the twentieth century. As Portsmouth, Dover, and other communities in the region grew, and industry fell away, Somersworth began a transition toward a "bedroom community" and also a local retail hub. This is evident in the development patterns of the Route 108 and Weeks Crossing areas. Within residential areas, it is apparent that the historic Hill neighborhood of downtown housed the industries' elites, and other areas like The Brickyard and Smokey Hollow housed workers and their families. Subdivision-style housing appears after World War II, near the suburban arterials of High Street and Route 108, and scattered elsewhere in the City.

"Compared to a few of the surrounding communities, Somersworth's downtown has yet to measure up. Manufacturing is here, but is there enough?"

"The history of our homes and downtown should be celebrated and shared."

"...108, blackwater area. Just seem like... a passer by in [these] areas."

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Theme 2. Sights and Assets

Several “favorite” past and present amenities, businesses, and recreation opportunities, both public and provide, cited by the community in the Master Plan survey and in conversation at the Community Forum include:

- Hilltop Fun Center
- New England Sports Hub
- The Oaks golf course
- Noble Pines Splash Pad
- Lions Club Skating Rink
- ROSO Soccer Fields
- Jules Bisson Park
- The former Stripe 9 Brewing Company

This is by no means a comprehensive list, and families and community members of all household types expressed desire for local attractions and “things to do.” This ranges from particular restaurants and retail types, to performance venues and enhanced recreation spaces.

Water Resources and Green Spaces

Somersworth has a unique “belt” of wetlands and green spaces surrounding its downtown, and the community is interested in exploring potential connections to Willand Pond, Malley Farm, and the Salmon Falls River to form a comprehensive trail and greenspace network. The Riverwalk is reported as underutilized and presents an opportunity to connect to downtown energy and amenities. A long-term vision of the Berwick Comprehensive (master) Plan includes a pedestrian bridge across the Salmon Falls River and notes the Mast Point Dam as an “out-and-back” kayak destination from their own kayak launch.ⁱⁱⁱ Lastly, a green corridor surrounding Willand Pond could counterbalance the more heavily developed High Street and Route 108. Enhancements to greenspace and water-based recreation can serve as a catalyst for complimentary businesses and further add to the *pull* factors that could make Somersworth a regional destination.

“...park area with bars and restaurants by the water... [like the] San Antonio Texas river walk. All outside walking bars restaurants and stores.”

“A completely revamped area would be awesome. Something like the Roanoke City Market in Va. a food hall, storefronts, a few restaurants, a brewery - a real destination tucked into downtown.”

“I feel that we need more kids centered businesses in Somersworth. Maybe some family friendly entertainment. There are very few options for indoor kids entertainment in Somersworth or really the tri city area.”

“Businesses that attract younger populations to want to live here.”

Source: 2025 Master Plan Survey

Theme 3. Somersworth and the Greater Seacoast

Salmon Falls River and Downtown

Many of Somersworth's community assets transcend town and city lines. On the Salmon Falls, or Newichawannock River, what we now recognize as downtown Somersworth, was the historic Great Falls village. It was originally a part of Dover and quickly became an industrial town and later a small rail hub along with neighboring Berwick.^{iv} At the time of this Master Plan, Berwick is undergoing a revitalization of its own, and Somersworth seeks to grow together with Berwick. There is an opportunity for intermunicipal collaboration for the betterment of both. For example, the community does not want to see one municipality or the other be wholly responsible for traffic concerns on either side of the bridge. The evolution of both communities is visible in **Figure 4****Figure-6** below.

Figure 46: Downtown Somersworth and Berwick as seen in 1951 (left) and 2022 (right)
(Sources: State of Maine^v; GRANIT GIS^{vi})



Regional Transportation and Commercial Corridor

Near the Willand Pond area within Somersworth and Dover, the name "Gates Corner" appears on maps by 1944^{vii} (**Figure 5****Figure-7**) next to what we currently recognize as today's High Street, Indian Brook Drive, and Route 108. For those traveling to Rochester or Somersworth, this intersection appears to have been the key "split" to travel to these two neighboring

communities for decades prior to World War II regardless of map labels. Today, it remains a critical node for connections within Strafford County.

Figure 57: 1944 Map of the Weeks Crossing Area Prior to Construction of the Spaulding Turnpike
(Source: USGS)



At the time of this Master Plan, efforts are underway to design and implement a “complete streets” upgrade^{viii} that would improve safety for all transportation modes along the Route 108 corridor. Designs consider bus stops, bike lanes, sidewalks, and vehicle travel lanes with safer speeds along this regional corridor. Municipalities across the state are searching for commercial activity to offset tax burdens on residents. Through zoning changes that are currently underway in 2026, Somersworth will be fostering safe and pedestrian-friendly areas near its commercial and industrial hubs with responsible housing that allows a workforce to be walking distance from employment and daily amenities.

Collaboration

Somersworth shares a wide range of resources with bordering communities. There is economic potential along the Route 108 corridor that can enhance the existing types of development found there. Both Willand Pond and the Salmon Falls River are shared assets with neighboring communities and collaboration is needed. Small-area plans, such as the one found in [Figure 6](#)~~Figure 8~~, enhance cross-communication and allow community members from multiple communities to feel ownership and attachment to a location. At the riverfront, a small-area plan or another neighborhood plan effort could inspire a vibrant gathering place or a continuous town center with Berwick in the same way. Small area planning and any engagement that accompanies them enables all to work in coordination, and further the possible collective impact with a shared vision that can be referenced and used to create detailed actions beyond this citywide Master Plan. As an example, some communities’ parks and planning departments have

held “placemaking festivals” to help the community imagine re-activated spaces and build excitement for new businesses or community spaces for strip mall areas similar to the Somersworth Plaza or Tri-City Plaza ([Figure 7](#)[Figure-9](#)).

Figure 68: Partial Map of Major Drainage Features in the 1979 Willand Pond Master Plan (Source: City of Dover^{ix})

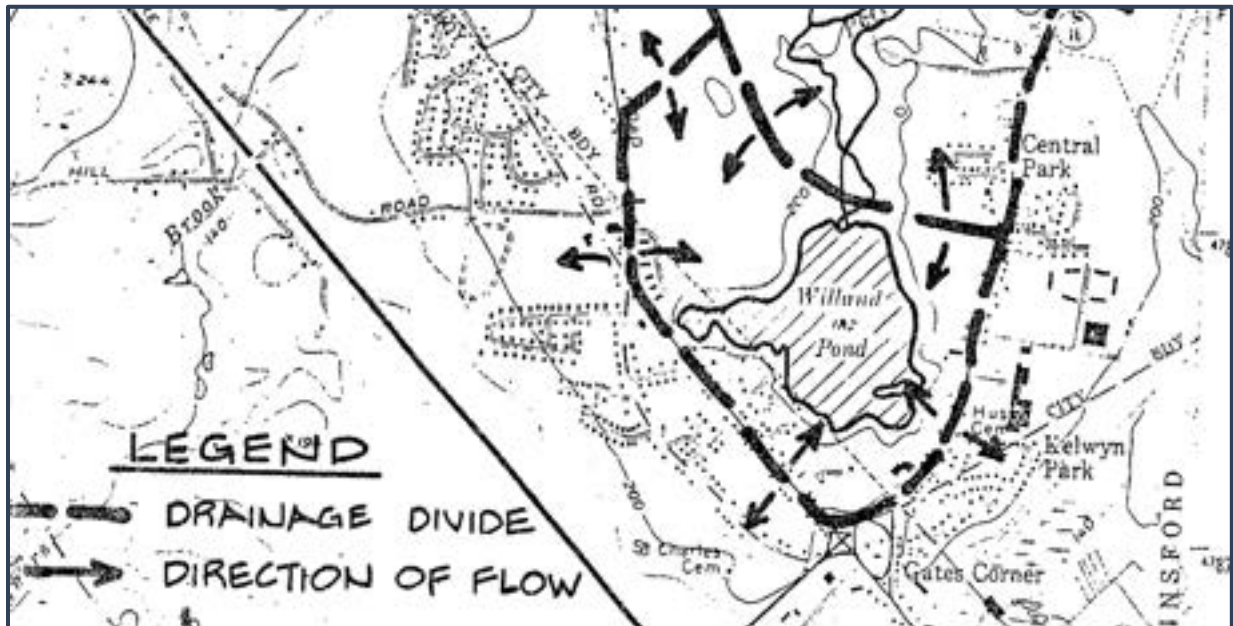


Figure 29: Example Placemaking Festival to Imagine a Repurposed Strip Mall development that had Fallen into Disrepair (Source: Montgomery County, Maryland^x)



Vision Goals and Actions

The following goals and actions were developed based on the themes that guide this chapter. These themes, goals, and actions are established by the priorities identified through public and municipal engagement efforts, and analyses of the existing and projected future conditions facing the City of Somersworth. For each goal, actions are listed in order of highest priority and potential impact, based on a ranking exercise conducted with Planning Board members in April 2026.

Goals	Actions
Goal 1: Define Somersworth’s identity for 2030 and beyond.	Define, enhance, and preserve Somersworth’s neighborhoods and their character. Craft engaging and compelling outreach that excites and informs all ages, abilities, and groups. Identify need and funding source for uniform wayfinding signage. Actively recruit underrepresented populations to advisory boards, committees, and other volunteer positions. Identify need and workflow for including K-12 engagement in the capital improvements planning process. Use Form-Based Code zoning formats to encourage placemaking in more areas of Somersworth.

Goal 2: Expand Somersworth’s green corridors and trail network to improve neighborhood access to parks, regional trails, and water-based recreation.

Identify business types that pair well with recreation.

Hold a charrette or other organized effort to energize the community for a refreshed riverwalk area.

Create regulatory incentives in the site plan and subdivision process to include connections to Somersworth’s trail network.

Conduct comprehensive trail mapping and an illustrative or future trail network map.

Goal 3: Identify and utilize regional collaboration opportunities.

Identify the need for collaborative small-area plans, such as Dover and Rollinsford in the Weeks Crossing area, and Berwick for the riverfront.

Review regional progression of housing production; not only for net units built, but affordability and types.

Identify joint planning opportunities for trails and greenspace.

Resources

- I. [Example Wayfinding Plan \(Presentation\), Holyoke, Massachusetts](#)
- II. [Capital Improvements Plan](#) (Malley Farm proj. no. B2)
- III. [Placemaking Festival](#)

Sources

-
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