



**City of Somersworth**  
**Resource Guide for Business Development**  
**2020**

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## *Proud Past - Bright Future*

Welcome to the City of Somersworth, New Hampshire. This handbook is intended to be an introduction and guideline through the development process in Somersworth. It is designed as a reference manual. The Department of Development Services should be contacted prior to any development on site, so that specifics about your property and your unique development concept may be reviewed. There is a great team at the City of Somersworth, and we are all anxious to assist you in any ways that may be helpful. Please reach out to any one of us at any time.

[www.Somersworth.com](http://www.Somersworth.com)

*We are here to help!*

### **Key City Contacts:**

- City Manager | Bob Belmore  
[bbelmore@somersworth.com](mailto:bbelmore@somersworth.com) | 603- 692- 9503
- Deputy City Manager/Finance Director | Scott Smith  
[sasmith@somersworth.com](mailto:sasmith@somersworth.com) | 603- 692- 9504
- Economic Development Manager | Robin Comstock  
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- Director of Public Works and Utilities | Michael Bobinsky  
[mbobinsky@somersworth.com](mailto:mbobinsky@somersworth.com) | 603-692-4266
- Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director | Keith E. Hoyle  
[khoyle@somersworth.com](mailto:khoyle@somersworth.com) | 603-692-3457
- Chief of Police | David B. Kretschmar  
[dkretschmar@somersworth.com](mailto:dkretschmar@somersworth.com) | 603-692-3131

## Somersworth Development Incentives

**Economic Revitalization Zone** | The most notable tax incentive offered to Somersworth business is the ERZ. It is an incentive for new and existing business to relocate, expand, and create at least one new job. With the ERZ tax credit program, you may be eligible for tax credits to be used against your business profits tax and business enterprise tax.

To qualify for the ERZ, projects must create new jobs and expand the economic base for the state. Projects can range from the creation of new facilities, to the rehabilitation of existing structures. The City of Somersworth has two ERZ's that offer potential tax savings to employers who invest in facilities and jobs. ERZ tax credits are short-term tax credits against the business and enterprise taxes. The total maximum amount of the credit is \$200,000, which is spread over five years. The total credit is based on the amount invested in the facility and the number of jobs created.

The state of New Hampshire Business and Economic Affairs Division (NHBEA) has prepared a FAQ list for your consideration, which can be found on their website. Somersworth is working closely with the exceptional NHBEA team, to ensure you have every opportunity to take advantage of available tax incentives that may help make your development project a reality.

More Information about the Economic Revitalization Zone and the application may be found at [www.NHeconomy.com](http://www.NHeconomy.com)

**Opportunity Zone** | A once in a generation investment opportunity. The new Opportunity Zone program is intended to offer a tax incentive for investors to reinvest their unrealized capital gains into qualified Opportunity Funds. These funds will invest in projects located within Opportunity Zones, which are certified by the Secretary of Treasury. The goal of the Opportunity Zone is to spur economic development. Opportunity Fund investors will receive a deferral of taxes owed on unrealized capital, and if the investor holds the investment in the Opportunity Fund for at least 10 years, the investor will be eligible for an increase on the basis of the original investment, which will mean significantly less tax owed at the end of the term.

**Somersworth Solar Exemption** | We are also pleased to let you know that in 2017 the City adopted RSA 72-62. This is a solar infrastructure exemption (for residential and commercial use) from the assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property which is equipped with a solar energy system.

## Somersworth Development Incentives

**Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive** | The City has adopted State RSA 79-E, which offers a significant property tax savings for qualified rehabilitation projects in the newly revitalized downtown district. This valuable tax incentive offers up to five years of property tax assessment freeze (stay) for property owners who make a significant investment in a downtown building.

The way it works is simple. If a redevelopment project will result in a substantial rehabilitation, any new taxable value directly generated by the renovation could be free from the levying of property taxes for the following periods:

- Up to five years for a substantial rehabilitation
- Up to two additional years for new residential units
- Up to four additional years for affordable residential units
- Up to four additional years for a property listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places

If a site is declared to be a public benefit to enhance Somersworth's Downtown Revitalization District with respect to economic activity, cultural and historic character, sense of community, and in-town residential uses that contribute to economic and social vitality, it may qualify for a 79-E tax credit. Or, if it is determined that your site is a public benefit that encourages the rehabilitation of underutilized structures in the downtown as a means of encouraging growth of economic, residential, and municipal uses in a more compact pattern, it too may qualify for 79-E. Call our office to learn more about this great program at 603-692-9519.

Somersworth Economic Development Manager | Robin Comstock | 603-692-9516

New Hampshire BEA Tax Incentive Manager | Bridgette Beckwith | 603-271-2341

*We are here to help!*

Information about tax incentives, and more, may be found at  
[www.Somersworth.com](http://www.Somersworth.com) [and] [www.nheconomy.com](http://www.nheconomy.com)

## **The Business Development Process**

This section of the Resource Guide will overview the steps of the development process. For the purpose of a high-level overview, bringing a business into Somersworth is divided into three sections:

1. Taking over an existing business /commercial unit
2. Changing the physical structure of an existing building
3. Building a business from the ground up

### **Taking over an existing business /commercial unit**

If you are taking over a turnkey business in Somersworth you will need to obtain a Change of Use Permit from the City's building inspector/code enforcement office. Changing the use of the premises may trigger additional City review regarding life safety, parking, drainage, etc. so please call our office before you begin any work. If you are changing the interior layout of the business, you must obtain a building permit first. The renovations may trigger installation of a fire protection system or a new assembly permit, information on these may be obtained from the Fire Department. You will also need to complete a sign permit application if you are changing the name or sign of the business you are taking over. For information about obtaining a Change of Use Permit please contact the Code Enforcement Officer. For assistance with completing a sign permit application please contact the Economic Development Manager.

### **Changing the physical structure of an existing building**

If you are changing the physical structure of an existing building, or parking or loading area, you first need to complete and submit a site plan review application. This submittal includes a plan showing the existing site conditions and the proposed site conditions. Your application will be reviewed by the SRTC (Site Review Technical Committee) to go over the technical aspects of your plan prior to going to Planning Board. The SRTC can approve Minor Site Plans as defined in the regulations. Once approved by the Planning Board, you will need to obtain a City building/electrical/mechanical permits, and then, either a change of use permit or a certificate of occupancy permit depending on the extent of renovations. For information about obtaining a certificate of occupancy please contact the Code Enforcement Officer.

The renovations may trigger installation of a fire protection system or a new assembly permit. Information on these may be obtained from the Fire Department. The renovations may also require a water and sewer connection permit, information on this may be obtained from the Department of Public Works. A sign permit application is the final step in the process, this is available through the Economic Development Manager.

## Building a business from the ground up

If you are starting a business from the ground up you will need to reach out to the City Planning Division. Building construction is an involved process and we recommend that your development team contact the city prior to any development actions to ensure that the proper permits and applications have been submitted. This will also prevent delays in the development process. Please contact the Development Services Department if you have any questions about the development process in Somersworth.

## Other considerations

Please note that if your property or building is in the Historic District (Please see map for your lot location) or has wetlands (determined by a wetland or soil scientist), you may need to meet with the Historic District Commission (HDC) or the Conservation Commission. Please call the Development Services Department if you have any questions.

Also, there will be State requirements to open your business. For example, (1) you must register your business with the state and (2) in order to serve liquor and/or food, a state license must be obtained. The following are the resources for general information and applications.

- New Hampshire Liquor License: NH Liquor Commission | 603-271-3523  
[www.nh.gov/liquor](http://www.nh.gov/liquor) | 50 Storrs Street, Concord, NH 03301 New Hampshire
- Food Service License: NH Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Food Protection | 603-271-4589 | [www.NH.gov.dhhs.dphs.apply-change](http://www.NH.gov.dhhs.dphs.apply-change)
- NH requires your business is registered with the state. For information on registering your business, call 603-230-5892 | [www.revenue.nh.gov/fag/register-business.htm](http://www.revenue.nh.gov/fag/register-business.htm)

**Applications are located in the Development Services Office or  
on the City's website [www.somersworth.com](http://www.somersworth.com) !**

[Change of Use Application](#)

[Certificate of Occupancy Application](#)

[Sign Application](#)

[Historic District Commission Permit](#)

[Site Plan application](#)

[Conservation Commission Conditional Use Permit Application](#)

[Driveway Permit application](#)

[Excavation Permit Application](#)

[Trench Permit](#)

[Water & Sewer Connection Permit](#)

[Building Permit application](#)

## Board Submittal Schedules

[Planning Board](#)

[Conservation Commission](#)

[Historic District Commission](#)

## Permit Types – When do you need each type of permit?

**Change of Use Application** – Change of Use is required whenever one type of business changes to another type of business AND there were building permits required. For example: 1) office space changes to a restaurant space – Change of Use required. 2) restaurant space changes to a new restaurant but kitchen is renovated - Change of use required 3) restaurant changes to a restaurant, no building permits – NO Change of use required.

**Sign Application** – Sign permits are required if you plan to display a new sign or, replace, resize, or replace the face of an existing sign.

**Site Plan Application** – Site plan applications are required for any change or expansion of commercial or multifamily use. This includes changes to driveway or parking lots. Exemptions include change of use under 5000 sq ft. accessory structures under 500 sq ft

**Driveway Permit Application** – Driveway permits are required for any construction, reconstruction, paving or repaving of a driveway entrance.

**Trench Permit Application** - Trench permits are required at least 48 hours prior to digging in any owned street or Right-of-way. This is most often needed for water and sewer hookups. Permittees must be a public utility or the contractor who does the work.

**Water Sewer Connection Permit** – W/S Connection permits are required for any new water or sewer hookup or for any change of commercial use that increase water usage or sewer flow.

### **Building Permit Application –**

**Major Building Permits** are required for: all new construction, additions to all commercial structures, and multi unit dwellings. It will also be required for renovations in which the scope of work will not allow habitation during the renovation (i.e.: complete gut and rehabilitation, fire restoration, etc.) or projects that remodel greater than 25% of the square footage of inhabitable space.

**Minor Building Permits** are required for all types of construction not described above.

**Demolition Permits** are required for all structure wrecking and removal, fire restoration and rehabilitation destruction exceeding 600 sqft.

**Certificate of Occupancy Application** - Projects that require a major building permit will require a Certificate of Occupancy prior to use or occupancy or re-use or re-occupancy.

## Development Related Land Use Boards and Commissions

### **1. Planning Board**

The Planning Board meets the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm in the City Council Chambers, unless otherwise posted. The Board reviews applications for site plans, subdivisions, conditional use permits and boundary line adjustments. In addition, the Board reviews the Capital Improvement Plan and considers amendments to the City's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

### **2. Site Review Technical Committee**

The SRTC is a subcommittee of the Planning Board. It meets on posted Wednesday at 10:30AM in City Council Chambers. The committee works with an applicant to review the technical aspects of a plan before they appear before the Planning Board. The Police Chief, Fire Chief, Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Director, Public Works Director, Conservation Commission 1.24 acres and Water Division are all represented on the committee.

### **3. Historic District Commission**

The HDC meets the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in City Council Chambers, unless otherwise posted. The HDC is responsible for upholding the guidelines of the Historic District and reviewing the application for exterior renovation or new construction in the Historic District. The Commission may also act as an advisor to property owners and other officials and boards regarding historic preservation.

### **4. Conservation Commission**

The Conservation Commission meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the City Council Chambers, unless otherwise posted. The Commission reviews applications for conditional use permits and forwards their comments to the Planning Board for final review. The Commission may also review State Dredge and Fill and State Wetlands applications.

### **5. Zoning Board of Adjustment**

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the City Council Chambers, unless otherwise posted. ZBA reviews appeals from administrative decisions, as well as rehearing requests, and applications for variances, special exceptions and equitable waivers.



## Local and Regional Funding Resources

**Strafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)** | Is an independent non-profit corporation specializing in providing and locating financial assistance for businesses in areas of southeastern and south-central New Hampshire | [www.sedcnh.org](http://www.sedcnh.org)

**Great Falls Development Corporation (GFDC)** | Is a private non-profit that offers small loans to businesses located within the City of Somersworth. More information can be obtained by calling the Somersworth Economic Development office at 603-692-9516.

**Somersworth Community Development Corporation (SCDC)** | Offers low interest loans to businesses investing in their facility. Loans of up to 550,000 can be used to enhance the structural needs of the building or facade. Administered by the Somersworth Housing Authority the SCDC is an independent non-profit offering loan programs to both commercial and residential communities. More information can be obtained by calling Deborah Evans at 603-692-2864 or [dievans@somersworthhousing.org](mailto:dievans@somersworthhousing.org).

**Capital Regional Development Council (CRDC)** | Offers creative financing for small businesses, real estate development, and more. They will work with your financial institution to make your deal happen. From SBA 504 commercial real estate loans, to Brownfield funds and more, they have the expertise and experience to get a deal done! CRDC is a mission driven non-profit focused on providing tools that result in private sector job creation and local property tax base enhancement | [www.crdc.org](http://www.crdc.org)

**Community Loan Fund** | Offers a variety of loan products for small businesses ranging from \$1,000 microloans up to \$500,000 business builder loans. The nonprofit also includes royalty or mezzanine financing through Vested for Growth | [www.communityloanfund.org](http://www.communityloanfund.org)

**Business Finance Authority (BFA)** | Works in cooperation with NH banks to provide loan guarantees for small businesses that may not otherwise qualify for conventional loans. | [www.nhbfa.com](http://www.nhbfa.com)

## **State Incentives and Resources**

**ERZ** | The City of Somersworth has two Economic Revitalization Zones. Businesses located in an ER Zone that invest in their facility and create new jobs, could be eligible for up to \$520,000 in tax credits from the State of New Hampshire.

**Research and Development** | The State offers a Research and Development Tax Credit for companies making qualified manufacturing research and development expenditures | [www.nheconomy.com](http://www.nheconomy.com)

**Export Assistance** | The State of NH offers free technical support for businesses new to exporting or looking to grow their exporting. Contact Tina Kasim at 271-8444 | [tina.kasim@dred.state.nh.us](mailto:tina.kasim@dred.state.nh.us) | [www.nheconomy.com](http://www.nheconomy.com)

**Government Contracting** | The NH Government Contracting and Assistance Center is a State and Federally funded program that helps businesses looking to do work with the government. The staff works with businesses that are new to government contracting as well as those that are looking to expand their contracting opportunities. For more information about local, State and Federal contracting opportunities | [www.nheconomy.com/business-services](http://www.nheconomy.com/business-services)

**New Hampshire Works** | NH Works offers hiring assistance and incentives for local businesses | [www.nhworksjobmatch.nhes.nh.gov](http://www.nhworksjobmatch.nhes.nh.gov)

**NH Vocational Rehabilitation (N.H.V.R.)** | the primary resource for businesses seeking solutions to their disability-related issues, and for information about employing individuals with disabilities | [www.Education.nh.gov/career/vocational](http://www.Education.nh.gov/career/vocational)

**Aerospace NH** | Is a Seacoast regional effort to promote the aerospace industry in our area in partnership with the Pease Development Authority. [www.aerospacenh.com](http://www.aerospacenh.com)

**Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** | The SBDC serves companies from all sectors and provides advise on small business financing, improving operations, business sustainability, best practices, business plan drafting and marketing. [www.nhsbdc.org](http://www.nhsbdc.org)

## **Federal Resources**

**Department of Commerce** | Offers export assistance at a deeper level than the State for a reasonable fee. Their Gold Key program will arrange for meetings with potential business partners in the country of choice | [www.commerce.gov](http://www.commerce.gov) [or] 603-750-0452

**Small Business Administration** | Offers technical assistance through three SBA supported organizations: Small Business Development Center, SCORE and the Women's Business and Enterprise Center | [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

**Small Business Healthcare Options Program (S.H.O.P.)** | Offers healthcare coverage options for business with fewer than 50 full-time employees. Online enrollment begins November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Businesses can sign up using a broker or agent at any time. Businesses with fewer than 25 full-time employees may be eligible for a tax credit | [www.healthcare.gov/smallbusiness/employeers](http://www.healthcare.gov/smallbusiness/employeers)

## Downtown Somersworth

**Face Book** | See Somersworth

**Twitter** | #SeeSomersworth

### **All Day Parking Options for Downtown Area Business Owners and Staff**

- The parking regulations are found in “City Ordinances “- under: Chapter 13, Police Offenses. Section 3.1.F.6 delineates All - Day Parking in the downtown area. [www.somersworth.com/city-clerk/pages/city-ordinances](http://www.somersworth.com/city-clerk/pages/city-ordinances)
  
- All Day Parking in the Downtown Area are allowed as follows:
  - Constitutional Way, south side, between High and Washington Street
  - High Street, both sides between Beacon Street and Government Way
  - Highland Street, south side - between High and Grand Streets
  - Main Street, both sides - between John Parson's Way and Washington Street)
  - Station Street, north side - between Government Way and Main Street
  - Washington Street, north side - between Elm and Main Street



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