

# Somerset Development Guide

TOWN OF SOMERSET, MASSACHUSETTS

# Introduction

## **Thank you for your interest in the Town of Somerset, Massachusetts!**

Somerset, a small New England community located along the Taunton River, in the northern corner of Mt. Hope Bay, has been shaped by four centuries of waterfront commercial and industrial activity. Our town boasts a strong sense of history and community connectedness, while benefiting from proximity to the major economic engines of Boston and Providence.



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For decades, our economy was based on the large-scale energy production that took place at the Montaup and Brayton Point power plants. But over the past few years, these plants permanently closed down. Now, Somerset will begin a period of transition. Our business landscape will flourish and diversify. We will promote the growth of our existing businesses, including marine, manufacturing, retail, and restaurants. And in addition, we will attract new businesses, new residential development, and new recreational and community activity throughout town.

This pamphlet is intended for anyone interested in investing in our community. We will provide a snapshot of Somerset's eclectic development opportunities and offer an overview of the local permitting and approvals process. If you have an idea for development in Somerset, whether it is a store, cafe, apartment building, or industrial facility, we will work to provide 100% clarity and transparency in the development process, getting you from plan to product as smoothly as we can.

We invite you to spend some time in Somerset to get to know our community. We are confident that you will find a great environment for doing business.

# Town Vision

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During the preparation of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan, the residents and businesses of Somerset came together to articulate a shared Town Vision. This statement expresses Somerset's bold ambition for the future.

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*Our Vision is to advance the town as a flourishing community, while striving to create an economically sustainable future with thriving businesses, inviting open spaces, and walkable neighborhoods.*

*We seek to build a community that fosters economic development by expanding upon our waterfront roots, while promoting stewardship of our historical heritage and cultural differences.*

*We will continue to celebrate our small town as a place where families and people of all generations enjoy a safe, affordable, and well-connected community with great schools, accessible recreational opportunities, and quality public services.*

*We will embrace a creative economy that balances protection of our natural resources, leverages our strengths, and embraces new and innovative strategies to achieve economic growth, while honoring our past. We recognize our future will be stronger by collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and the private sector to contribute to the common welfare of our town, region, and state.*

*Together, with a shared spirit of ownership, we will maintain a socially, economically, and environmentally conscious culture. Building upon our strengths, Somerset strives to advance our identity as a flourishing small-town waterfront community.*

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# Opportunity Sites

The Town of Somerset has identified eight sites located throughout the community that present the opportunity to advance the Town's goals for economic development.

Each site is grounded in Somerset's natural strengths and stands to contribute to the economic health of the entire community. Each site has a unique character, and each one presents a unique set of opportunities.

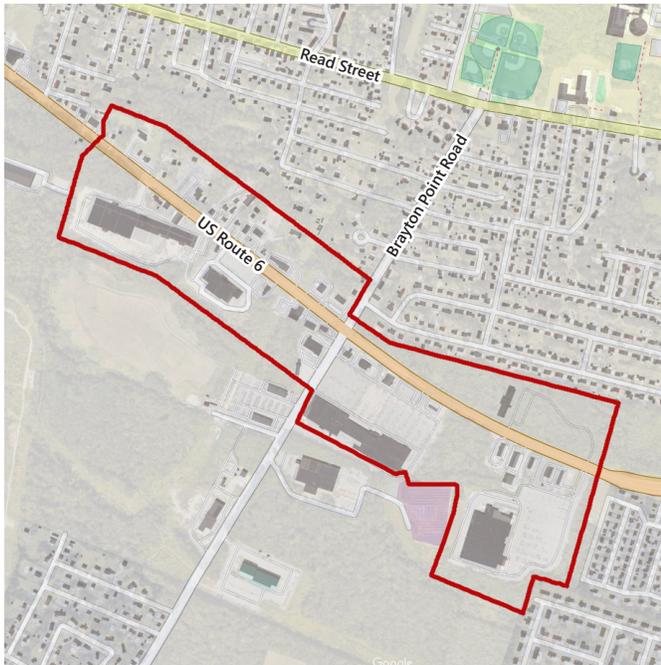
Whereas some sites are largely vacant, others are almost entirely built out, but still have great potential to play a role in Somerset's broader economic development strategy. This pamphlet provides an overview of the eight sites and identifies what makes them significant.

In addition to describing the sites, this pamphlet identifies specific categories of local, state, and federal financial incentive programs that may be applicable for development at each site. This includes the following programs:

- » **Federal Opportunity Zone Program.** This program establishes a mechanism for high-net-worth individuals to defer their capital gains taxes by investing development capital in specific census tracts that have been historically ignored by investors. The southern half of Somerset has been established as an Opportunity Zone.
- » **Tax Increment Financing.** TIF districts invite developers to blighted areas that they may otherwise ignore by offering tax breaks. In a TIF district, landowners receive tax exemptions of up to 100% of the tax increment for a fixed period of time. Approval for a new TIF Plan, or participation in an existing TIF District, will require approval through the Somerset TIF Board.
- » **District Improvement Financing.** In a DIF districting program, a municipality designates an area (up to 25% of the town's land area) for inclusion in a DIF initiative. The town can then acquire land, fund improvement, incur debt, and/or pledge tax increments and other revenues for debt payments.
- » **Chapter 40R.** The Chapter 40R Program is also known as the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act. This Massachusetts state program seeks to increase the supply of housing and decrease its cost through smart growth zoning.
- » **Historic Tax Credits.** Historic Tax credits are provided at the state and the federal levels. Up to 45% of qualifying project costs can be funded through this program.



- ① Route 6 Commercial
- ② Wilbur Ave Property
- ③ Waterfront Industrial Area
- ④ Slade's Ferry Mixed-Use Area
- ⑤ Montaup Site
- ⑥ Route 138 South (Town Center)
- ⑦ Route 138 North (Indian Springs Plaza Area)
- ⑧ Historic Village



## SITE 1. ROUTE 6 COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

**Area:** 120 Acres

**Zoning:** Business/Industrial

**Ownership:** Mixed Private

**Existing Businesses:** Large-Format Retail, Grocery Stores, Gyms, Restaurants, Manufacturing

**Ideal Investment:** Commercial or Mixed-Use Development

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Federal Opportunity Zone, Chapter 40R, TIF/DIF



## SITE 2. WILBUR AVENUE PROPERTY

**Area:** 98 Acres

**Zoning:** Residential

**Ownership:** Town of Somerset

**Ideal Investment:** Industrial or Business Park/ Data Center/Back Offices

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Federal Opportunity Zone, Chapter 40R, TIF/DIF





### SITE 3. WATERFRONT INDUSTRIAL AREA

**Area:** 120 Acres

**Zoning:** Business/Industrial

**Ownership:** Mixed Private/Public

**Existing Businesses:** Shipbuilders, Metal Fabricators, Composite Pilings, Forklift Dealer, Bowling Alley

**Ideal Investment:** Marine-focused Commercial and/or Industrial Development

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Federal Opportunity Zone, TIF/DIF



### SITE 4. SLADE'S FERRY MIXED-USE AREA

**Area:** 66 Acres

**Zoning:** Business/Slades Ferry Crossing Overlay District

**Ownership:** Mixed Private/Public

**Existing Businesses:** Banks, Appliance Store, Florist, Physical Therapist, Shoe Store, Restaurants

**Ideal Investment:** Retail and Office

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Federal Opportunity Zone, Chapter 40R, TIF/DIF





### SITE 5. MONTAUP SITE

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**Area:** 40 Acres

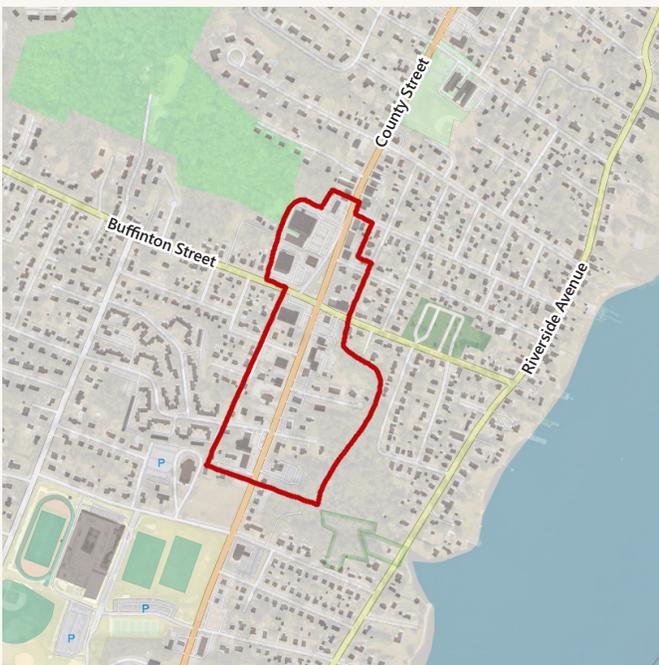
**Zoning:** Industrial

**Ownership:** Private

**Ideal Investment:** Industrial/Energy

**Potential Incentive Financing:**  
Federal Opportunity Zone

**Tax Increment Financing**



### SITE 6. ROUTE 138 CORRIDOR SOUTH (TOWN CENTER)

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**Area:** 30 Acres

**Zoning:** Business/Mixed-Use Overlay District

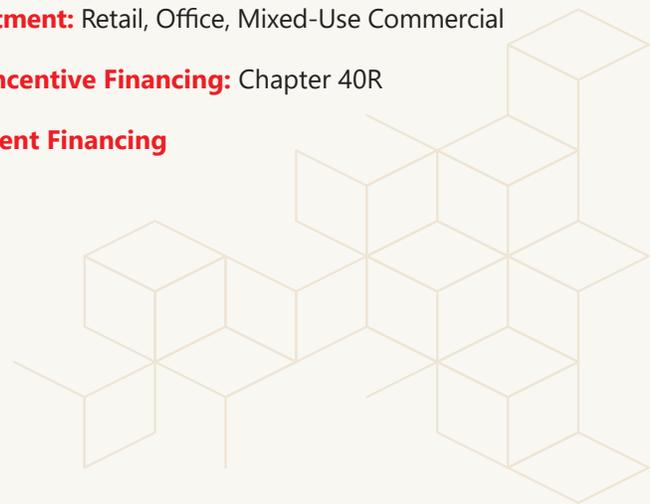
**Ownership:** Mixed Private

**Existing Businesses:** Pharmacies, Florists, Dry Cleaner, Gas Station, Boutique Shops, Law Offices, Insurance Offices, Banks/Credit Unions, Beauty Salons, Restaurants, Bakery

**Ideal Investment:** Retail, Office, Mixed-Use Commercial

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Chapter 40R

**Tax Increment Financing**





## SITE 7. ROUTE 138 CORRIDOR NORTH (INDIAN SPRINGS)

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**Area:** 80 Acres

**Zoning:** Business

**Ownership:** Mixed Private

**Existing Businesses:** Storage, Liquor Store, Church, Restaurants, Farming Equipment, Bank, Somerset Water Department

**Ideal Investment:** Retail, Office, Mixed-Use Commercial

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Chapter 40R

**Tax Increment Financing**



## SITE 8. HISTORIC VILLAGE

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**Area:** 120 Acres

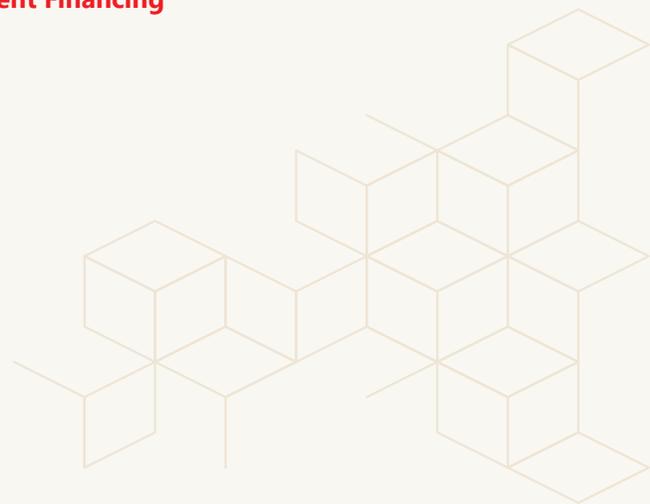
**Zoning:** Residential/Business/Recreation

**Ownership:** Mixed Private/Public

**Ideal Investment:** Residential, Retail, Office, Mixed-Use Commercial

**Potential Incentive Financing:** Historic Tax Credits

**Tax Increment Financing**



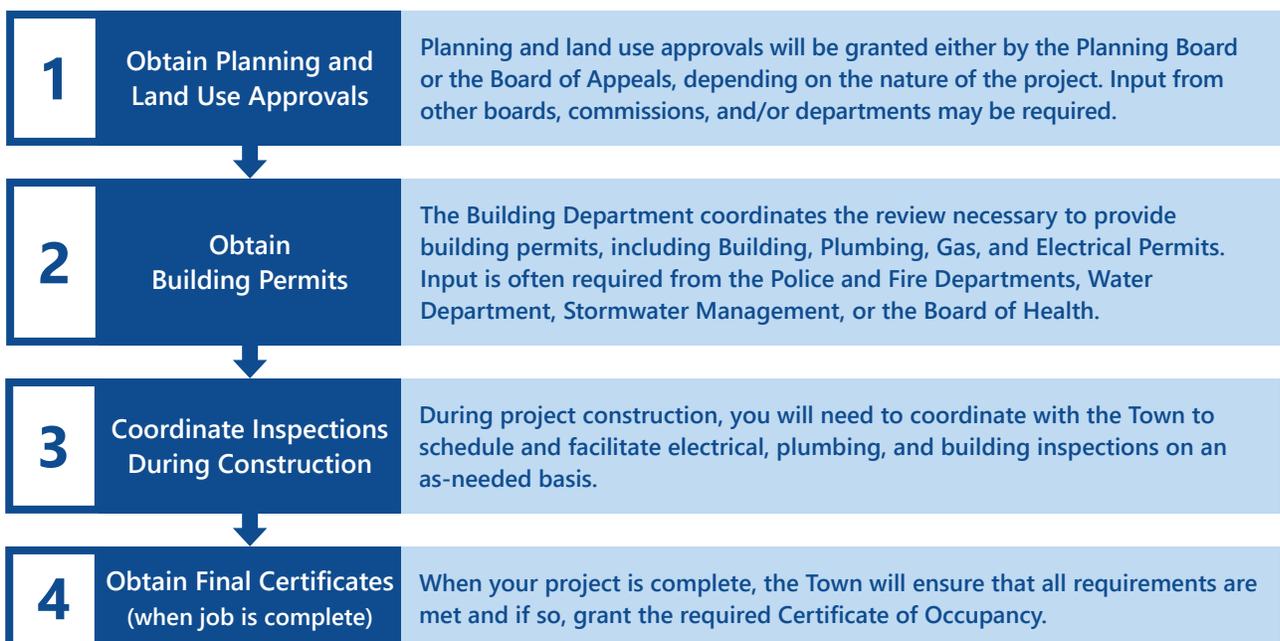
# Permitting and Approvals

## Overview

The Town of Somerset is excited to hear about your investment ideas. We strongly encourage you to reach out and begin a productive dialogue early on. Once you are ready to move forward with your project, please know that we are committed to working with you closely to ensure that your project meets all relevant requirements.

In order to move your project forward, you will need to obtain all relevant approvals and permits from Somerset's public offices, commissions, and boards. Each project is unique, and your specific requirements will depend upon the type, location, and scale of your proposed project. We highly recommend that you perform research locally, including outreach to our Planning Department, to identify which documents you need to prepare, which commissions and/or boards you need to consult, and which permits you need to obtain.

Once you have a solid vision for your project, you will follow these steps:

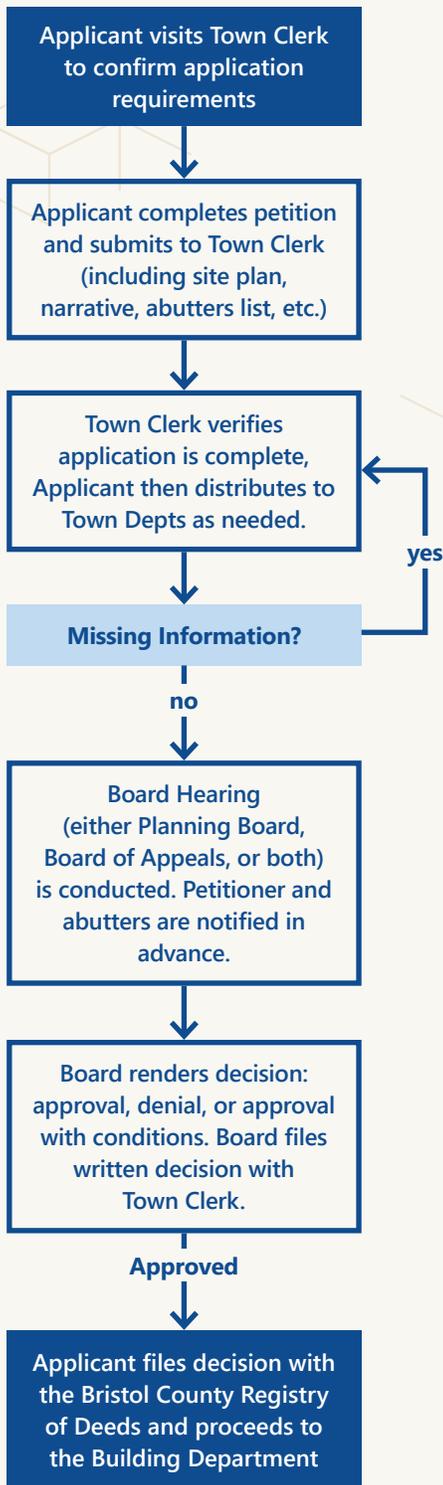


## Getting Started

As you get started on the permitting and approvals process, please take into account the following considerations:

- 1. Land Use.** Land use is regulated according to the Somerset Zoning By-Laws. Depending on which zone your property is located in, your proposed land use may be allowed by right, allowed by special permit, or not allowed. It is critical to review the By-Laws in their entirety to understand the use constraints specific to your property. This may include reviewing the provisions of Zoning Overlay Districts like the Business Industrial Overlay District or the Slade's Ferry Crossing Overlay District.
- 2. Site Design.** Many factors go into site planning, including grading, landscaping, drainage, and connection to public utilities. Your property is subject to the site regulations embedded in the Zoning By-Laws, including all lot size, lot coverage, setback, and screening requirements.
- 3. Building Design.** If new construction, or rehabilitation, is part of your project, please familiarize yourself with the dimensional requirements of your property, as described in the By-Laws. The Building Department can assist with any questions you may have early on.
- 4. Parking.** Similarly to land use and design, parking is regulated by the Zoning By-Laws. Please consult the By-Laws carefully to understand how much parking is required for your proposed project, and the dimensional requirements for off-street parking facilities. We encourage you to explore creative ways to mitigate the visual and functional impact of off-street parking on Somerset's public realm, especially in mixed-use districts.
- 5. Signage and Lighting.** Signage and lighting requirements are represented in the Zoning By-Laws.
- 6. Historic Assets.** Somerset has a rich history. If your property has an existing building, please familiarize yourself with its history, and determine if consultation with the Somerset Historical Commission will be required during the approvals process.
- 7. Opportunity Zone.** Much of Somerset exists within a federally-designated Opportunity Zone. This program allows for tax-deferred investment in transformative real estate development projects. We encourage you to explore this program and find out if your project could benefit from it.
- 8. Use of Public Resources.** For any anticipated impact on public services (e.g. school system, public water supply, emergency services, etc.), the applicant shall meet with the relevant Town department(s) prior to submitting the application.

Typically, the process of applying for Special Permits, Variances, and Planned Development Permits follows this sequence of events:



## Project Review (Planning Board/ Board of Appeals)

If your proposal is in line with the Somerset Zoning By-Laws, then you may proceed to the Building Department to apply for building permits and a certificate of occupancy. If, like many investors, your proposed project will require some form of zoning approval or permit, then you may have to apply for one or more of the following:

- 1. Planned Development Permit.** Planned Developments are as defined in Section 6.10 of the Zoning By-Law. Generally, this category of project includes commercial or industrial projects **at least one acre** in size with a major impact on the urban environment. The Board of Appeals is responsible for granting a Planned Development Permit, with input from the Planning Board, who performs site plan review.
- 2. Special Permit.** A special permit is often required for large-scale projects with significant impacts on the urban environment. Depending on the type of project, either the Planning Board or the Board of Appeals will act as the Special Permit Granting Authority. The Special Permit Granting Authority has the power to approve special permits, deny them, or approve them with conditions. In Somerset:

### **The Board of Appeals is the SPGA for:**

Accessory Uses in connection with scientific research or development, Automobile Repair Garage, Club or Lodge, Home Occupations, Genetic Engineering Laboratories, Restaurants, Marina, Medical Laboratories and Clinics, Commercial Parking Lots, Retail, Adult Entertainment, or Marijuana-Related Facilities.

**The Planning Board is the SPGA for:** Accessory Units for Single Family Dwellings, Mixed-Use Developments, Open Space Communities, and any project located within the Water Resources Protection District or Watershed Protection District.

- 3. Variance.** A variance can grant relief from the provisions set forth in the Zoning By-Law, in relation to land use or dimensional requirements. In Somerset, variances are granted by the Board of Appeals.

## Building Permits, Inspections, and Certificates

Once land use review and approval is complete, you may proceed to obtaining all required building permits and getting started on construction.

As you begin this process, please keep in mind that most, if not all, of the following documents will likely be required for permitting purposes:

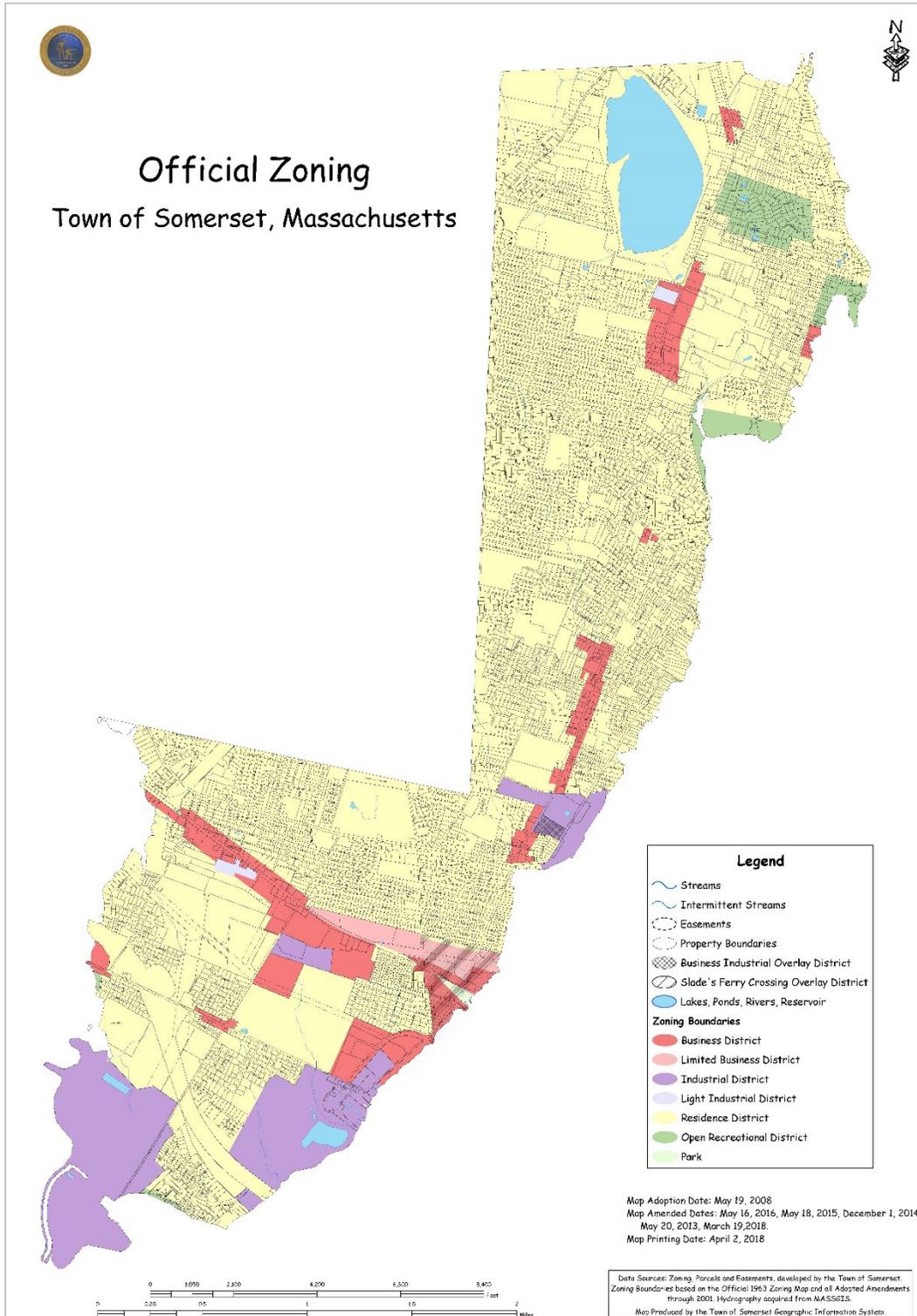
- » Application forms
- » Detailed Site Plan (featuring utilities, grading, drainage, etc)
- » Parking Plan
- » Architectural plans, sections, and renderings
- » Building Logistical plans including erosion and sedimentation control
- » Stormwater management plan
- » Stormwater design calculations
- » Information on utility loads and points of connection

Depending on the nature of your project, the Building Department may consult with any of the following groups:

- » Planning Department
- » Zoning Board of Appeals
- » Historical Commission
- » Community Preservation Committee
- » Cultural Council
- » Conservation Commission
- » Stormwater Management Department
- » Water Department
- » Board of Health
- » Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners
- » Board of Assessors
- » Police Department
- » Fire Department
- » Highway Department

# Zoning Map

Somerset's Official Zoning Map shows the location of all zones regulating land use and dimensional requirements.



# Contact List

<b>Administrator</b> .....	(508) 646-2800
<b>Board of Selectmen</b> .....	(508) 646-2800
<b>Building Department</b> .....	(508) 646-2805
<b>Conservation Commission</b> .....	(508) 646-2804
<b>Economic Development Committee</b> .....	(508) 646-2800
<b>Fire Department</b> .....	(508) 646-2810
<b>Planning Board</b> .....	(508) 646-2809
<b>Police Department</b> .....	(508) 679-2138
<b>Stormwater Management</b> .....	(508) 646-2835
<b>Town Clerk</b> .....	(508) 646-2818
<b>Town Planner</b> .....	(508) 646-2809
<b>Water Department</b> .....	(508) 679-2731
<b>Zoning Board of Appeals</b> .....	(508) 646-2818