

SOMERSWORTH HISTORIC DISTRICT

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

Adopted June 24, 2020



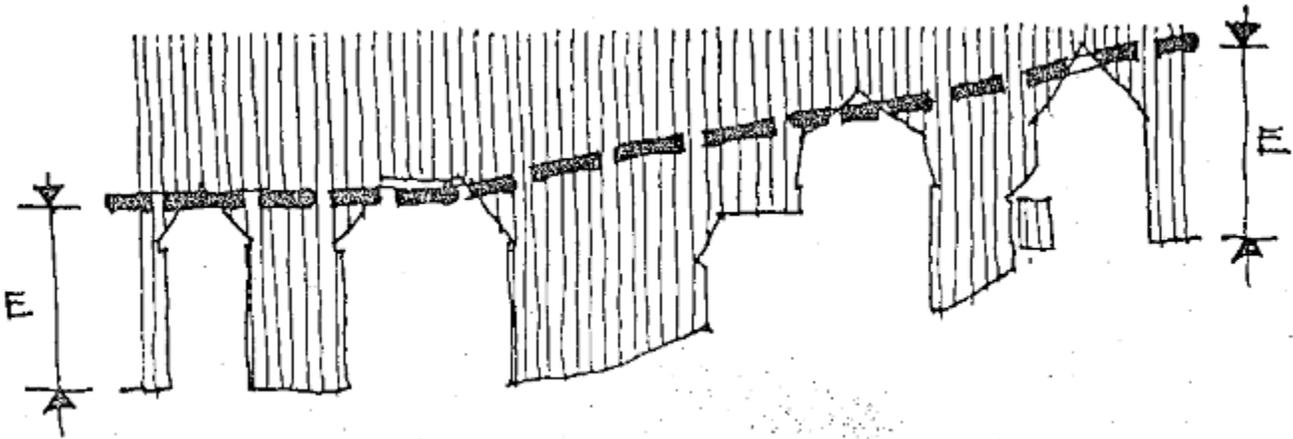
As outlined by Somersworth Zoning Ordinance, these are the guidelines and standards of the HDC when reviewing applications. In making a decision on an application the HDC shall take into account;

- The historical, architectural, or cultural value of the building(s) or structure(s) and its relationship and contribution to the setting.
- The compatibility of the exterior design, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used in relationship to the existing buildings or structures and its setting, or if new construction, to the surrounding area.
- The scale and general size of the buildings or structures in relationship to existing surrounds, including consideration of such factors as the buildings overall height, width, street frontage, number of stories, roof type, facade openings (windows or doors, etc) and architectural details.
- The impact that the applicant's proposal will have on the setting and the extent to which it will preserve and enhance the historical architectural and cultural qualities of the district community.
- National Park Service Secretary of the Interior Standards shall also be considered.

1). STREETSCAPE AND BUILDING The scale and general size of the building or structure is compatible with the existing surroundings.

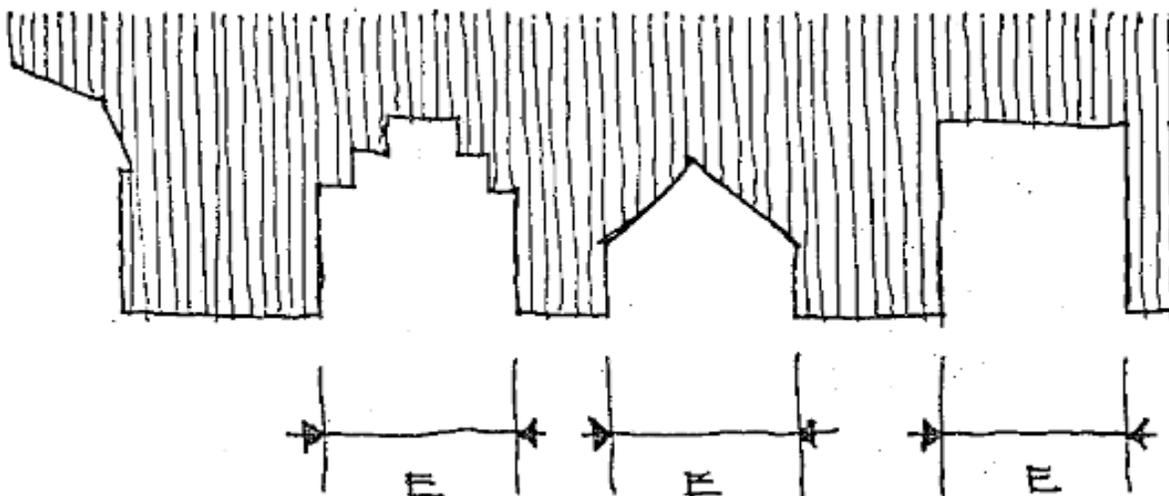
A. Heights:

1. Buildings within each area are similar in height except where irregularities occur because of later replacements. Seen from above, groups of buildings echo the original contours of the land beneath them.
2. All heights of new buildings should be similar to the average height of existing buildings in each area so that the relationship of building heights and land contours remains constant.
3. Heights of new or altered buildings should not exceed one story above or below surrounding buildings.



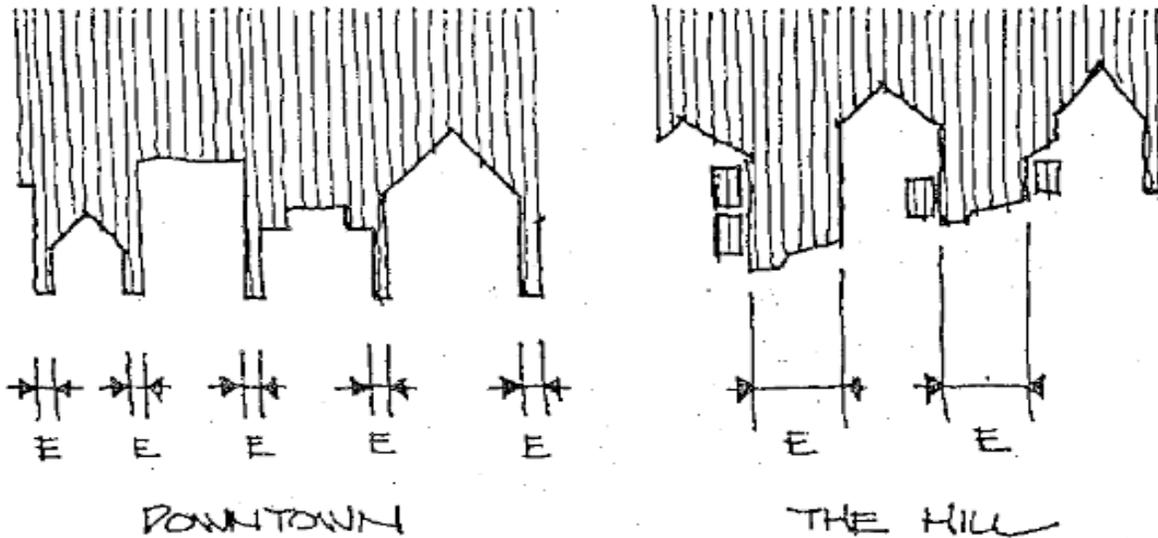
B. Widths:

1. Buildings along each block are similar width. Exceptions occur where later buildings have been added.
2. The width of new buildings should be similar to the average widths of existing buildings on each block so that the relationship of building mass to open space is maintained.



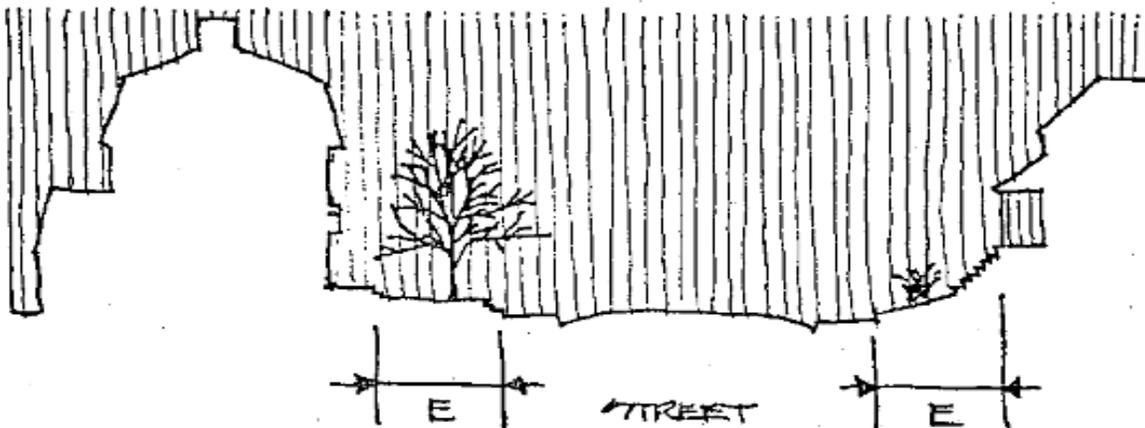
C. Spaces:

1. Spaces between buildings are generally consistent within neighborhoods or areas. (Side yard spaces on the Hill, or very narrow or no space between buildings downtown.) The effect is one of continuous "wall" along each street with an established "rhythm" of solid and empty spaces.
2. Maintain the average yard widths at front, sides, and rear of all buildings within the surrounding area.



D. Setbacks:

1. Most buildings along Downtown blocks are built out to the sidewalk with no setback from the front property line. Most buildings on the Hill have front yards on uniform average depth. These setbacks create a uniform alignment of facades that give each block a strong edge.
2. Maintain the alignment of facades at the average established within each neighborhood.
3. If an applicant's project would need any variance related to dimensional requirements from the ZBA.



The HDC is willing provide an opinion to the ZBA relevant to the variance requested.

4. Where facades do not align, use columns, hedges, low walls, or other screens to define the edge of the site and to preserve alignment.

E. Additions:

1. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of the structure and its environment and these changes should be recognized and respected. Do not try to make the building look historical, i.e. older than it really is, because this debases what is truly historic.
2. Alterations to create an earlier appearance should be discouraged. Contemporary design for additions to existing structures are acceptable if such design is compatible with the size, scale, material, and character of the neighborhood, structures, or its environment. Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures should be done in such a manner that if they were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original structures would be unimpaired.
3. Many of the ways in which an addition should relate to an existing building have already been covered in the design criteria set for streetscape, i.e. pattern and alignment should be maintained, horizontal banding of openings, lintels and building eaves should be addressed, size, and shape of building mass should be similar, etc.
4. Materials used for additions should be similar to materials used on the original building
5. Additions are encouraged that are sympathetic to the original building yet contemporary in spirit.
6. The materials used for renovations or additions should be finished in ways that are consistent with the original building.

F. Renovations:

1. Rehabilitation work shall not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the architectural features, alterations should be held to a minimum.
2. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new materials should match the materials being replaced in design, texture, and other visual qualities.
3. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on physical or pictorial evidence, rather than on hypothetical designs of the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.
4. Incorporate similar elements of the original in the renovation scheme. Respect the original character and period of the building.
5. Do not obscure facade details by covering them with panels or signs or by painting them out.
6. Do not alter the shape of original openings. The original window opening should be visible to the eye either with trim left in place or with a false window installed.



Architectural Terms

2). ROOFS

- A. Roofs should be considered minimal impact if a period correct roofing material is proposed, such as slate or metal. In the case of other proposed materials the applicant shall need approval by the HDC.
- B. Roofs and roof trim should not be altered from their original design style.
- C. Roof features should not be altered. This includes feature such as chimneys, dormers, gutters, snow birds, etc.
- D. Rooftop solar panels mounted flush to the roof is the preferred placement within the Historic District. Solar panels should completely and neatly fill the roof in an effort to show only one texture of the roof. The solar panels should fill as close as possible the entire façade of the roof. Solar panels placed on a roof less than two stories high or in a highly visible location should be discouraged.



Gable Roof



Flat Roof



Mansard Roof



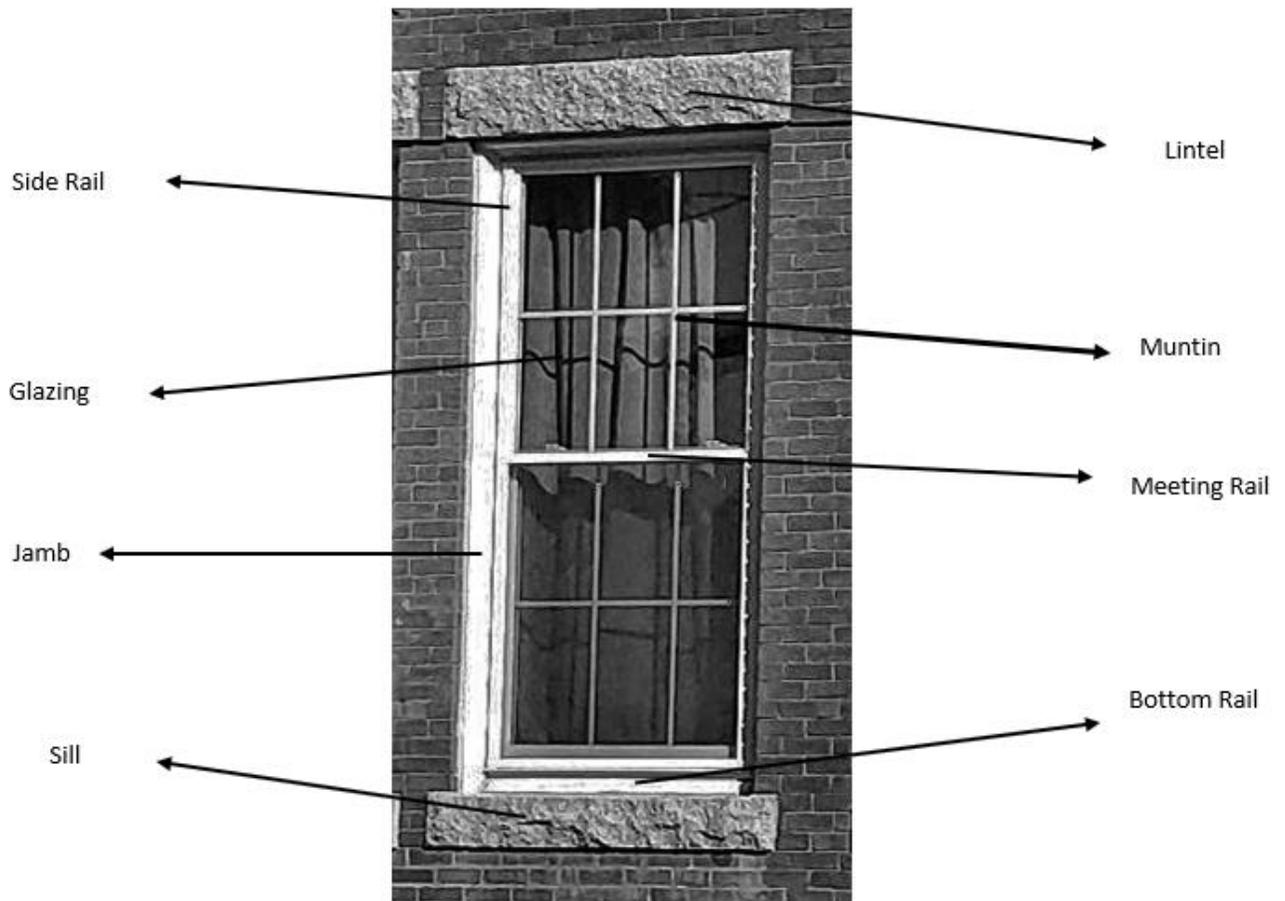
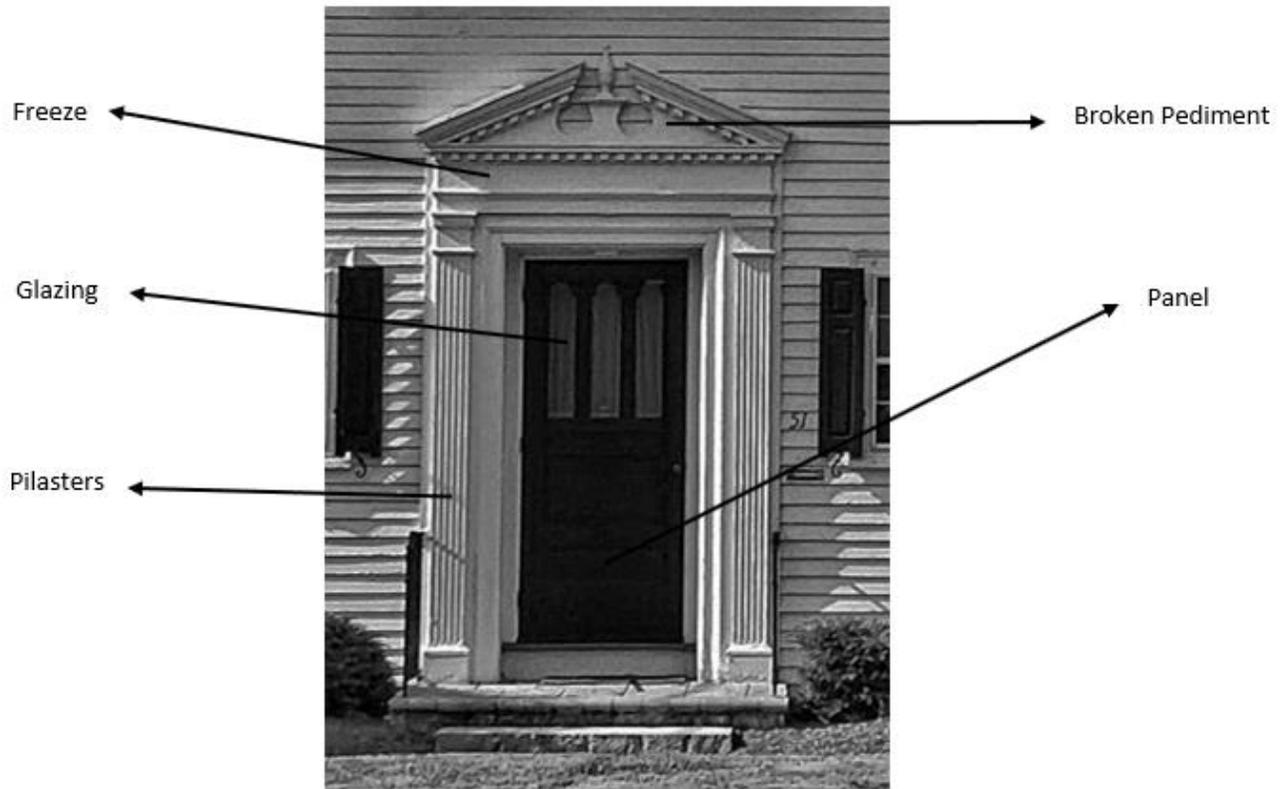
Hip Roof

3). FENESTRATION. Fenestration is the pattern of window and door openings of a building. It is the spacing, size, proportion, and symmetry or lack of symmetry. First floors, which have large areas of glass and small areas of opaque materials, are clearly separated visually from upper floors, which reverse the pattern: small areas of glass, predominance of opaque materials. Historic buildings receive specific characteristics from their doors, windows, and other openings depending on their design style.

- A. Window sizes and shapes should not be altered during renovation.
- B. All original windows and doors should be repaired if possible. If not, the replacement should match the historic sash in size, operation, configuration, number of lights, muntin detail and profile.
- C. All non-historic windows and doors should be replaced with designs and materials compatible to the style and age of the building.
- D. All new construction should use windows of similar size and shape or incorporate other facade elements that establish the same sort of pattern.
- E. Consideration will be given to all replacements that are appropriate to the individual building style and age.
- F. Generally, aluminum and vinyl windows are not appropriate replacements for historic wood sash. But will be considered if the be following are followed:
 - 1. Authentic Divided Lite (ADL) or Simulated Divided Lite (SDL) muntins are preferred
 - 2. All original features are maintained (sills, heads, moldings, number of lights, and configuration)
 - 3. Window replacements consist of sash replacement and window inserts instead of full window replacement
- G. Maintaining functional trim, hardware and components. All features of windows and doors will be treated with the same consideration as the openings themselves. Such features can include frames, sash, muntins, glazing, sills, heads, hood molds, paneled or decorated jambs/moldings, and exterior shutters. All such features should be repaired when possible or replaced with in-kind design and material.
- H. Storm doors or windows should not remove, cover, or destroy original architectural features. Storm doors and screen doors shall have plain stiles, rails and panels. Storm windows and doors should cover as little of the historic window or door as possible. Their color should match the door or window of which they cover to help blend them with the existing door or window.
- I. Garage Door's original shape and size of opening should not be altered. Original materials and door design should be kept. If new doors are required the historic character of the building in which they are being placed should be maintained
- J. Shutters should be repaired when possible. If new shutters are to be placed they must consist of in-kind material of original shutters. Consideration will be given to all replacements that are appropriate to the individual building style and age. All shutters should fit the window opening size, they should be or look functional. No shutters shall be placed on architectural styles where shutters were not typical.



Dark lines depict the fenestration details of spacing and alignment.



4). EXTERIOR DETAILS. The exterior design arrangement, texture, and materials are compatible with the existing building or structure or if new construction, the surrounding area. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize historic structures and often pre-date the mass production of building materials should be treated with sensitivity.

- A. Buildings components should be similar in size and shape to those already in use along the street or elsewhere in the district. Similar shapes should frequently recur along the street such as rectangular windows, dormers, triangular roof pediments, cornice moldings, porches, and covered entry ways.
- B. Due to infill of buildings there are exceptions, throughout Somersworth history some building styles within the District stand out and do not resemble others along the street. Buildings with Mansard roofs are the best example of this.
- C. Materials:
 - 1. The preferred exterior material is wood, especially when replacing any portion of existing wood materials.
 - 2. Where original materials have failed newer modern materials may be allowed provided they match dimensional size and texture.
 - 3. Modern materials such as, but not limited to, composites, PVC, and plastics will be given consideration due to their durability.
 - 4. When replacing only a portion of siding or other elements and using a different material, the two materials should visually match nearly exact when viewed from the street.
 - 5. Any pressure treated wood or smooth high gloss composite materials approved by the HDC must be painted within 8 months of construction project completion.
- D. Siding:
 - 1. Siding or re-siding of structures provided that exterior architectural features (exclusive of existing siding material) are not removed, destroyed or covered and provided that the siding is similar in style and appearance to the original construction.
 - 2. Traditional materials, such as wood, shall be used. Plastic, aluminum, and vinyl are strongly discouraged unless it can be demonstrated that their use is historically consistent with the architecture of the building.
 - 3. While the use of vinyl siding is discouraged within the district the Commission realizes that there will be circumstances that may make it a reasonable choice of material. In order to preserve the nature and quality of contributing buildings as well the overall quality of the neighborhood the following guidelines are to be followed;
 - a. Vinyl will have the same profile and exposure as pre-existing clapboards.
 - b. Wooden corner boards are to remain on the building,
 - c. Soffits and window trim are to remain wood.
 - d. All ornate wood details on the building are to be maintained.
 - e. Shutters may be replaced with vinyl when vinyl siding is approved by the HDC.
 - f. No "J Channel" is to be used, existing trim is to be routed, and siding placed underneath.
- E. Masonry:
 - 1. Brick, Natural stone, concrete masonry, and granite are important design features of historic buildings and should be properly maintained.

2. If replacement of any masonry is needed it should be replaced with in kind materials. Due diligence should be given to match the original material to be replaced. (i.e., if replacing hand-pressed bricks, hand pressed brick should be used as replacement).
3. Some masonry can be delicate; therefore cleaning of masonry should only be done when absolutely necessary. Appropriate cleaning methods should be used that will not damage the original masonry as much as possible. The least intrusive method shall be utilized, options include low pressure water, chemical cleaning and mechanical cleaning.
4. Masonry shall be left unpainted if originally unpainted. If masonry is painted it should not be stripped, only prepped for repainting as needed for proper maintenance.

F. Porches and Decks:

1. Porches, stoops and decks play an important perception of historic buildings and streetscapes. Original materials and details should be preserved.
2. When proposing a replacement deck please make sure the design is consistent with historical photos, drawing or maps of the property or comparable porches in the neighborhood of similar style. Consideration will be given to style and designs with in the HD. The design should fit the style, proportions, materials, and time period of the building it is to be added to. The use of typical box store railing systems should be discouraged in favor of traditional styles.



5). SITE ELEMENTS DESIGN LANDSCAPES. This includes but is not limited to cemeteries and parks. Site elements can be as significant as buildings, and can include sites without buildings.

- A. All built structures will be properly maintained.

- B. If repairs are to be made to built structures, due diligence should be done to find the least intrusive method possible.
- C. Any replacements or substantial changes to the built environment must match the original materials to be replaced.
- D. Any vegetation or landscaping changes that do not fall under exempt or minimal activities shall come before the board for approval.
- E. Retaining walls, stone walls, and landscaping features shall be constructed of natural stone only. Any natural stone may be used whether it is cut, shaped or in its raw natural shape are all acceptable.
- F. Typical red brick is the only mass produced block allowed. Any other uniform mass produced block is discouraged and will need approval by the HDC and may be allowed if it appears to have no obvious repeating pattern when finished.
- G. Any vertical improvement to the property, including improvement to any building, structures, landscaping and other improvement to be rehabilitated, constructed, or installed on or in connection with the development of the site will need a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Changes to curbs and steps will be the smallest items to need approval.
- H. Any retaining wall over 3 feet high shall not have vegetation over 1 inch in diameter growing directly out of it. Vegetation should be kept 12" away from the walls base or top. Larger vegetation acts as a wedge over time destroying the wall as well as creating a safety hazard.



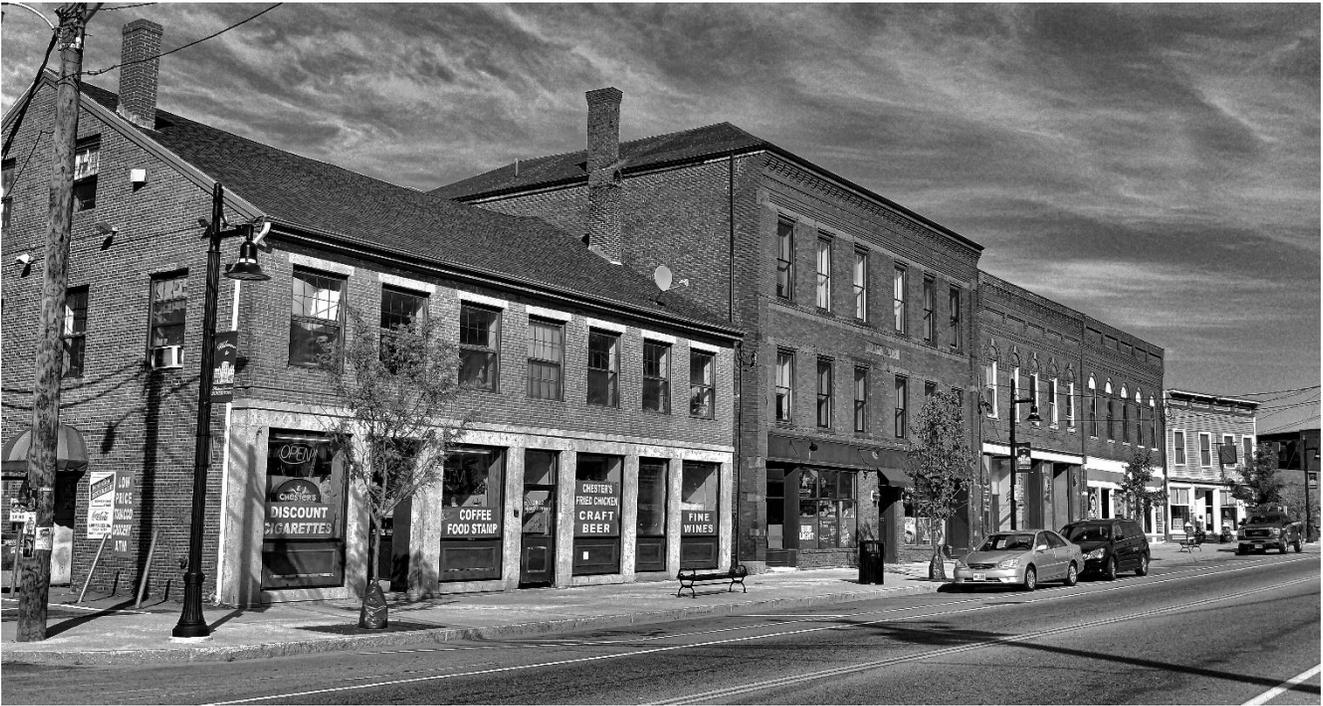
6). MECHANICAL FEATURES

- A. Mechanical units including but not limited to exterior heating, permanent AC units, solar power inverters should be located on the rear of the building when possible.
- B. All mechanical units including electrical meters shall not be located on the front/street side of the building.
- C. Multiple satellite dishes on one building are discouraged.
- D. Solar panels should be located only on roofs for historic district compatibility reasons.
- E. Any plans involving mechanical units shall include specs such as actual size and any clearance requirements.



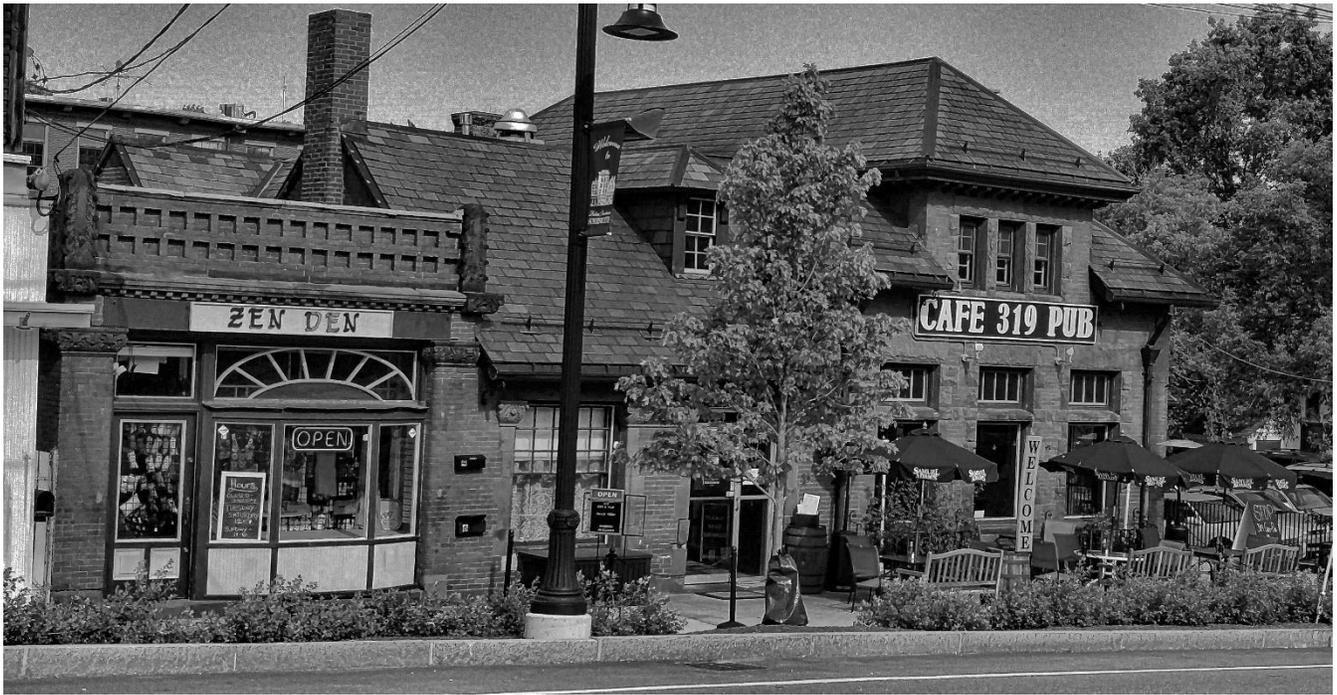
7). COMMERCIAL PROPERTY. The economic development of Somersworth downtown commercial property is encouraged. Every effort will be made to assist commercial building owners and tenants with revitalizing older retail areas and buildings, while maintaining compatibility and providing a visual connection with the other surrounding historic structures in the district.

- A. Any work done on commercial properties should take careful additional consideration of storefronts. This should include storefront components: cornices, transom windows, display windows, aprons, and entrances as well as any other standard listed herein.
- B. The HDC does acknowledge that special consideration must be shown for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for accessibility to the commercial property.



8). SIGNS

- A. Signs shall conform to all Somersworth Sign Ordinances 19.20 as well as guidelines listed in this section, and in the case of any contradicting the more restrictive shall apply.
- B. Signs shall fit within existing features of the facade. On most buildings, lintels or bands of decorative moldings create natural frames for signs.
- C. Projecting signs shall align with some horizontal element on the facade (i.e., top of sign aligns with top of window; bottom of sign aligns with bottom of window; bottom of sign aligns with top of lintel). Where possible, signs shall be aligned with other signs on adjacent buildings.
- D. Projecting signs shall be supported by black iron attachments to the building. Guy wires shall not be permitted as a principle sign support member. No support for the projecting sign shall extend above the cornice to which it is attached.
- E. Internally lighted signs shall be prohibited. Only shielded, downlit, indirectly lighted signs shall be permitted.
- F. Traditional materials, such as wood, glass, bronze or iron shall be used. Plastic, aluminum, and vinyl are strongly discouraged unless it can be demonstrated that their use is historically consistent with the architecture of the building.
- G. Signs on residential buildings should be mounted on the building itself near entry doors and no higher than the top of first floor elements. The size shall not be greater than one square foot. Exterior lighting is prohibited.



9). NEW CONSTRUCTION, AND NONCONFORMING BUILDINGS

- A. New construction should reflect the theme of nearby existing buildings, but should not be compared or similar to any nonconforming buildings nearby.
- B. Nonconforming buildings will not be held to the same standard as conforming properties. They will be reviewed primarily on the basis of Size, Scale, Placement, Orientation, Landscape Features, and Signs.
- C. Nonconforming buildings shall be subject to required maintenance standards.



10). DEMOLITION

- A. Every effort shall be made to preserve the historic structures of Somersworth.
- B. No existing building or other structure may be demolished or moved out of the overlay district until approval has been granted by the HDC.
- C. A detailed plan for the reuse of the site shall be submitted along with a report as to the structural soundness of the structure and its adaptability for rehabilitation. Any dangerous conditions should be identified.