

Introduction to the Historic Preservation Element for inclusion in the Somerville Master Plan

Somerville is a town with deep roots and a long history, during 2006 as part of the state mandated update to the Borough's Master Plan, the Council made the decision to include what is known as a "Historical Element" to this plan. The purpose of this element is to assure that the historical character of the town is not lost and to provide direction to all as to how various historical aspects within the town can best be preserved for future generations, without imposing costly or unnecessary rules or regulations on property owners.

The Borough applied for and received a grant of \$25,000.00 to undertake a study of historical aspects of the Borough and to create the Master Plan Historic element for inclusion. Early in the year a Request for Qualifications was distributed to over a dozen planning companies; during October and November of 2006, Borough officials invited respondents to make presentations to the Council and members of the Planning Board. Following these presentations, Saltel Consultants of Mendham New Jersey was selected for the project.

For a complete outline of the project and tasks Saltel will be completing go to the document on this site titled; "Historic Preservation Element Somerville Master Plan", this is a copy of the project scope and details the various components of it.

You will see that Public participation is sought and ultimately a consensus of the community will be required for the final plan being proposed to the Borough for adoption.

The key components of this project are the "survey" and the "recommendations". Over the years there have been numerous studies and surveys of the historical nature of Somerville, resulting in the identification of several historically significant areas and of course a number of significant buildings, while being identified they have never been formally included into any Borough plan to ensure that they remain where-ever possible part of the fabric of the Borough.

Saltel will conduct a physical and photographic inventory of historic properties and clearly define those areas considered to be historic. Following this Saltel will present the findings and preliminary recommendations and ordinances at a public meeting for review. Following public input the final recommendations will be prepared and presented once again to the Borough at a public session, if endorsed by Borough officials they will then be included into the Borough's revised Master Plan.

A critical note: many associate the phase Historical Area with the thought of mandatory rules and costly and prohibitive renovation and repair costs; this is not the intent of this project at all. While it is intended to create a Historical Preservation ordinance, with the input from the Historic Committee and at the direction of the governing body, the ordinance will not contain language that insists that certain types of materials and/or fittings to used for repair and renovation, instead it will state that materials that reflect the architecture, character and style of the structure should be used where possible to maintain the historical nature of the building and the area in which it resides.

We look forward to your participation in this important study.