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>> Hi, everyone. We're going to get started in about five minutes if the you're wanting water, there's water outside there and there's cups on the table there. Thank you.

[Pause]

>> Welcome, everyone. And thank you for joining us tonight. There are people joining us online via Zoom tonight. If you're on Zoom, live transcription is available for those joining.

If you would like to see live captioning during this meeting, please select see captions on your screen.

Some housekeeping before we begin. There's water fountains right outside this door on the left. Cups are on the table there, bathrooms are on your right right outside this room. Tonight's City Hall committee meeting is in a hybrid format. In addition to those with us tonight, residents are tuned in online via Zoom.

We have a full agenda tonight. Presentations aren't going to be taking too deep a dive into any subject and will primarily focus on updates.

For the sake of time, we have established a process for taking your questions. Once each speaker finishes their presentation, we'll take up to two questions from our live audience and then an additional two online. Those here in person, please raise your hand if you have a question and our staff member will come around so you can ask your question.

For everyone on Zoom, please write any questions you have in the Q&A area on your screen. And please make sure your microphones are turned all the way up.

If we don't get to your question initially, don't worry, upon completion of each presentation, staff members will be here and also checking online with the Q&A to answer any additional questions by writing in responses. I'd like to take a quick moment to ask all city staff to please stand. If we could go around and room, you could give your name and title. I'll also be repeating your name and title so those on Zoom can hear who's with us tonight. I'll start from the right with Emily.

>> Emily: I'm Emily Sullivan, I'm the climate change program manager in the office of sustainability and environment.

>> Victoria: Emily Sullivan, with our office of sustainability and environment.

>> Good evening, Rachel Carney.

>> Hello, everybody, I'm a senior planning in the planning division, specializing in

long range manager.

>> Victoria: Victor Nascimento, senior planner.

>> Urban forestry.

>> Malik, public space and urban forestry.

>> Good evening, Adrienne Pomeroy, ADA or Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator.

>> Victoria: Adrienne Pomeroy, our ADA coordinator.

>> Good evening, Denise Molina Capers. I'm the director of the department of racial and social justice, also part of the mayor's executive administration.

>> Victoria: Denise Molina Capers, our director of our racial and social Justice Department.

>> Colin Zeigler, environmental health coordinator for rats, if you have rat questions, right here.

>> Victoria: Colin Zeigler.

>> Hi, I'm the director on council on aging. Nice to be here tonight.

>> Victoria: Ashley, director of our council on aging.

>> Nick Soler know, collections commissioner.

>> Jim Donovan: Hi, Jim Donovan with the police department.

>> I'm the executive director of the mayor's office for strategic planning and development.

>> Victoria: Tom of our Mayor's OSP city department.

>> Good evening, I'm Rebecca Wright, engineering division, project manager of streetscapes.

>> Victoria: Rebecca Wright, senior project manager of streetscapes.

>> I serve as director of mobility in Mayor balance Ballantyne's office.

>> Brian Postlewaite, director of our engineer division.

>> Victoria: Brian Postlewaite, director of our engineering division.

>> Good evening, I'm Kelly, assistant housing director.

>> Victoria: And Kelly, assistant housing director. Thank you, all.

Staff are here and ready to speak with you and answer your questions. Please go up and say hello or if you're on Zoom write in any questions if you have something particular you'd like to ask.

Around 8:00 p.m. this meeting will come to a close. If you have any remaining questions, we ask that you email [CM@Somerville.gov](mailto:CM@Somerville.gov). All questions will be responded to in the coming days.

For those in person with us, city staff will be hanging out after the meeting if you have additional questions and you'd like to have a one-on-one conversation.

If you want to know that tonight's meeting is also being record and will be on the CityTV YouTube channel in the next day or so. Thank you for taking the time to be with us tonight. I'd now like to welcome Councilor Davis to the podium.

>> Councilor Davis: Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody, for being here. I'm so excited to see all your faces again. It's been so many years since we've been here in person. Happy to have these community meetings, we won't call them -- anymore, but it's a new format and so I'm excited to see how that works out as well. I'm not going to say much else, just I'm thrilled to see you all back here in person and look forward to hearing from the administration and answering your questions.

And with that, I'll hand the microphone over to Mayor Ballantyne.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Good evening, everyone. It's nice to see you. Some of you I've known for a number of decades. You've worked really hard and volunteered your time and expertise over the years, so thank you for that. It's wonderful to see new folks and making new relationships.

My name is Katjana Ballantyne, my pronouns are she/her. I've attended these meetings as a resident, as a city Councilor, as a City Council president, as I'm honored to be here now as your Mayor. As the good Councilor mentioned, these were known as ResiStat meetings, but people don't know that that mean the. This is the City Hall coming to you as a way to engage so you can hear what we've been up to.

For some of you it might be your first evening. I was hoping I could ask you a couple questions so we could see who was in the room. I would say when I ask the question, if you could raise your hand so we get to know who our neighbors are. If this is your first City Hall community meeting, formally known as ResiStat, please raise your hand.

Wow, wonderful. Thank you so much for coming.

If you've lived in Somerville under a year, please raise your hand.

If you've lived in Somerville two years or less, raise your hand. Wonderful.

Between two years and five years.

Between five years and ten years. Ten years and 15? 15 and 20. If you have a pet, raise your hand. If you have children in Somerville public schools, raise your hand.

Okay. I will venture in to asking if you mainly get around the city walking, raise your hand.

Using a bus, raise your hand. If you use your bike to get around. Okay. If you use your car to get around. Okay, great. So let me just throw it out there. Is there one question you wished I had asked and I hadn't? The goal of the ward City Hall community meetings is to provide information, access, and community. Information is a word we hear so much, and it's easy to forget how important this is. But the old phrase, knowledge is power still stands. It is just as important that community members use city resources as it is for staff who do the work.

To identify and act on current issues, we first must understand Somerville today. So let's zoom out and take a look at some of these facts.

The City of Somerville is four square miles in comparison to our neighbors. Cambridge is just under seven square miles. Boston is 45 square miles. Every three years roughly 60% of Somerville's population turns over. Those are residents moving in and out of the city, and that's roughly 50,000 people.

Between 2010 and 2020, the city's population rose 7% to 81,000. We speak 50 plus languages within the City of Somerville.

We are a community that's 76% White, our Somerville public schools are almost the reverse. We're a majority/minority school district with over 60% identifying as low income.

What else is going on? Jobs in Somerville have increased between 2011 and 2021, for a decade to over 8,800. Our financial resources have grown. For this budget we're a little over 309 million.

We have 17 city parks that have been renovated in the last ten years. We add about 350 trees to our urban canopy per year. Roads around us.

Somerville bears the burden of the regional cut-through motor traffic vehicles and

Ward 6 definitely feels that. So that is eight out of ten cars in the City of Somerville are passing through to get to Boston or Cambridge, they're not stopping at a residence and they're not stopping at a business.

Our state-owned highways like I-95 and the state road 16 are feeders. For folks to visualize, I-95 in Medford carries roughly 200,000 vehicles on an average weekday. Route 16 carries roughly 30,000. How does that translate to ward Ward 6? College Street carries about 12,000 vehicles on an average workday. Holland Street west of Davis also carries about 10,000 vehicle trips. Broadway and Ball Square carries roughly 12,000 vehicles. Powder House Boulevard, nearly 8,000.

Summer Street near Hancock Street carries 5,000. Willow Avenue near Brown School, 4,000.

City policy is to discourage cut-through traffic and to reduce dangerous speeding to keep residents safe. One way we do this is with physical traffic calming, like speed bumps and sidewalk islands.

You'll hear more about this from city staff in a few minutes.

All these statistics are just a sampling that confirms significant changes from where we've been to where we are as a city. And it's up to us to act on what we know. These community meetings are a step in the right direction. They allow city departments to tell their story and for you, our residents, to keep informed.

So access is the other thing. You know, access should be multifaceted and we take every opportunity to ensure it. So whether it's emails, whether it's newsletters, whether it's online meetings, and in person, we're welcoming to you because we want to give you every opportunity to have access to myself and to city staff.

A main goal of the City Hall community meetings is to prioritize residents and center the conversation around you. Everyone speaking tonight, myself included, is available to speak with you one on one. Our job tonight is not only to inform, but to listen.

As our community is changing, I'm establishing systems that give residents access to help shape the change around them. Job seekers and neighbors need access to city planners and private developers. Youth need to be heard by our schools, city, and by adults.

Historically, underrepresented voices need to be sought out and amplified in all our shared decision-making. Long-time residents and newcomers must have opportunities to find common ground on our shared goals and priorities.

Access is also rooted in affordability. Which is created not just by housing, but also access to good jobs. It's the ability to live, work, and do business in Somerville.

It's the ability to walk, ride, roll to civic opportunities safely and easily, or to participate virtually.

We're working to connect people. This past spring, I hosted a forum connecting developers with unions. First of its kind for a mayor to host such a forum, building on what I did as a city Councilor. We know the construction is in process or it's in the beginning processes, so again, everybody should have access and introductions to one another.

Last week, I invited in more than 60 Somerville nonprofits to deepen our work to aid them in their service in our community. And I'll continue to host these forums twice a year in the spring and in the fall to connect groups to develop relationships and opportunities to create progress for all.

So our community. Many of our city's major projects include a public process of getting community feedback. City Hall community meetings are also a vehicle for residents to meet, talk, and come together on issues that matter to them most. Residents like you played a key role in the development of our strategic plan. It's called SomerVision, sometimes it's called SomerVision comprehensive plan, but it outlines where we would like to be in the next decade.

The plan captures our goals, our values, directly identifies ongoing challenges. And some of the goals that were included in our vision, the SomerVision's was affordable housing, job creation, mobility and infrastructure, climate and sustainability, and more.

SomerVision's 2040 is greatly echoed in my administration's progress for all agenda. My progress for all agenda is a commitment to an open and inclusive government. First we asked how do we create progress for all?

The answer is through inclusive, intentional efforts always viewed through the lens of equity. We must make space for all voices, prioritize those who often feel unheard.

Progress for all begins with listening and understanding the concerns. So what have I been doing in the last ten months since I've been in office is I've been engaging our community. I've held a dozen Covid listening sessions with various resident groups to understand their concerns and ideas, the impact of Covid.

I've also, you know, put a call out for participatory budgeting working group to help us allocate \$1 million to our city budget, which is the first time the city has ever done that.

We've also launched a survey called voices of Somerville, so if you like to work on, you know, online to give your feedback, there's an opportunity for you to do that.

And I've met with the youth. I can't keep track at this point, it's somewhere over 15 times to hear what is most important to them. And what am I hearing?

I'm hearing that affordability, housing, and living costs are an issue for people.

I'm hearing about the impacts of Covid that people are feeling, whether they have financial recovery, health, safety, have access to food. I'm hearing about social justice issues, certainly about the environment, global warming, sustainability, transportation, city infrastructure, our school buildings, our city buildings, street surfaces, quality of life issues like rodent control and public safety.

So my administration has taken concrete steps to address multiple areas of concern. On the affordability front for youth, we funded free breakfasts and lunch in the Somerville public schools. Our youth starting in seventh grade have free T passes, that's the link pass, that's bus and subway, so help ease in the Covid recovery, we have food security and access. We have a coalition that helps the Somerville food security coalition that helps us and guides us and provides services.

We have the Somerville mobile farmer's market. We have city-wide \$15 SNAP and P-EBT match programs at the Somerville farmer's markets. We have a cab to health program, which provides free rides to grocery stores, feed pantries, farmer's markets or medical appointments.

Economic development has awarded small business grants. We have free and rapid tests, K-95 masks available at City Hall and all libraries. We have rental assistance, which we call flex funds. If you're struggling with paying your -- your rent or your utilities. And you know, in the social justice realm, I'm happy to say we're fully staffed now and our racial and social Justice Department. Our director Denise Molina Capers will be talking a little bit later.

Our SomerViva office of immigrant affairs has expanded now with six languages offered for interpretation and translation. That's Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian, Creole, Nepali, Chinese Mandarin, Chinese Cantonese. We had a historic increase that I put in the budget, 10% in funds for the Somerville public schools. What are one of the concrete impacts of that is we've added ten additional mental health staff at all levels within the Somerville public schools from behavioral therapists to social workers to redirect employees and more.

In the affordable housing realm, I added 8.5 million to the affordable housing trust fund for land acquisition.

We've used an interesting financing tool that the state allows us to use for nearly 300 affordable housing units up at Clarendon north street public housing. They're going to -- we're going to rebuild -- or I should say the development team is going to rebuild the 216 really in poor condition housings and plus we're adding another 80 units on top of that.

And we have, you know, recently had -- I think it's 82 affordable housing units within the community, whether it's been built by developers or nonprofits or we've added six through the Somerville community land trust.

So where are we headed?

We're looking at -- or we have launched, I will let Denise Molina Capers talk about this, sometimes people know it was re-imagining the police, but it is re-imagining public safety, because many people have told us public safety is many things. It's not just defined by one department.

Having help, hiring, we're also hiring at the city. So we need an arts development manager, a health communications officer, a chief administrative officer. We're hiring in the public schools. So please, if you want to be really cozy in our four square miles, you know, look on our website.

If you have concerns that are not mentioned tonight, we are here tonight and beyond to talk with you. Know that we are hard at work in numerous other areas and we're actively assessing all city activity.

As I stated in my inaugural address, my pledge to you as mayor is that I will always have an open and honest conversation with you about the issues we face and our plans to address them.

The City Hall community meetings are a vehicle to do just that.

Thank you for your participation as we continue to build progress in Somerville.

So I think my instructions are I'm happy to take a couple of questions now and if there's any online, let me know. Otherwise, I can pass it on to the next department head.

But I'm here the entire evening, so feel free to ask me anything.

Yes.

>> Chapel Street, and I've been concerned for quite some time about -- preparation for the overflow of biotech into Somerville. I have friends, neighbors, family who are in the biotech industry, so I'm not the least bit hostile. But I noticed that in Davis Square there is a proposal to put a level 3 lab, things like tuberculosis, Influenza, Covid at the corner of Grove and Elm Street. I'm concerned that there's been no public health representation, no public health input into this process as yet.

I'm also concerned that our ordinances have a few loopholes that a clever lower

could exploit to put marginal projects as say substandard from a public health point of view. I just want to call that to your attention.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Thank you for the question. You have the answer? Awesome.

>> So, the question was, so there's actually two buildings that are being proposed for [away from mic] many of you may know about. Both are the building type is a lab building which is different than the actual use.

Lee is correct that there may well be a lab use in there for a variety of reasons, including folks tend to come to work at lab buildings more than office buildings these days, so it certainly wouldn't be unexpected for that to be the ultimate use that goes in there.

We did recently update our biotechnology ordinance, but Lee has provided me with some input that I think is worth looking at and I have been looking at. So we -- you know, I think it's likely that we'll be updating that or at least I want to take a harder look at what you propose, Lee, and make sure there aren't any loopholes. Some of the language that you pointed out, I think there's some merit to that.

Certainly in our legislative matters, once -- once we sort of focus on the exact language that might need to be change and we work with our subject matter experts, we'll look at that and close those loopholes if it makes sense to do so. Totally listening to you on that point and I think you've got some good input there and we'll keep that conversation going.

So, no, neither of the buildings -- so there's no active permit for the -- for any use right now. But both buildings are in the permanent -- permit process for construction. None of which has started yet. We may be able to get more details, last time I spoke to him was a week ago. Both of those under the works and there's been a number of public meetings and the plans are available online. The planning board is probably the best place to get those current latest versions of the plan, planning board website. But those buildings, it will be the next few years that those are constructed and then, to my knowledge and I'm looking to Tom or to our -- I don't think there's any actual tenants being considered at this point on the upper levels. They're not to that point yet.

That answer your question?

>> Yes, thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Thank you. Sure.

>> Hi.

>> Hi. I live around the corner, this is Myles, my 2-year-old. He's excited to meet a real mayor because he sees them on Paw Patrol.

So my question is, I was asked to be part of a letter-writing campaign that was to convince the city against having some sort of -- clinic or medical clinic for that community in the church next door that's not being used currently. And I did not sign up for that letter-writing clinic and didn't know how to express support for it.

And I just as a -- as a member of the daycare down the street and someone who lives around the corner, that church is right there, I just really want to know, can we make an effective use of that space and can we get some medical care for the people in our community, if we're being inclusive, are really not being included right now?

>> Mayor Ballantyne: So are you talking about the church that we own that the city owns on the corner of Morrisson and College?

>> Yes.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Right next door. The city owns some assets. There's nothing being planned for that at this moment. We don't have an RFP going for that.

There -- there have been -- are we [away from mic]. Okay. Thank you.

>> That's the bigger question.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: That is the bigger question. So we -- we did a study in our community on the possibility of opening a safe consumption site. In that report, which was led by Fenway Health, it gave some recommendations of what to do and where potential locations could be at the city.

In the report, it also said that there needs to be community process once a location has been discussed.

At this point, what we're doing is the Advisory Committee has met with my -- you've taught him well, yes. Healthy choice.

[Laughter].

They have -- there's going to be more community process on that to identify what the location is and the Advisory Committee is helping us define the next steps. But the goal is to -- to help and to be compassionate and to work as quickly as possible.

So I will say that there are some hurdles with supply chain management, if we're thinking about using any type of modulars during the time. We're also trying to be supportive of also the change that's going around here in Davis Square. But the next steps are with this Advisory Committee is to do -- I think what they've said -- I will say the meeting was just yesterday and I had a conflict so I wasn't part of that, is that they're going to have -- define probably another -- not another, but sort of a rollout team to make that happen. And then figure out the procurement process and have community process.

Hi.

>> Hi. I'm Harriet Ramsey. A long-time resident --

>> Mayor Ballantyne: They're going to give you the microphone.

>> My name is -- my name is Harriet and I'm a long-time resident of Somerville, 40 years just about, raised my kids here. And I've been blind since I was 14. And very active in disability issues for many years.

And have applied to become a member of the commissioner of the persons with disabilities commission. And I'm so glad that we have such a commission and we've had applications and the first three were, I think, considered very good ones. I'm one of them. And then it's been reopened. And I'm just very eager to be a full commissioner, because until we have five full commissioners, we really can't move forward. And we work a lot on everything from making sure our sidewalks are accessible even though we need to eat outdoors and just pay attention to all the details that need to be looked after. And look forward to closer connections with everyone in the RSJ division to -- just because crossing all those inclusivities, justice in disability is a major, major issue.

So look forward to hearing from you, mayor Ballantyne, when you might predict that appointments may be made.

Thank you.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Thank you. We are going through the process of -- of the applications. So I -- my staff -- I don't know, Adrienne, if you have any updates on that or no?



So it's with Hanna?

>> Yes, it is with Hanna.

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Okay. Okay. Thank you. So I know there was a whole slew of applications that have come in to their review or they've advised already and I believe there's an attempt to put some forth in the next City Council meeting, which is next week.

So I think -- should I pass it on to someone else. I'm here all evening and thank you.

>> Emily: Hi, everyone, I'm Emily. It's so nice to see you here tonight. Tonight I'm going to provide updates on three different programs that the office of sustainability and environment manages.

So OSE works to improve the city government and community. OSE implements different programs, policies, and projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and energy usage, to minimize environmental impacts and waste, to adapt to climate change and then to further equity in the community.

OSE is a growing department. We currently have five staff members, but we do have two openings, as the Mayor alluded to in the city.

The first program that I'll speak of tonight is the Community Choice Electricity program. This is the city's bulk electricity purchasing program. By leveraging consumer power, the city is able to offer more stable, competitively priced energy rates and more cleaner energy products.

So you may have received a mailer about this sometime this fall, but so essentially the CCE program contract was renewed this year and effective two days ago their new energy rates through the CCE program. There are three different levels of energy products that residents can select from with varying levels of renewable energy.

I will say that this most recent CCE contract renewal doubling the amount of renewable energy offered through it. And so it's a renewed contract. It's regional, local energy that therefore supports regional clean energy products -- or projects and jobs in New England and a bit of New York.

And so if you're interested in this program, if you don't already participate, just a few things to know. The CCE program, no one will ever reach out directly to you or, like, knock on your door or call you unless you reach out explicitly to the program. So that's something just to be aware of.

Renters who pay for electricity are eligible to enroll in the program without approval from their landlord.

And you can opt out, you can change your electricity product whenever you want with no penalty or fee or anything like that.

So participating in the CCE program is really impactful and easy way to take climate action. And another way that you can take climate action is participating in something called the Somerville climate forward ambassadors program. You may have heard about this before, it started in 2019. We didn't have a program this year, but we're starting it up again for the 2023 program year.

The ambassadors program is an opportunity for residents in Somerville who are interested in learning more about climate action to participate in a group setting where you learn more about what's happening on a global scale, state scale, a local scale. You -- we hear from experts on different topics of climate action, and then ambassadors have a final project that they -- they work together on either in a group or independently,

and then they kind of present it back to city staff and it has opportunity to, you know, be implemented into some city programming.

This year a really big focus of the ambassador program will be the Somerville climate forward update, which is the city's climate action plan. We're embarking on that update process later this fall, so the ambassador program which will start in January will have a really good opportunity to work closely with that update process.

So applications for the climate ambassador program will be opened later in November and open through December. Classes in the program will start in January, 2023, and then the program will wrap up in June, 2023.

And I spoke a little bit about Somerville climate forward. So like I said, that's the city's climate action plan. We'll be updating it over the next year. The plan was first published in 2018, so you may recall that process. And we're really looking forward to getting some good community participation. We want feedback on how the city's doing in terms of its greenhouse gas goals, greenhouse gas reduction goals and climate adaptation. And so if anyone's interested in participating in any of the programs that I discussed tonight, I'm happy to help you sign up for them. And if you haven't already, I do recommend that you subscribe to the sustainable newsletter. It's a great monthly newsletter that can help you keep up to date on what's happening in the city related to climate.

So thank you. I will take a few questions, if anyone has them, but I will be here for the rest of the evening too.

>> My name is [away from mic] and my question is for this community choice energy, are there any power sources or any suppliers that are wood fired in any way?

>> Emily: Yeah. So the question is regarding -- sorry, there's feedback. Regarding the community electricity program, are there any wood-burning fire electricity sources?

>> In that plan.

>> Emily: In that plan. So from my understanding, you know, I'll pass this off to Larry, he's a member of the commission on energies and climate change. Larry, do you want to pop up here? Very convenient to have you here tonight. Thank you.

>> Larry: This is a quick answer, no, there's no biomass generation.

>> Thank you, Larry.

>> Emily: Thank you, Larry. Yes. Good question.

>> Other questions for Emily?

>> Quick question just on the -- on the community -- on the community energy program, you mentioned there's a new contract.

You mentioned there's a new contract. If people had signed up or opted out, do they have to do anything or they roll right into the new contracts?

>> Emily: Another great question. So the question is for the CCE program, if folks have been previously enrolled, do they have to do anything different now that the contract has been renewed? The answer is, no, you're automatically rolled into the new contract so there will be new rates, you should have gotten a mailer about the new rates in the mail. So, no, you don't have to do anything.

[Applause]

>> Mayor Ballantyne: I just want to introduce for those of you who might not know, but representative Kristine Barber is here this evening.

[Applause]

>> Mayor Ballantyne: Victor and Brad, you can come on up.

>> Hi, everybody. I'm Victor Nascimento, I'm in the planning division and work on a lot of our neighborhood planning.

Want to give you a quick update on the status of the Davis Square commercial area plan and a little bit of context. We had a Davis Square neighborhood plan previously that got delayed primarily because of Covid and the priorities associated with it. That also gave us a little bit of time to do further analysis on feedback we received. But particularly on the impact that Covid had on businesses on Aught Square.

Some structural things that happened, like a lot more outdoor dining, businesses are struggling, finding ways to adapt. So we went back to the drawing table a little bit to include all that information and make sure that the plan captured it.

We also changed the focus of it a little bit more to the commercial core of the neighborhood. And as a sort of broader context, the city's comprehensive plan that the Mayor mentioned earlier, SomerVision, talks about areas that we want to transform, enhance, and preserve.

The Davis Square core area is an area that we want to enhance, meaning we think the square works and it's a place that people love. And so we want a better version of it rather than something that's totally different.

And we think of the residential area around that core as areas that we want to preserve, as the sort of residential neighborhoods that exist today.

So right now the status of it is we are doing a lot of internal research and analysis of different things we can do, particularly to improve the public realm which provides businesses sort of an environment where they can thrive.

We've also carried out a lot of conversations with local businesses. We really wanted to hear from them what, in their view, are things that we can do to support them better. And a lot of that is in the plan.

Without giving you too much of a summary since it's a work in progress, I'll give you a quick timeline. We're planning on releasing this publicly to folks about mid-January, and then we'll have a community meeting just a couple weeks after that to give folks a couple weeks to look at it before we get together and talk about it.

And our intention for that meeting is to really show you what we've been working on and get your feedback and go to the drawing -- back to the drawing tables many times as we need or to the extent that we need based on the feedback that we receive from you as to whether we're going in the right direction.

If you go to the web address there, that is our Somerville voice website where we keep our active projects. My email is at the top of that page.

I want to encourage anyone who wants to talk to me or has questions to email me. I will look through and I'm also happy to schedule a call from you and talk it over. I want to hear from folks if you have any ideas.

But once the plan is ready for public release, we will do a lot of engagement to hear your feedback about it in addition to any one-on-one conversations that anyone may want to have with me about any particular issues.

Thank you so much and if anyone has any questions, I'm ready to take them.

>> Any questions?

>> What are the city's plans to preserve businesses that are being displaced by new construction?

>> Victor: That depends on the particular case scenario and in the neighborhood plan we were thinking more in the context of how we can provide an environment that helps business succeed. I think as far as questions about specific developments and specific businesses that are being displaced in what we're doing, economic development would be better suited to answer that.

So if you have a particular you want to bring up, perhaps Rachel can give you some clarification on it.

>> Other questions?

>> Hello. My name's Charlie, I'm the owner of dragon Pete's in one of these buildings.

[Applause]

I've been a resident of Somerville for 17, you've been very supportive of our business, I appreciate it. Before Covid there was a meeting proposed in the building. Victor, excuse me, you mind reviewing for the constituents here and for myself, I'm living it so I know it, but there have been some articles recently, getting a lot of questions from the community about the status of our building. Do you mind reviewing the past and present and any quick estimates for the future of our building on the corner of Elm and Grove?

>> Victor: Unfortunately, I would want to check -- you want to do it? Okay.

>> Rachel: Hi, everyone. I have my phone because I checked the dates with the case planner who was working on this project. So the project has been going through the permitting process. They completed that with the planning board on October 13th.

After they get an approval, which they did on October 13th, there is a 20-day appeal period. That has just wrapped up in the last couple of weeks. That is part of why there has been some uncertainty about what the immediate steps are. Because they are waiting to see what happened.

As far as we've been told, we have not heard from the developer that they had an appeal. There still could have been one. But it may not have reached our ears yet if that happened.

Understanding that they probably have not had an appeal, what that means is that they are going to be looking towards their future and construction. We haven't heard anything specific about dates yet in terms of when that would start, but their indication when they were with the planning board is they would aim for spring of 2023.

So not immediate, but also not that far away as well.

Is there any follow up? Did I answer everything, Charlie, or did I miss some things?

>> [Away from mic].

>> Rachel: So that's where they are in terms of the timeline. Economic development, some of my colleagues were out walking around again yesterday just to make sure we're checking in with all of the businesses who are going to be affected. Most of the businesses do have a game plan for what they're looking for and what their next steps are going to be. We have not been sharing that publicly just because those are private decisions of those business owners and so we want to give them that courtesy to make those decisions known in the way that they would like to make them known.

But again, most of them have -- they've all been in talks with the developer about whether or not they would be coming back or not. And then what their game plan is going forward. For economic development, one of the things we can do is help them

search for another location in Somerville if they are not coming back to that location.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Rachel: Yes. If anyone is not -- they know they're not coming back and looking for something else, we are ready to help them connect with brokers and figure out what else is out there to keep them here in the city.

There was a follow-up here.

>> [Away from mic] when you issue a permit, is it a permit just for the building or for the use of the building also?

>> Rachel: So the question was when we issue a permit, what does that mean? Does that mean it's for the construction or is it also for the uses, is that right?

So the uses that are defined are very broad at the point where they're getting their permit and zoning. So it says things like ground floor -- there's specifics around the ground floor has to be retail, restaurant, there's a certain amount of arts and creative depending on where you are in the city, and then there's flexibility about what to do on the upper floors, depending on the type of building it is.

But at this stage, most of those buildings -- those developers don't have all of their tenants identified. So particularly this was the question around the biotech use. They aren't -- with these biotech buildings that we're seeing, they're coming in with a sense of what the market is going to be when they're ready to open two years from now, but they don't have tenants lined up yet. So we don't have a good sense at the moment of what type of lab use it might be.

We're also seeing in some of our lab buildings a mix. Some of it is biotech companies, some is actually not biotech companies. Some of it's also green tech companies or other uses that could use that same kind of space.

So we won't have a good sense in terms of the tenants, especially on the upper floors, for a couple years. Again, they have been reaching out to the current tenants to explore who might be coming back. And then there's also some specifics around the dimensions and how it's going to work going forward.

>> [Away from mic] tenants who are going to do something that's bad for the [away from mic].

>> Rachel: So the second part of that question is can the city refuse a company that's coming in that might be sort of detrimental to the neighborhood or where there's disagreement about its impacts.

I think on the biotech side, I don't know the biotech safety ordinance super well that Councilor Davis was speaking to before. I believe there's an opportunity in that respect, but maybe not and that might be the problem that we need to work on and I will pass that over to Colin who might have a better answer on this particular element who is in our environmental health.

>> Colin: Hi, everybody. Colin Zeigler. I'm sort of operating as the temporary chair for the Somerville bio safety committee. It is to the discretion of the committee to determine whether or not we issue a permit or not. It goes through a review process where members of the city staff, but also members of the community review it. We are looking for community members, so if you're interested please reach out to me. I'd be happy to speak with you on how to serve on the committee and learn about all the exciting work going on. But we want to ensure safety first and foremost. So thank you.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Colin: Yes.

>> Not the building?

>> Colin: Not the building, the use. Specifically the biotech use, if it's using RDNA or other --

>> Two different permits being discussed?

>> Colin: Oh, yes, this is specifically biotech. Thank you.

>> A question back here.

>> Thank you very much. My name's Jack, I'm a lifer here in Somerville. I've lived here [indiscernible] I spent about 30 years as an elected official here in Somerville and have a pretty big concern about what's going on in Davis Square. Actually what's not going on right now.

Victor, delighted to hear about this commercial area plan, but myself and quite a few people have been around Davis Square for a long time are concerned about who is going to help restore the Davis Square community policing, help restaff the empty store fronts and who's going to fix the crumbling crosswalks, the loose bricks, and the walls that are basically coming apart?

And on top of that, wait a minute, there's other things and this comes from people here on Davis Square. And who's going to be part of the process to help the homeless and the urban campers who are across the street from the theater? And who's going to help pick up those discarded needles that we're finding all too frequently here on Davis Square? Pretty sad, to be honest with you. I'm in the square every day and it's sad to see and I hope the public health people are going to do something and a safe consumption center, I know those things are going to be discussed here. I'm sure we can do this pretty soon.

And lastly, I want the store fronts, the church services going to be assisted through the loss of parking?

We've seen a couple stores here on College Avenue close up and the store owner said it's because of the fact that it's not convenient for people anymore to come and stop by the square, especially coming out of Covid. I'd like to know who's leading that effort, whether it's your department, if there's a special committee for how Davis Square is going to be restored to what -- close to what it used to be. I appreciate any wisdom, counsel, or when we can get together to discuss more of this. Because I know it can't be answered in two or three sentences.

Thank you.

>> Victor: Thank you for your question. I share a lot of your concerns and absolutely I will be happy to talk to you more on these subjects, particularly as we get to a public discussion part of this document.

Your question had a lot of parts to it that kind of different folks will know more about. But what I can talk about, we are talking about in the plan quite a bit is the conditions of the square. The public realm of the square and how that influences both visitors and businesses.

We are calling out in the plan to change our approach to maintenance when it comes to the square. We know that there is currently a lot of sidewalk infrastructure and crosswalk infrastructure that just really needs to be completely redone.

And we are also having a lot of conversations about prioritizing accessibility, which has been brought up earlier. One of the sort of conflicting and challenging parts is brick

is often called out as part of the character of the square. But brick is also not the ideal material to maximize accessibility. And so we're talking about how can we make the use of brick material an accent, a thing that is part of the public realm, but ensuring that our sidewalks prioritize above anything else accessibility for folks not only who may have mobility challenges, but also folks who are, you know, carrying something with wheels. It could be a wheelchair, but it could also be a cart, it could be a stroller. So we're thinking about all of that and how we can improve the public realm.

Another topic that has come up a lot in that sense is the need for Davis Square to have some kind of business organization. We know that some of the coordination that would really kind of maximize the square as a -- to create a great environment beyond the maintenance of the infrastructure, which is the city responsibility, but having some kind of business organization could assist with that as well. We're making suggestions about how we could facilitate that in the plan and encouraging the business community do that as an outcome of this plan as well.

As far as plans for traffic and parking, Brad who is here can speak a little bit more to that and I'm sure he will get a chance to come after me and I'll let him address that.

As far as the issues around homelessness and drug use, that's something that would be better addressed by one of our health oriented folks, if anyone wants to speak about it now or perhaps this can be addressed at some point later in the evening.

But I totally agree with you, that's a key concern as well.

And so if also to -- go back a little bit, I want to clarify about something earlier. I encourage anybody to -- if you have questions about the status of specific projects in the square, we usually have planners who are assigned to work on a specific project who will really know exactly what's going on with it. If you email [planning@SomervilleMA.gov](mailto:planning@SomervilleMA.gov), that goes to the planning division and we can direct that to the person who is hands-on with that project.

If anyone's curious on the project's up to date information, that's what I encourage you do because you get the most up to date information that way.

Thank you.

>> We'll move on to Brad.

>> Brad: Good evening, everybody. How's the volume in the back? Okay? Little low. Let me see if I can avoid feedback. Okay.

I'm a musician, you would think that this shouldn't happen very often for somebody who knows how to be in microphones. I'm a Somerville resident and a parent in our Somerville public schools. I live in ward 7, I've served this community for 15 years, so I see so many faces of folks who have been here through thick and thin, longer than I have and who helped me understand the long history of this community. For all of you, thank you. Brian, thank you. Jim, thank you. Jack, thank you.

Our generation of public servants needs to learn from the folks who have been here through thick and thin. It's our work to carry on your values and make sure they're reflected in the modern era. The team that I lead is responsible for a variety of work, and I'm going to touch on a few specific examples tonight.

If you want to boil the mobility's mission down into a distilled version, our first job is to make sure that nobody in our community is run over by a speeding car and killed.

Who remembers Lea? Was anybody friends with Lea? Neighbors? Lea died two blocks from here two years ago, it was election night, 2020. Her death haunts me

personally.

I feel responsible and our industry should. It's unacceptable. 40 years ago this society decided that speeding suburban commuters through urban areas was an effective policy. Our residents for 15 years told me in a variety of jobs that it's unacceptable, and now it's my job to make the hard calls to work with you all to save lives. We're doing that every day.

It's also a part of our team's job to make sure that people can get around without a car. With reliable buses that get you where you need to go on time.

I'm going to talk about that in a second. And it's also my team's job to work on mass transit extensions, the green line that so many of you have your fingerprints on, Brandon, Ron, so many of you were working on these before I arrived 15 years ago.

So three quick themes for us tonight. Has anybody taken the time to write in, to advocate for preservation and enhancement of MBTA bus service in Somerville over the last six months? Thank you, your voices worked. Your words mattered. And so did the Mayor's and others.

The MBTA has a bus network that reflects like the 1950s street car era. It's not evolved with the times to reflect new travel patterns, new density, new jobs, new services. Health care, education, these things have all changed.

But the bus system is kind of stuck in the past. So we need to be cautious and credit the MBTA for thinking strategically about making a bus network region-wide for 1 cities and towns that works better than the one we have today. Honestly, I ride the bus to City Hall a ton. There are drop trips all the time. When I get out, it's coming once an hour frequency. That's unacceptable. Credit to the team for trying to marshal the resources to repaint the canvas of its bus network.

But they got the first draft terribly wrong. A community like Somerville before the pandemic, 16,000 bus trips every day began in our little four square miles, over 14 routes. They cut them to six or seven routes. If you live in winter Hill, you want to get to an appointment or grocery on Davis, 89 bus gone. Uh? What? In the 87 bus, you want to get to the affordable culturally relevant grocery store, that bus is out of the plan so Somerville residents rose up. We did it respectfully and diplomatically like we do so well, and the Mayor was one of the most forceful and diplomatic advocates in the entire region. I'm delighted to report to you all because of our advocacy, the MBTA published a new draft and it's so much better. 89 is saved. 87 is saved. We are going to get so much more bus service.

[Applause]

And not only are we seeing things, we're working together to make sure that the bus doesn't stop running at 6:00 p.m. That it doesn't stop running on Sundays. The new plan is going to have 25% increases in overall service over a five-year period, and it's going to have steady, around the clock service. That's really, really important because the old style of just 9:00 to 5:00 workers, which is code language for White suburban men, that's outdated. It's great that they're trying to provide better weekday and midday and evening trips and weekend trips. Fight's not over. We're going to still stay plugged in.

We anticipate that the MBTA will be proposing this. It's going to take five years for them to implement these changes. They're not going to flip the light switch and have no buses or different buses next year. '23 to 2028 will be the implementation schedule. If you're interested in learning more about these issues, please email



transportation@Somerville.gov. Mayor, Lance, Kristine have been super involved. We can get you plugged in. We have activists focused on transit issues. We have a conversation about the different committees.

So keep the faith, mass transit is not dead, cities are not dead, Covid will not keep us down. We actually have to evolve with the times and make sure that people can get around on the bus.

Next slide, please.

Green Line Extension who's attended a meeting and written a letter? Who's demanded that the commonwealth fulfilled its commitment to mitigate the air pollution caused by the dig years ago? Anybody? We're so close, folks. We're so close. Thank you for your patience.

For folks who live in the Ball Square side of the neighborhood, thank you for dealing with the terrible, terrible disruptions. The bridge is out. Chief, thank you. You and your team have persevered and continue to make response times work. The bridge is closed for two or three years it's been scary, hard. Earlier today to a question about business engagement. We were meeting with Ball Square businesses and they said the same thing you said, Jack, it's been a hard Covid period. And Rachel and the rest of us are working hard to make sure that the tools there are for folks to thrive in this new era. We're so close. Just a couple of weekends for this to open. End of November opening for the Medford branch. Trains are running on union square, that's amazing. They're going to be running to Ball Square and Tufts hillside -- well, not hillside, they're running to Tufts/Medford and we're going to keep up the fight for the route 16 extension. But that's probably end of November.

This community's advocacy also ensured that the Somerville community path would be extended as part of this once in a lifetime construction project. And this doesn't happen, folks, it's because we demanded that they not value engineer that stuff out. It's because Mayor Ballantyne had to make hard calls about allocating local funds, if necessary, when they tried to take ransom our local resources for the community path. They could have canceled this thing. We would never let them. They could have removed community path, we never let them. If you're a dog walker, a stroller, a bike rider, you are going to have safe off-street connection to the museum of science, Charles river pass just a couple months from now. Setting expectations, green line service will open end of November is what they're telling us, about two months later the community path will open. They have to finish work that the contractors are doing.

We also want to set expectations, it's only fair to look you in the eyes and say that the section that you love, for example, between Willow and Cedar is not how the new community path will look. It's going to look like this picture on the bottom. It's not as pastoral as we want, ten or 12 feet wide, fences on both sides. In some cases big retaining walls and hill slopes above, but it's a community path and we could have lost. It's better than the alternative. So City of Somerville will be responsible for care and maintenance of these issues. First responders will respond to emergency calls. Our water and sewer group will be cleaning catch basins. Our PPW crews will be plowing snow. This is going to take a learning curve. Please be patient. Use 311 if you see a light bulb out or snowplowing issue. We ask that you behave with grace. It's going to be so hard. There's going to be mistakes and lessons learned from this first winter.

I wish they were opening up in July instead of January. But next year will be that

much closer and tighter. Our crews are just about better than anybody, but this will be hard.

Last but not least, station upgrades, accessibility at Ball Square. You can see some of the shovels in the ground still, that will continue. I've clearly spoken for too long, take a couple questions. First and foremost, Holland Street, things are changing. Job number one is to save lives, period, full stop.

Job two is to make sure we're communicating the details, whys, whens.

If we need curb extensions, ADA compliant crosswalks, we owe it to you to communicate how the remaining services will best serve those that need them. That means ADA placards, people with mobility impairments of, that means seniors, parents with children, business owners, commercial deliveries, first responders, MBTA buses.

We are working hard to try to make sure that we can meet as many of those needs as possible. But we have to be very, very honest, there's less parking in Somerville's future than there has been over the last 40 years and we're committed to making sure that folks who truly need it are prioritized for that limited resource.

Construction's almost done on holland Street. Our amazing Brian Postlewaite, director of engineer, his team with our project manager just raised this last week. Pavement walkings are happening for crosswalks, should be as we speak. Keep the faith, folks. There's so much being built in this city, sewer pipes, libraries, parks, streets, it's disruptive, but it's all to serve you to make sure that our streets work for everybody.

I think that's it for me. Thank you so much. I'll be here all night and to handle questions as long as we can.

>> I have a couple questions.

>> The question that was asked earlier, three years ago we had a plan to overhaul the brick. Could you talk to why that didn't happen in the interim and what the plan is now? I think that's a question on a lot of folks' minds.

>> The question was back to the sidewalk condition. It's a perfect segue to get my talkative self off the microphone and Brian here. Our teams have been working together to improve accessibility and you can see the evidence at the intersection of the square. Brian, you want to talk about the work we've been doing and what comes next?

>> Brian: Sure. Everybody, I'm Brian Postlewaite, director of engineer. Unfortunately this question's going to steal some of the thunder of what I'm going to talk about in a moment, but I'm more than happy to speak a little early on it. Yes, a few years ago we did have a, what we thought was going to be a really fantastic project. Unfortunately, the bids came in not very fantastic. It was way too expensive for what we could afford at the time and had the ability to manage.

So we went back to the drawing board and we know, as Victor was talking about, there is a long-term plan for the square. So rather than trying to come up with a solution that's going to preconceive what that long-term plan is, our goal right now, knowing the condition of the sidewalks and the crosswalks in the square is to make them safe. To make them accessible. And so you probably have seen the construction that we've done, right, in the intersection where we have replaced the sometimes crumbling brick accessible curb ramps with stable concrete accessible curve ramps. We also removed the failing brick out of the crosswalks and replaced them with asphalt and we will have standard crosswalk stripes coming down. If they're not there already, they're going to be there within the week.

And that is the goal right now. In the next streets construction project, we're also going to include replacing the -- a five or six-foot accessible sidewalk along the brick corridor sidewalks so that we have a nice, stable, firm, concrete path that will be able to withstand all the damage we can throw at it until we get to the point where Victor's plan and the future plans for Davis Square can come into fruition and make that work for the time being.

>> Thanks, Brian. We just have a couple questions for Brad.

>> Hi, I'm Rachel Evans. I've lived in Somerville longer than you, but less than Jack. I am a pedestrian, a bicyclist, a car driver, a T user. I have two separate questions, I hope you'll indulge both of them.

The first one is we have lots of city and state laws, ordinances about traffic and parking. And each and every one of us know that they're not currently being enforced in Davis Square. There are double parked cars, idling cars, loading and unloading trucks, standing on the crosswalk. Why are we not enforcing the existing laws?

>> Brad: Thanks for the question. Just to repeat it, question about enforcement in all of its forms, Rachel. You described moving violations as well as illegal stopping, loading, double parking.

>> Mostly parking.

>> Brad: So to be clear, you know, captain Donovan can chime in here. The city's parking department is responsible for the enforcement of stopping violations, typically. And we have an amazing director, her name is Susan, she runs a big department, and PCOs are constantly making the rounds.

And yet so many of these violations, Rachel, are five minutes and so by the time that somebody files a 311 request and then maybe 15 minutes later whoever's on shift from the parking department gets there, that moment has passed.

As a result, we are looking into other ways to achieve enforcement. Some of it is about actually how we regulate the space, making sure there's enough loading zones, that there's the right information for merchants and the trucking industry. So that's something that we're working on in Ball Square right now. Sorry squeaking. Another thick is automated enforcement.

The city's currently doing a couple of pilots related to data collection about how frequently things like double parking happen on the heart of Elm Street, and that's going to help us learn. We need to make sure that we're consistent with our surveillance work, that privacy is respected. But when you look around the world, places like New York and so many others, state laws often allow for more flexibility on automated enforcement than we have around here.

But that said, there are things that we can do even in the absence of legislation. We can continue to invest in our workforce in the parking department. Making sure that we're growing and retaining that workforce, training them, giving them the technology tools that they need to do their job.

The city has just finished up a park study that we're work on with the mayor and the City Council. That's going to be one of the main recommendations is sustaining investment so that those professionals have dignified, safe effective ways to do the enforcement. It's a long answer and a little vague, but I want you to know we think about this stuff all the time. We observe it too.

>> I could jump in real quick too, because I totally agree with you and on that -- on

the point of automated enforcement, I chair the committee on legislative matters, just this past Tuesday I put on the agenda, there's three items that sort of get to this issue and we had a conversation about it. There are state laws that we can adopt that will enable different enforcement mechanisms and so we're working with the administration, because it's something the council is very aware of as well. So it's as recent as Tuesday we were talking about this exact thing and trying to come up with a better way of solving these problems.

>> Thank you, Lance. Please stay there for a moment because my second question will include you and Brian and Jack Connelly, because I have a child who's 20 years old and when she was an infant, I tried to cross Elm Street with her in a stroller. There was no curb cut and there were cars parked on that crosswalk.

And I have before 311, I sent letters, I sent emails to every Councilor, to the mayor, the traffic department, every year. My daughter's now 20 years old. And that crosswalk still doesn't have a curb cut. It still doesn't have a bump out. And the flashing pedestrian light, thank you very much for putting that in, it's broken for the fifth time. And I submitted a 311 request a month ago. And I got no response.

I submit 311 requests about this particular crosswalk three or four times a year. It's on elm Street and Willow. I have a neighbor with a mobility impairment and she uses that crosswalk every day and she has been very close to getting killed several times. It seems like the city wants to wait until someone gets killed before they address a dangerous crosswalk.

>> Brad: Rachel, thank you. Again to summarize the question was about a specific location at Willow and elm which everybody knows is an uncomfortable and safe intersection. We've been advocating with us and we've been working with our partners in the city of Cambridge for quite some time to improve safety. But you're describing a legal crosswalk without curve ramps. That's obviously unacceptable and our city departments work every year to modernize and install new ones. Brian and I take notes and follow up and try respond in good faith to that 311 order, even if the answer is design and construction will need to be built last year. I've taken a ton of time --

>> I have been told they will be repaired for 20 years I have been told. Yes, through many different directors.

>> Brad: I feel you.

I feel your pain.

Thank you, everybody. We'll be around all night. We've taken way too long. It's time to get to the next departments out of respect. I'll be here until the last person goes home. Thank you so much.

>> Brian: Try this one. I can't hear the buzzing, so if it comes up, let me know.

And you can't even hear me, that's a bigger problem.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Brian: Does this work better? Okay, all right. Again, I am Brian Postlewaite, director of engineering.

>> Is that better? Yeah?

>> Brian: I wanted to remind everybody, we have a new streetscapes project manager. Our department is mostly staffed with project managers. About a third to half of everything the engineering division does is construction in the city rights of way.

And -- thank you. Don't worry about it.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Brian: We have streetscapes project manager, Rebecca Wright. Raise your hand. She does -- will be doing all of the major street reconstruction projects, including the sidewalk work that I talked about earlier and she is helping us pull together the last bit of work in -- on College and Holland and the crosswalk work that we've just been doing in the square. So I want to thank her for bringing this project home at the end of the year. It has been very challenging to get everything done before winter comes. But I'm optimistically hopeful that we will make it and we'll have much safer streets through this winter and in for the next few years.

I also wanted to point out that -- so I already talked about the accessible curve ramps that you can see on the left that we just installed. This photo was taken before we replaced the brick crosswalk which has now since been replaced with asphalt to remove any sort of tripping hazard and concerns of that like.

And also to make it more maintainable and durable over the next few years.

The second thing that I wanted to point out is that we have installed a number of speed humps through the city. Some people may have noticed that the last batch of speed humps weren't quite as effective as previous batches. We have since fixed that and so you should notice that the speed humps are a little more effective at slowing you down. That is intentional.

So thank you for driving slowly and safely.

You should expect additional speed humps next year. This is a continuing element of our annual streetscapes projects. So these are intended to keep people driving safely, because as Brad said, our -- one of our main priorities is to minimize high-speed impacts between pedestrians and vehicles.

Part of the piece that we do to encourage that is pedestrian safety islands. Such as the one that we have at Cameron as well as the ones at Kidder and College. They generally work in two ways. One, they slow motor vehicles down. Two, they make crossing the street easier. And the way they do that, especially for younger children like my kids, is that it allows somebody to look in just one direction and cross halfway and then look in just the other direction and cross the other half of the street.

So you're not having to find that -- that unicorn of a gap where there nor cars coming in both directions at the same time. So it helps -- it helps make these crossings easier and more convenient for pedestrians.

Next slide. Thank you.

We don't just do streets, we also do what's underneath streets. About two years ago -- three years ago we took a study of all of the water service connections in the city, about 20,000, and found out that about 450 of them had lead or non-copper water services. For the past two years we have been -- we have had a contract that goes out and replaces those water services all the way up to the meter. And we've been doing that to the tune of about 50 to 100 per year, and we expect to do another 100 this coming-up construction season.

We prioritize people who believe or know that they have a lead service and contact us. So if you have any suspicions or inklings, please let us know. The database is online, we will help you look it up. And if you're on that list, we will prioritize you for the next available slot in the construction schedule.

And really important, this is a program that is at no additional charge to you, our

water customer. This is grant funded. So this isn't out-of-pocket expense.

The last thing that I wanted to talk about is -- is flooding and combined sewer overflows. We also work with our water and sewer system with our great water and sewer department. We manage all of the rehabilitations, all -- and our approvals with DEP and the EPA. So what we are working on right now is, A, finishing up a study that many of you may have attended discussing the flooding on our streets in Somerville and we have a set of projects that will be rolling out soon to help alleviate some of those.

One of those projects will be in Davis Square, which is going to be located along Morrison avenue. It's the number two project that came out of the analysis, and that should come up -- you should see that in the study. That should be released this month.

And second, and immediately following this floodwater study, is a combined sewer overflow. Who here knows what a combined sewer overflow is?

I feel so sorry for you.

[Laughter].

So a combined sewer overflow is over half of the sewers in our city are combined where storm drain and sanitary sewer flows together and when we have really, really bad rainstorms that even the NWRA system can't take it, that storm water and sanitary overflows into our rivers. It's not a good legacy that our forbearers left us, but we are trying with your help to make that better and to make our rivers safer, to make our streets cleaner, and to provide a better and healthier life for all of us.

This is something that we're studying now with our colleagues in Cambridge and at the NWRA to improve this and to come up with a robust plan for reducing them to at least a bearable level, if not removing them all together.

So as you can see, I talked almost entirely about construction and I know construction is hard. I've lived through it, a lot of my neighbors have lived through it, I'm sure all of you have lived through it. We really, really appreciate your patience as we work through this, as we work to make Somerville a healthier and safer city.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Take a couple questions for Brian.

>> Hi, I just wanted to clarify what you were saying about Davis Square sidewalks. I appreciate the crosswalks being fixed, but the sidewalks are a real mess and I've nearly fallen and broken limbs as a result.

The plan is to put a concrete step on all of the commercial area sidewalks in Davis Square and, if so, during what time period?

>> Brian: Ron, thank you. You are correct. Your interpretation of my explanation was spot on. The goal is to have a continuous ribbon, if you will, of concrete sidewalk that connects the entire square. Much of the square [broken audio] that are brick will have concrete. We don't intend to replace all of the brick. But where we can -- but we will be replacing just enough so that we can get a safe, concrete sidewalk path.

Primarily up against the business frontage leaving the brick in between the tree wells. That's the goal right now, but we haven't fully designed it.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Brian: The time frame will be the next construction project, which starts in the spring of 2023. But that construction project goes through to the fall of 2024. So it's going to be in that 18 to 24-month period.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Brian: I 100% agree with you.

>> Hi -- ooh, that is loud. Eric Wilson on Liberty Avenue. I appreciate the effort to make the city safer and I appreciate the efforts that calm traffic. But I think we've gone from a pendulum over here to these speed humps that are making it difficult to drive around the city. If the speed limit is 20, shouldn't you be able to drive over a speed hump at 20? If you drive over a speed hump -- if you drive over a speed hump at 20, you're is going to lose your dentures if you have them. It's bad. They're so high. I drive a Prius, which about half the people here drive, except mine's [away from mic] you have to go like 12 or ten and I wish I didn't have to drive, but I have to drive to work. Most of these or many of these are not marked well. There's no sign on the side. When it snows you're not going to be able to see them. And heaven forbid you have an accident and an ambulance has to come and they have to drive over these. I think we've gone too far. They should be lower, well marked, and I don't know about if they need to be quite as ubiquitous as they are, maybe we got a special deal on them, but there are really too many of them at this point.

[Applause]

>> Brian: So, yes, we have been installing these speed humps and we have been reviewing their efficacy. And we have noticed many of them haven't been as effective as they should be. They should be keeping you at or below a 20-mile-per-hour speed limit. It's not a minimum speed. So we do understand that some of our speed humps do require people to drive slower than 20 miles per hour. They absolutely shouldn't allow somebody to drive over 20 miles per hour.

So that's a really hard piece -- sliver to slice there. And so we do err on the safety side, not on the exceeding the speed limit side.

We do completely understand and agree with your visibility concerns. And we -- and we can't get the thermoplastic striping out there right after the asphalt goes down, it has to wait a few weeks. So what we've been working with is putting down the tape that is sub optimum, I agree, but it's the best technical solution we have until we can get the striping down.

Our strong goal right now is to get the thermoplastic down before the winter snow comes in so that we have those arrows. We will also be putting down yellow paint and actually our Mayor, when she was a Councilor recommended this to us and we did it on Powder House Boulevard and we believe that it's been pretty effective. So we're going to be putting down yellow, but probably not until the spring season.

But first we're needing to get all of the crosswalks striped and then the second priority is get all the speed humps striped with the arrows. We have just gone out last week to put up signage on all, if not almost all of the speed humps that have been installed this year.

>> Well, I don't believe it's too much more, maybe ten seconds or so, they just redid the one around the block from me on Kidder and it's still too high. I'm a quality engineer, so I couldn't help myself.

I drove over it a bunch of times to test it. Highest I could drive over it without risking damage to my car was 14.

I realize that I'm not required to drive at 20, but if you're driving at, say, 18 and you hit one of these, it shouldn't be something that you have to tell everybody at work about

and then get your car fixed.

>> I have a question.

>> Brian: Harriet. I'll repeat your question. I'm sorry, can you let Harriet go first?

>> My question is, how far is the speed bump from a pedestrian crosswalk? Because if somebody's going 20 miles per hour, it takes a certain distance to slow your car down. And as a blind pedestrian, what I can tell you? I live on the corner of [away from mic] and people come ripping around that corner. I've even had my foot driven over. For some reason, I don't know if I have guardian angels, it didn't break any bones.

>> Brian: I'll repeat the first half of her question for those online. She asked how far apart are the speed humps and how far away from a crosswalk are the speed humps?

We try to space them out at approximately every 500 feet. Research has shown that 500 feet is the optimum dimension to -- to keep people driving at a safe speed for the entire corridor.

Brad, if I got that dimension -- okay, good, I got the thumbs up. That's the first piece.

The second piece is that we try to put them relatively close to crosswalks, but we have to pay attention to one-way traffic and we can't put them right at the crosswalk. So it really depends on the specific street and how traffic is flowing, the hills that are coming in from either side. We have a lot of them in our city. So there's a lot of pieces, so there's not a simple answer there.

>> Thank you.

>> Hi, Brian. My name's Mark. I wanted to say that I actually appreciate the speed bumps on Morrison. Because that was a thoroughfare.

I have another concern. I've been coming to these meetings for over a decade. Our neighborhood floods fairly frequently. I've written to all of you many times. The sewage does not just flow into our rivers, it's flowing into our streets when it floods. And there's been promises. I'm encouraged that you said the plan on Morrison might happen. I do not want to be pushing up daisies by the time this happens. It's a third-world system. You -- people should not have sewage in their streets. Should not have condemnments in their streets after a flooding rain. I really want something to happen.

>> Brian: I couldn't agree more with you. I can't tell you when, it requires a large amount of conversation with the Mayor, with the council, but we do have a plan. We have -- we're finishing that plan, we have presented the plan, and the next step is to move forward with prioritizing funding to make that plan happen.

Then we have to go into design, to be honest, design is about a year to 18-month process and then construction is another two years after that.

So the -- the absolute fastest, frankly, is going to be probably about five years. And I don't want to -- I don't want to pretend that it could be faster.

>> That's too long. There cannot be sewage in the streets [away from mic].

>> Hi, I'm Kate Neil, I live actually not in your ward, I live in ward 3 and that was a great meeting at the high school. This is a totally different meeting, which I appreciate. Different things are being covered in each ward. I am married to a business owner Davis Square to dragon pizza, Charlie, so thank you all for supporting us. And you have no idea how many other families are supported who are employed there.

My question just goes back to another question, I think the data speaks so clearly to why the speed humps or bumps, which the signs are different in different neighborhoods, why they're important and at what speeds would bad things happen?



Can you quote that? I know there's a graphic that's coming up.

>> Brian: Yes, and actually Brad's -- I'm going to try and Brad can correct me.

If I recall correctly, at anything over 15 miles per hour a collision is, I think, over 50% likely to be fatal.

Brad, do you want to --

>> [Away from mic] 90% die when struck [away from mic] speed is the thing. Speed is the thing.

>> Brian: Thank you, Brad.

>> One more question and then just to be respectful of everybody's time, we'll move on to the next --

>> Brian: Yeah.

>> Thank you. Hi. Haley, I live in Davis Square. I actually just bought an apartment there and so you know my neighbor. This sort of intersects with the parking situation. Due to the safety improvements along Holland Street, now there's zero parking along the entire sort of little island north of Davis Square, which is fine. But now there's also no -- no loading zone at all. So we moved there and now there's zero loading zone. We have a car, we mark it elsewhere. I work at the T and I bought the apartment because it's next to the T. But now there's just no way to load my baby, my elderly parents, my, you know, vacation nothing and that's not to speak for the business owners on the street as well. Have there been engineering solutions considered to, like, add loading zones, to add, perhaps, parking spaces for people who find that their parking that they needed is now gone? Because it seems like there's no space for some reason on the street existing, but we're hoping maybe there's an engineering solution that could be explored.

>> Brian: Unfortunately, the design that we came up with with mobility really results in what we see out there today. There isn't any more space that we can -- that we can find any where. All the rest of the space that we have available is private property, which we don't have the availability to -- to take for that purpose.

I could speak to you afterwards on, like, specific solutions, because I can't quite identify precisely where you're living. But the -- the need to have a safe corridor for all users does sometimes conflict with having convenient access to loading and parking.

>> [Away from mic] the loading is a safety issue. Like right now there's no [away from mic] loading on that block which means that whoever is [away from mic] has to cross Holland in order to be in a legal loading zone. Could you hear me?

>> Brian: Yes, I could hear you and I'm not --

>> [Away from mic].

>> Brian: Okay. So I'm going to remind people that parking -- parking in the City of Somerville is not guaranteed at any particular location. We have many, many, many streets in this city. Holland is only but one of them that only has parking on one side of the street. That is why we prioritize making pedestrian safety crossing our streets as much as we possibly can.

The -- the proper place to load and unload is in the assigned and dedicated spaces for those purposes. And yes, sometimes that is located on the other side of the street from you.

>> Thank you, Brian.

Brian and Brad will be here, so if you have additional questions, please feel free to

approach them.

>> Good evening, everyone, again. I know it's late. I'm good at being quick as a former teacher.

All right. So the department of racial and social justice, although we're known for the initiative around public safety for all, our general mission and why the department was created in the first place is because we lead Somerville's efforts around equity. We collaborate with city departments, constituents, and stakeholders to eliminate the institutional and structural systems that create racial inequity, social disparities, and other social injustices as it relates with all city services in Somerville, both internally and externally.

So we were established in 2021 and from this time, as the mayor mentioned, we have continued to build the department's capacity. More recently we come new staff members, RSJ coordinator Amanda, Leonor, and Haakon.

We have an RSJ youth league that started a study last year to conduct studies in the city and their concerns and thoughts around public safety.

With this study, there will be a design for an official RSJ youth cabinet which will give the youth a place, a seat at the table to be able to lean in and help us make official decisions around policy for the city.

These RSJ youth league members will be presenting their findings publicly and we are very excited to support them in this year-long project that they have worked on.

The RSJ department has also been continuing training around what is known as PFA, psychological first aid, in collaboration with Soya and the Department of Health and Human Services. We have hosted now four free psychological first aid training sessions to city staff, frontline workers and community leaders such as yourself that are well informed and can be a resource for other community members.

We have had over 100 participate in these meetings and these follow-up training sessions have been an opportunity for those over 100 persons to continue to practice what they are learning in these training sessions. This is one of the ways in which the RSJ department is collaborating with the community, not just to get feedback from the community, but to involve everyone in our mission of the initiatives that we have within our office and provide the community with tools to do so.

So the community also requested that we monitor the establishment of a system for reporting, investigating, and refer hate and bias incidents. We are in the process of implementing a case management system known as file vine. With this file vine case management system, we will be able to track any and all relevant information to the complaints, keep track of these cases, and also keep contact with those who have filed the complaints and give them consistent updates on what is happening with their complaint and where it is in the process.

What is formally known as re-imagining policing and public safety and now known as public safety for all because, as we all know, public safety is not just about policing, it is also about public policy, it is also about your lived experience and what does it mean to feel safe where you live and work.

So the staffing and operations analysis, we have completed the phases of initial meetings and fact finding conducting the focus groups and interviews, data collection, and analysis and we are now in the process of recommendation development.

The final phases of this will be the report development and finally to present the

findings to the public.

We have the policing and public safety perception survey. It is published, it is available in six languages. We have somewhere in this room the QR Code. We also have everywhere around in this room the hard copy. If you still need more, we are here, we will be here afterwards and we can help you in whatever way you need to get access to this public safety survey.

Yes. Our czar. We are also in combination with the survey are conducting what we are calling community visioning focus groups. These have been ongoing since August of this year. Dates for participation are posted on our website. We are welcoming people to either join a group, if you want to host a group because you have neighbors that you want to be able to share your thoughts with us with in a safe space. We will help you to host it, find a space, and prepare all materials and whatever is needed in order to do that.

So please talk to us afterwards if you are interested. If you don't want to talk to us, you can also go online and register on the community visioning link.

So in oversight we are tasked with creating what oversight would look like in Somerville. This November, because it's November 3rd, we are going to be announcing who are the official task force members that are going to be trained, informed, and knowledgeable about what civilian oversight is, how it functions across different models and what does it mean specifically for the City of Somerville, because there's no cookie cutter answer. There's knowing the data and the evidence and catering to what Somerville needs specifically.

Finally, see, I'm quick.

The commissions of the human rights commission, the commission for women, the Somerville commission for women and the Somerville commission for persons with disabilities is -- has an open call for four spots in each of these commissions, which will remain open until filled. Again, if you are interested, we have registration sheets so that we can give you a call and follow up on your interest to be a part of any of these commissions which the RSJ department supports.

And I will now render the floor to our ADA director.

>> Adrienne: Thank you, Denise. Good evening. Thank you for extending and staying the evening. As I said, as Denise said, my name is Adrienne Pomeroy and I'm the ADA coordinator with the City of Somerville and just wanted to highlight a few things.

In the spring, I decided I really wanted to first educate myself and the division on how much our staff knew, our city staff knew about the ADA and accessibility in general.

So I conducted an internal survey and was extremely encouraged by the results because the majority of our departments actually have to consider the ADA and accessibility in the projects and other things that they manage for our city.

With that, this does inform professional development and training opportunities, which are a part of my role. And I started that process last week with the Somerville fire department who requested to learn a little bit more about having positive interactions and best practices with people with disabilities. The really wonderful thing about our first responders is not only do they respond to emergencies, but they just respond when somebody is in need. And they are first-hand able to see when somebody may be in need of resources. And that gets sent in varying directions, so now they have a

resource need if they are to encounter folks with disabilities that maybe need some additional help.

Ongoing, the next up will be our police department. And then finally, later this month, please be on the lookout for the ADA community survey. This is a chance where you and the other folks that live, work, and play in Somerville get to tell the division more about their ADA and accessibility experiences, concerns, and any other feedback you want to give. And I look forward to looking at that data and learning more about your experiences.

Like my colleagues, I am here to talk to you and answer questions after this. I can also be reached at [ADA@SomervilleMA.gov](mailto:ADA@SomervilleMA.gov) if you prefer to reach out by email. Thank you so much.

>> Questions for Adrienne or Denise?

Okay, thank you both.

>> Excuse me, I just have a question. Are we also taking questions on Zoom or are there no people --

>> No questions on Zoom. Thank you. That was a good question.

>> Captain Donovan: Good evening. Can everyone hear me?

My presentation's short, I should be about maybe an hour, hour and 15 minutes.

>> Thank you.

>> Captain Donovan: No radio. I'll go over here. That's fine. My name's Jim Donovan, I've been with the police department going on over 22 years. Currently assigned to patrol captain. I've been the patrol captain for about six years now. I'm with the department for almost 22 years, like I said. I've been in every department within the police department with the exception of the traffic bureau. I've never had the pleasure of being out there writing citations but I've been in every other department.

I'm glad there's a representative from dragon pizza tonight. Pizza, sugar, and bacon, don't tell anyone. Phenomenal, phenomenal pizza. I love it.

I'll be here to take questions after, I'll stay here for as long as people won't. If you don't have a question today -- have a question today and you think of something, my office is right around the corner and I start my meetings and whatnot, whatever I have to do administratively. But I always welcome company, muffin shop's next door and I've been known to buy coffee, so please stop in.

I'll go through these updates quickly and then I'll take questions individually so everyone can take off if they want.

As far as police updates, Jack talked about our community police officers. One time we did have a number of community police officers was 14, fell to seven. Most recently we disbanded our policing unit due to staffing. Right now it's at an all-time low. There's a staffing study going on at the police department and we're hoping the results of that study will allow us more personnel to re-implement that. We definitely see a need for police officers in your neighborhoods.

School resource officers. Initially they were removed from our schools. Summer PTA voted to remove the SROs from the schools. There's negotiations going on now, talks with the PSA and the working group and the police department and the administration within the school department and the -- school committee, school committee, I apologize, school committee. I don't want the PTA getting mad at me. The PTAs actually I think kind of pushing the issue more. I think there is an agreement close to the

works of having something like a hybrid method of having an SRO if not in the schools, working with the schools. So there will be more to come in the next meeting.

Accreditation, we've attended before these meetings. The police department is an accredited police department. What that is the Massachusetts police accreditation commission creates standards and we have to meet those standards. We met 382 standards to achieve their accreditation and reaccredited this year. This takes place every 3 three years and we met our accreditation this year.

I will say most police departments that are accredited are small. It's difficult to become accredited.

As far as police reform, you may be aware of it. There was legislation passed regarding police reform and training. There's now a body that sits in -- nine members, six are non law enforcement, appointed by the Governor and AG and they recertify officer. I just went through recertification. They're doing it in thirds, so it's A-F we'll say got re-accredited next year and then it will come back to me three years from now. That means officers are license dollars like doctors are licensed, plumbers, electricians, and if an officer loses their certification, they can no longer practice as a police officer in this state.

And that last is shared with other states as well. So if we have a police officer that loses their certification, we hope it does not happen, if they lose their certification and wants to go to New Hampshire, that information is available to them that they're no longer certified in Massachusetts and why.

Those are our updates. As far as crime, we have some crime data for you. City-wide, we've seen increase in crime, 10% over one year, 11% over two years. For your ward we saw an increase of 5% over one year. Seven incidents. And a decreased 4%, 6 incidents, over two years.

We've looked at the data and what we found especially in ward 6 is what's trending to that? Not violent crime. It's package thefts and we're concerned about that with the holidays coming. Theft of motor vehicle parts. I don't know if you've been watching the TV and the news, catalytic converters. There's precious metals in those. They go under your car, about 15 seconds they cut them and take them and junk them. They get significant amount of money for them. We do have an officer assigned to a regional task force on that but it's very difficult to track.

And the third thing is bicycle theft. We have seen an increase in bicycle theft. Met recently with a crime analysts and we are going to move resources to ward 6. Don't tell your residents in ward 7, but we're going to take Ward 7 officer and move him or her down towards 6 during certain periods during the day.

They're not going to ignore Ward 7, but you know, we move our resources. We base it on the data we get, information we get from you, the public. I always say, I see people -- I love to walk, people say oh, my car was broken into. First thing I say did you report it? And people have said, well, they didn't take anything. We don't have a crystal ball. We need to know everything. If nothing was taken, your car was still broken into. Package was still stolen. You have to tell us this. This is how we write down resources. We look over the reported crimes and move our resources to address the crimes. So we need your help.

Next slide.

Just some crime prevention tips. Always lock your doors. People say my doors are

locked. I see in the media there's this universal beeper for cars that open doors, does not exist. You didn't lock your doors.

[Laughter].

I don't say it that way, but there is no universal beeper. Motor vehicle left, vehicles running, we've seen that. Delivery drivers, Uber eats, Doordash, they leave their cars running.

We're not seeing a lot of cars stolen we're seeing running cars stolen. Package thefts, discussed that, bicycle thefts, discussed that. People going back to work, packages are coming during the day, a lot of times, pre-Covid I had a lot of packages delivered to my mother. She's 90 years old and as soon as that package hits the front door, she knows it's there. You can have them delivered to whole foods now and other places.

There are alternatives if you're not going to be around to receive a package and it's valuable, I would suggest to use one of the alternatives.

We talked about how we deploy our cars based on crime data. Detective assigned to the catalytic converter theft task force and that's our current investigation division. I have the lieutenant here in the back, the gentleman with the white shirt on, he's the lieutenant in charge of our crew investigation division. I don't think he can stay, but I can probably answer any questions you have for CID as well.

You want to get to the last slide.

And these I provide to everyone, if you can leave them up there, it's good resources for a number of things that you may come across that we interact with these different organizations.

I can probably take one or two questions, but I'd rather stay and take individual questions. So those of you that want to leave can leave and not feel rude if the you have a question that you want group to hear.

>> [Away from mic] slides will be posted on [SomervilleMA.gov/community meetings](https://SomervilleMA.gov/community-meetings) with an S.

>> [Away from mic].

>> Oh, no, they'll be full size.

>> How does the police department feel about [away from mic] given that the drugs are still illegal? Are you guys going to be running after people until they get inside or do you have to walk away? What's the police do on that? And also [away from mic] for the fire department, since you have to respond to emergency requests.

>> Captain Donovan: I know for the police department we haven't necessarily -- it's such infancy right now, I've been on the Zoom meetings listening to it. So I don't think we've really collaborated as a command staff. But I will say anything that reduces harm reduction and harm to our community is a worthwhile venture to look at and explore. We've talked about, you know, needles and caps being found in Davis Square. You know, we're not going to do arrest our way out of this problem. I've been doing this for 22 years. When I first started 20 years ago the mentality was different. It's like, gung ho, go, go, go. We're still fighting the war on drugs. It's not a crime problem, per se, it's a homelessness problem, it's a mental illness problem, it's an addiction problem, it's a multifaceted problem. That's the only way we're going to solve it. I'd like to say I could clean up Davis Square right now for you, but that's a lie. We're working with the homeless coalition and our own corridor department, the clinicians are working out of the police station working with the police officers. I would talk about it all night. Any have

full access to our officers, full access to our system. They collaborate with them. They've been down here with us at Davis Square. We've formed relationships so we know who's who, what they're doing, where they're living, if they're living somewhere. And most importantly health and human services, we work with them as well. It's not an easy solution, but like I said, the solution's going to take a team. It really is. It's been around for the 20 years I've been here.

>> Victoria: Okay, that concludes tonight's meeting.

Thank you again for sticking out with us tonight. Staff will be hanging out as we break down, if you have additional questions or if you'd like one-on-one conversation. If you have additional questions, if you prefer to email, [cm@Somervillema.gov](mailto:cm@Somervillema.gov). I get those directly and will relay those to the appropriate department for follow-up. Thank you all, thank you staff, and have a great night.