



# Somerville Vision

City of Somerville, Massachusetts  
Comprehensive Plan | 2010-2030



Endorsed by the  
Somerville Board of Aldermen  
April 12th, 2012

Adopted by the  
Somerville Planning Board  
April 19th, 2012

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to  
Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

# Acknowledgements



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## Foreword: Our Shared Values

### Somerville Vision

*It's all about values.*

In 2009, a series of public workshops gave Somerville residents the opportunity to articulate what is most important to them. Even though our neighborhoods and backgrounds are unique, there is a remarkable consensus as to what matters most in our community.



*In Somerville, We:*

*Celebrate* the **diversity** of our people, cultures, housing and economy.

*Foster* the unique character of our residents, neighborhoods, hills and squares, and the strength of our **community** spirit as expressed in our history, our cultural and social life, and our deep sense of civic engagement.

*Invest* in the growth of a resilient **economic base** that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.

*Promote* a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces dependence on the automobile, and is **accessible**, inviting and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

*Build* a **sustainable** future through strong environmental leadership, balanced transportation modes, engaging recreational and community spaces, exceptional schools and educational opportunities, improved community health, varied and affordable housing options, and effective stewardship of our natural resources.

*Commit* to continued **innovation** and affirm our responsibility to current and future generations in all of our endeavors: business, technology, education, arts and government.

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to  
Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*





# 1. Overview

## Somerville Vision

*It's all about people.*

Somerville's greatest strength is its people: a diverse, creative and optimistic population who care deeply about Somerville's future. Plans document ideas, but people generate them. The big idea that brings us together around the Somerville Vision Comprehensive Plan is to make Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.



## A. Background

Somerville is America's original revolutionary community. On January 1, 1776, George Washington's Union Army raised the first true American flag on top of Prospect Hill. A few generations later, in 1842, Somerville's residents again stood up to assert their independence, and the Massachusetts Legislature responded by declaring Somerville to be a new municipality distinct from Charlestown or any other community.

People who know Somerville today won't be surprised to learn that our independent and entrepreneurial identity has roots that run deep. From day one, we've been a gateway for immigrants, a haven for creative thinkers, and a place where families of all means can establish their homes. Somerville's people turn the notion of the anonymous urban environment on its head, building and expanding connections between neighbors, business owners and civic leaders that are the envy of communities everywhere.

Somerville's unique nature is especially important to conversations about the community's future. When industrial growth in the 1880's and 1890's became unsustainable, Somerville's residents worked together to create a network of parklands that would be preserved for the future. After watching elevated highways cut neighbors off from one another in the 1950's and 1960's, we united to oppose the Inner Belt Expressway proposal of the 1970's. And when metropolitan Boston finally returned to its roots of street-car, trolley and subway mass transit, Somerville residents spoke with one voice to bring the MBTA Red

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

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Line to Davis Square, the Orange Line to Assembly Square, and the Green Line through the very heart of the City all the way to Route 16. We are resilient and forward-looking - it's in the very chromosomes of our community.

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan continues our revolutionary tradition of public participation in civic affairs. Somerville has never prepared a long-range, participatory plan for the future. We know that our city is always changing, and that we can harness the energy of this change for the good of our people: better public schools, more choices in housing and transportation, more local jobs and services. The Comprehensive Plan was produced by the Somerville community, for the Somerville community to use as a blueprint for a more sustainable, more equitable, and more exciting future.

## B. Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive planning helps communities shape their destinies. All around the world, businesses, nonprofit organizations and institutions plan to assure that they can meet today's challenges without sacrificing tomorrow's opportunities. When cities and towns do the same thing, the result is called a Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive planning is challenging for a city government. Governments frequently work in the present, responding to existing demands for city services and regulations (often with severely limited resources). Since critical functions are handled by specialized departments, attempts to think long-term are often limited to one specific subject: education; sewer service; public safety; business recruitment. Comprehensive planning is all about balance. It helps residents and public officials to think about transportation, housing, public services, open space and economic development simultaneously, while assuring that public policy is sensitive to all needs and opportunities, both today and tomorrow.

This is why it is so essential to get regular residents and businesspersons involved: they live and work in the community. They walk Somerville's streets every day, they work and shop in our many commercial squares, they play in our parks and volunteer at our nonprofit agencies. They worry about their children's ability to get into college, to find a job or to buy a home in Somerville. Our residents remember what has worked well in the past and what needs to be considered in the future.

## SomerVision

*It's all about community.*

*"We are breathing new life into an old city, and convincing the world that we are regenerating ourselves."*

Mayor S. Lester Ralph in his 1970 inaugural address



# Overview

## SomerVision

*It's all about balance.*

"There are no simple ways to balance progress with stability, but we have to try. As usual, Somerville will take care of its own."

Mayor Michael E. Capuano in his 1990 inaugural address



If any community is a perfect candidate for comprehensive planning, it is Somerville. We have pioneered approaches to municipal government that earn national and international recognition. Our 311 Constituent Services call line was the first of its kind in the United States. The SomerStat program puts performance management data in the hands of average residents. The Shape Up Somerville program was used as a model for the First Lady's national "Let's Move" campaign to combat childhood obesity. Our creative approach to economic development has yielded the first new rail transit station on the MBTA system in twenty-five years. Comprehensive planning is the latest in a long line of best practices that Somerville can utilize to benefit its residents and business owners.

### C. What is SomerVision?

SomerVision is our vision to make Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family. It is a foundation on which to build. It documents three years of shared learning between residents, the business community, nonprofit groups and public officials. It is based on a series of research reports prepared by the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD). These "Trends Reports" assembled the best information available on demographics, economics, housing, transportation and land use, and presented that information in a way that helped the Somerville community at large to understand the Comprehensive Planning process. Residents asked for the facts, and after the Trends Reports were completed, a series of ten open community workshops were held to discuss the statistics and their implications for our city's future.

The Comprehensive Plan is an easy-to-use guide for future growth and development in the City. Any resident, any visitor, investor or public official can pick up this document and quickly understand our community's priorities for the future. It provides a policy framework for other planning efforts including neighborhood plans and capital plans. SomerVision captures our best thinking on diversity, community, economy, accessibility, sustainability and innovation and wraps it into one set of goals, policies and action steps that will guide decisions between now and 2030.

The benefit of the SomerVision plan is that it confronts big issues in a big-picture way. Until now, we have never had a conversation about Somerville's future that is participatory, long-range and inter-disciplinary. SomerVision puts us in control of our destiny.



# Overview

## D. Plan Development Process

The 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan was produced by the community, for the community to use as a stepping stone to a more sustainable, equitable and exciting future. Thousands of hours of volunteer time resulted in its values, vision and policy recommendations.

In 2009, a Steering Committee of sixty Somerville residents, businesspersons, advocates and elected officials came together with one common goal: to lead a three-year public process that would chart the course of our community's future for the next generation. Seats on this Steering Committee were reserved for each of Somerville's unique neighborhoods, each of our remarkable nonprofit organizations, all of our diverse business interests, and all of our committed elected officials. Monthly meetings of the Steering Committee began in April 2009, and were advertised to the public, held in accessible locations and broadcast on public access television. A project calendar was established with key milestones for special public workshops and progress reports: June 2009, December 2009, June 2010, March 2011, September 2011.

The work of the Steering Committee was informed by a series of interactive public meetings, as well as other, more targeted opportunities to discuss the plan. Each of these discussions generated critical public feedback to ensure that the work of the Steering Committee was reflective of our shared community values. These included:

- **Community Values Workshop Series:** In late 2009 and early 2010, the City hosted four meetings where the future vision of Somerville's residents was discussed in detail. The workshops were designed using innovative approaches to public participation, such as small group breakouts, multilingual translation and real-time graphic recording of ideas. The creative workshop format was well-suited to a community dialogue around what Somerville should conserve going forward, what concerns residents have about the future, and what big ideas we should be advocating for as a community.
- **SomerVision Goals Showcase Series:** In the spring of 2011, a series of four showcase events were held to review the draft goals of the Comprehensive Plan. These interactive events offered

## SomerVision

*It's all about opportunity.*

"I see Somerville's challenges not as obstacles, but as opportunities. We can seize these opportunities and shape them into solid achievements only if we utilize our greatest resource: our people."

Mayor Eugene C. Brune in his 1980 inaugural address



# Overview



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

multilingual translation services, and were conducted in four different neighborhoods of the City to maximize public involvement. Hundreds of Somerville residents attended and provided valuable feedback to help the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee revise the draft SomerVision goal statements.

- **Public Survey on SomerVision Goals:** To cast an even wider net for public review of the draft SomerVision Goals, an online and print survey was distributed to the general public. Participants were asked to evaluate each draft goal statement and indicate whether it was consistent with their individual vision for improving Somerville. Hundreds of responses were received, again providing valuable information that the SomerVision Steering Committee used to update the draft goal statements.
- **Presentations at ResiStat and other Public Meetings:** The City's ResiStat program keeps Somerville residents engaged in public policy development, using an email distribution list of over 6,000 people and semi-annual meetings in each of Somerville's seven wards. Status updates on the Comprehensive Plan were presented at ResiStat meetings in 2009, 2010 and 2011, as well as at other neighborhood meetings during that time. Finally, members of the SomerVision Steering Committee gave presentations on the Comprehensive Plan to their individual sponsors and community organizations.
- **Presentations at Planning Board and Board of Aldermen Meetings:** Status updates were provided to the Planning Board and the Board of Aldermen at regular meetings in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The final draft Comprehensive Plan document was formally submitted to the Planning Board and Board of Aldermen in February 2012. After extensive review, the Board of Aldermen endorsed the plan on April 12th, 2012 and the Planning Board adopted the plan on April 19th, 2012.

Somerville has a rich tradition of public participation in civic affairs, and the SomerVision process has leveraged the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise of our diverse residents and stakeholder groups. The 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan is the product of unprecedented efforts by community volunteers, Steering Committee members, elected and appointed officials, and City staff.

# Overview

## E. How This Plan is Used

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan identifies the City's shared values, our collective vision for the next twenty years, and a series of goals and implementation priorities to meet that vision. It provides a framework for decision making. It does not change responsibility for decision-making. The Mayor, the Board of Aldermen, the Planning Board and other municipal boards, commissions and officials retain all existing authority under the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is simply a one-stop reference point that they can consider to inform their decision-making.

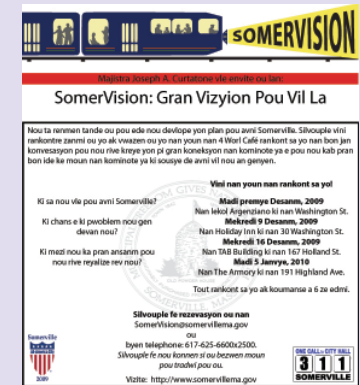
**Appendix 1** of the plan includes more than five hundred recommended action steps, based on the goals in Chapter 4. Each was developed by the SomerVision Steering Committee, and vetted through a robust public process.

The action steps in the plan reflect the aspirations of a community committed to a more sustainable, equitable, beautiful and dynamic future. The actions are not meant to be rigid, and the Comprehensive Plan does not dictate how and when the specific actions are to be undertaken.

Many issues and recommendations require further study and more public input to move forward. Many will require further review by the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen, state and federal agencies and our local nonprofit partners and business community. The Comprehensive Plan provides the framework to make informed and coordinated decisions on the important issues our community members care about.

Like many cities, Somerville may not have the necessary resources to accomplish all of the actions in Appendix 1. However, with the Comprehensive Plan in place, a proactive mindset and community consensus on necessary actions, the City can realize progress towards the future in an orderly fashion.

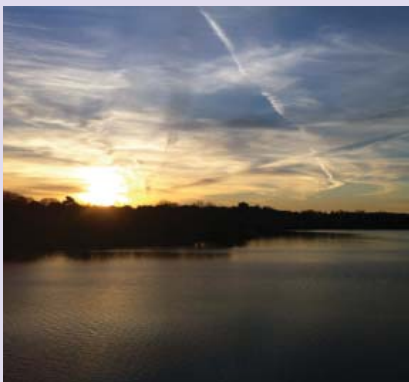
**Appendix 2** includes maps and target growth numbers developed by the SomerVision Steering Committee to illustrate the future context of land use and transportation in Somerville. These maps will provide guidance for decisions about capital projects, transportation investments, future development and zoning. Similar to the action steps, these maps provide a framework for decision-making. They are designed to serve as a reference point, while encouraging further discussion to implement a regulatory and



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# Overview



capital planning strategy that will achieve the identified outcomes. The maps and numbers in Appendix 2 are summarized in Chapter 3.

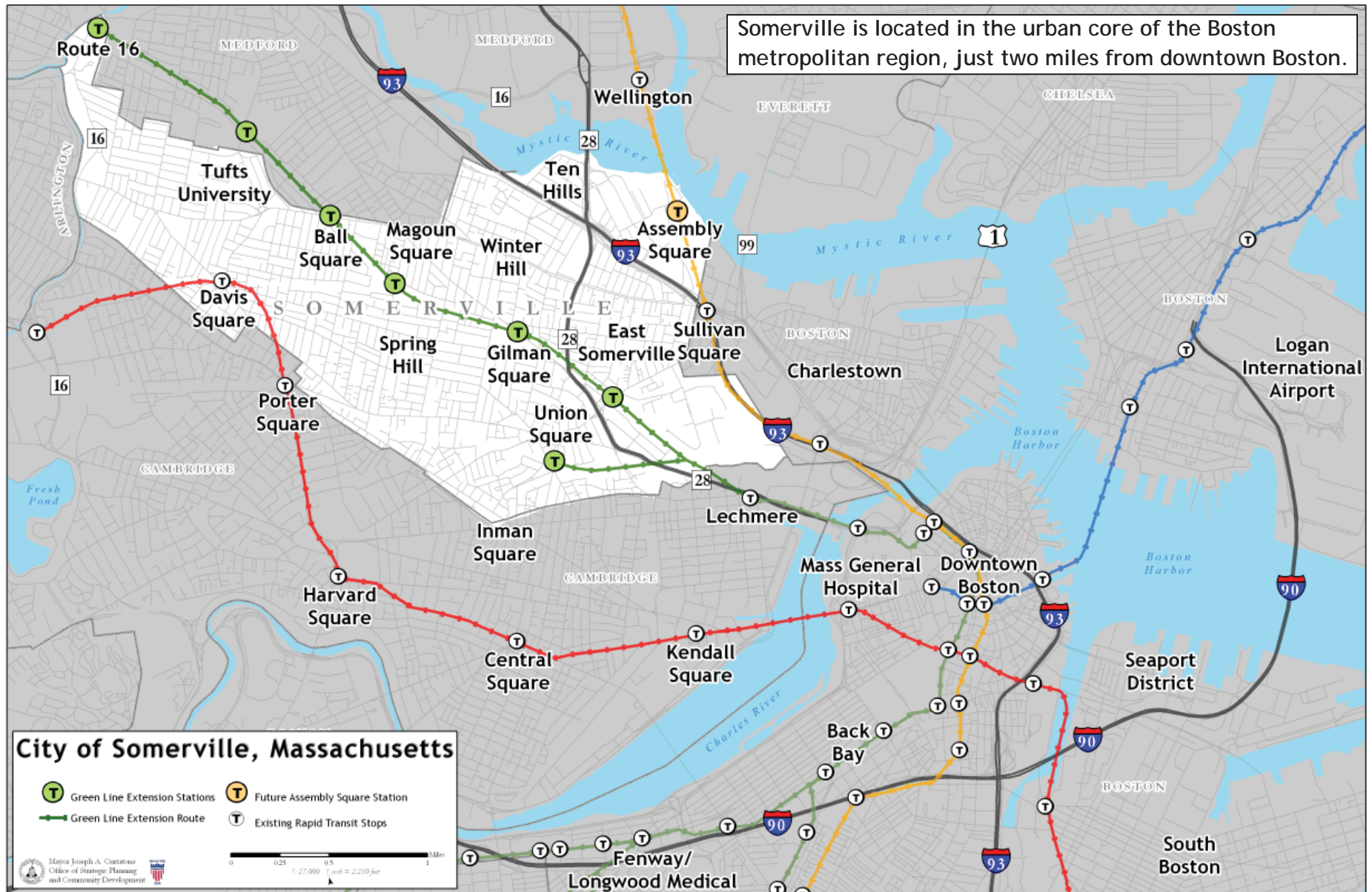
**Appendix 3** provides an ‘implementation plan’ designed to show the major initiatives that can be used to implement various action steps of the plan. The implementation plan groups the recommendations in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 into categories that can help decision-makers to identify opportunities to implement multiple action steps. The key strategies of the implementation plan are also summarized in Chapter 5.

As times change, there must be an opportunity to review and update this plan to capture the values, goals and proposed actions to move Somerville forward. Therefore, the plan recommends an update beginning in 2017. While the vision and values of a community typically do not change in a short time, the goals and required actions may need to be adjusted. Because a comprehensive plan captures a future vision based upon the understanding of a community at a present point in time, it will inevitably miss some activities that will impact the community and may change the priorities of the community going forward. For this reason five-year updates are recommended.

**Appendix 4** documents SomerVision’s extensive three-year public participation process.

**Appendix 5** provides a glossary of terminology to ensure that readers understand the goals, policies and actions articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has worked hard to use language that is accessible to the entire Somerville community. Even so, a policy plan will always include technical terms that are not commonly used.

# Overview





## 2. Somerville Today

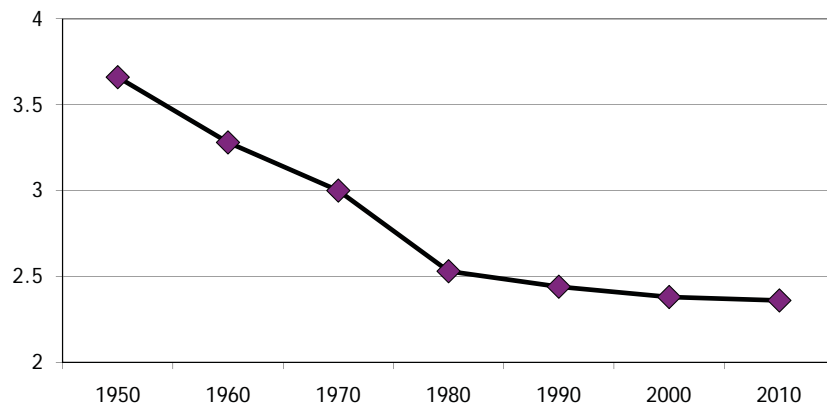
Somerville's story is the story of urban America, with our own local flavor. As our city works together to envision a brighter future, we have found it helpful to take a clear-eyed look at who we are today, and how we got here as a community.

In the summer of 2008, City staff began working with academic and nonprofit partners to produce what became known as the SomerVision "Trends Reports". This five-part series of hundred-page research reports addressed demographics, housing, economics, transportation and land use. Between May and October 2009, a series of eight public workshops were held around the city to discuss the findings, and to make sure that residents had access to the best information about Somerville.

The SomerVision Trends Reports, and the public dialogue around them have served as a common foundation for the 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan. They can be viewed on the City's website at <http://www.somervillema.gov>

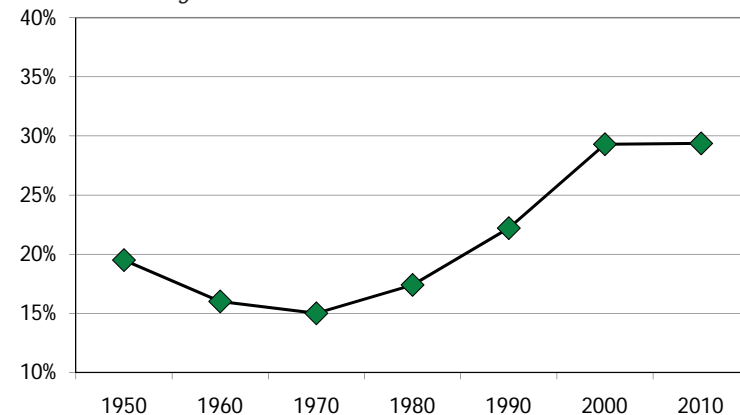
### *Average Household Size*

*Consistent with national trends, Somerville's average household and family size has decreased in recent decades.*



### *Residents Born Outside the United States*

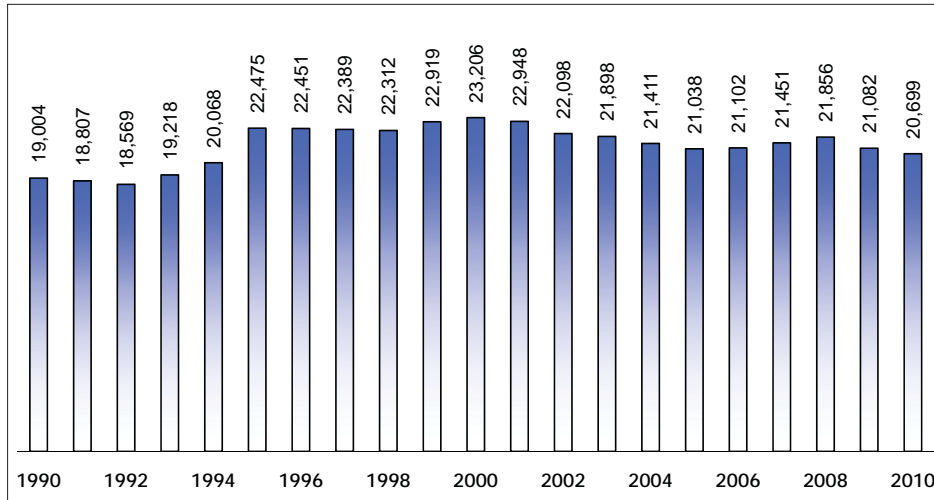
*Somerville has always been a community of immigrants, inviting and embracing new residents from all over the world.*



# Somerville Today

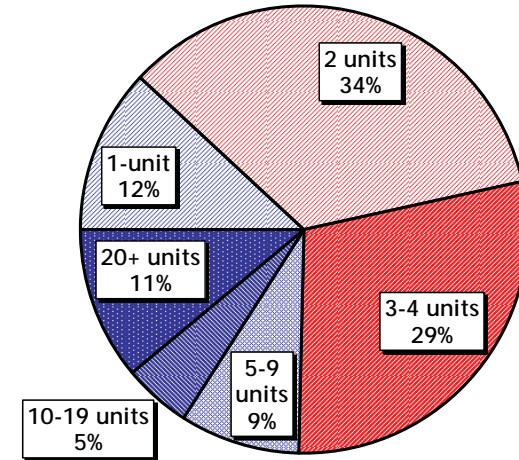
## Total Number of Jobs

Job creation in Somerville has been essentially static for twenty years.



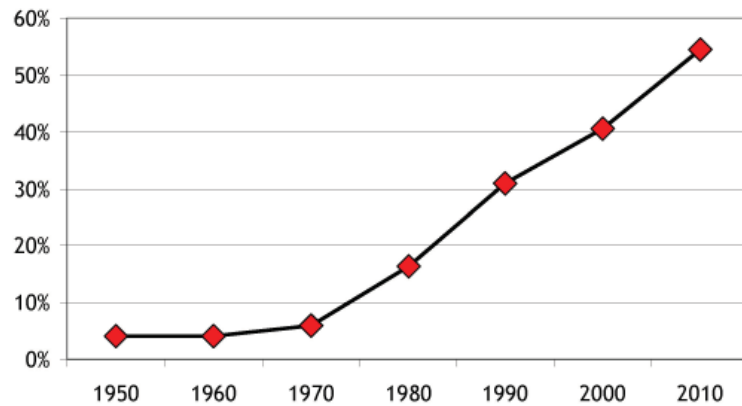
## Housing Stock

Small multifamily buildings are our primary building type.



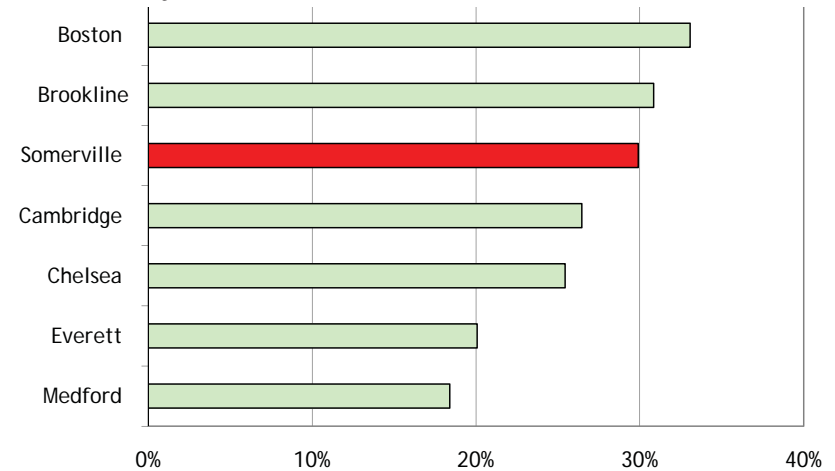
## Residents with a College Education

Somerville's workforce is highly skilled and educated.



## Commuters Using Public Transit

Nearly one in three Somerville commuters uses mass transit.





# 3. Our Vision: The Somerville Numbers

## Somerville Vision

*It's all about aspiration.*

Successful communities set goals that are both ambitious and achievable. The Somerville Vision Steering Committee worked to translate shared values into the Somerville Vision Numbers: a series of aspirational targets for economic development, open space improvement, housing growth, transportation and land use. The Somerville Vision Numbers were carefully tested to make sure that they are consistent with the community's shared values: balance, sustainability, affordability and vitality.



*30,000 New Jobs* as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs



*125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space* as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces



*6,000 New Housing Units - 1,200 Permanently Affordable* as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville's best asset: its people.



*50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike, or Walking* as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City.



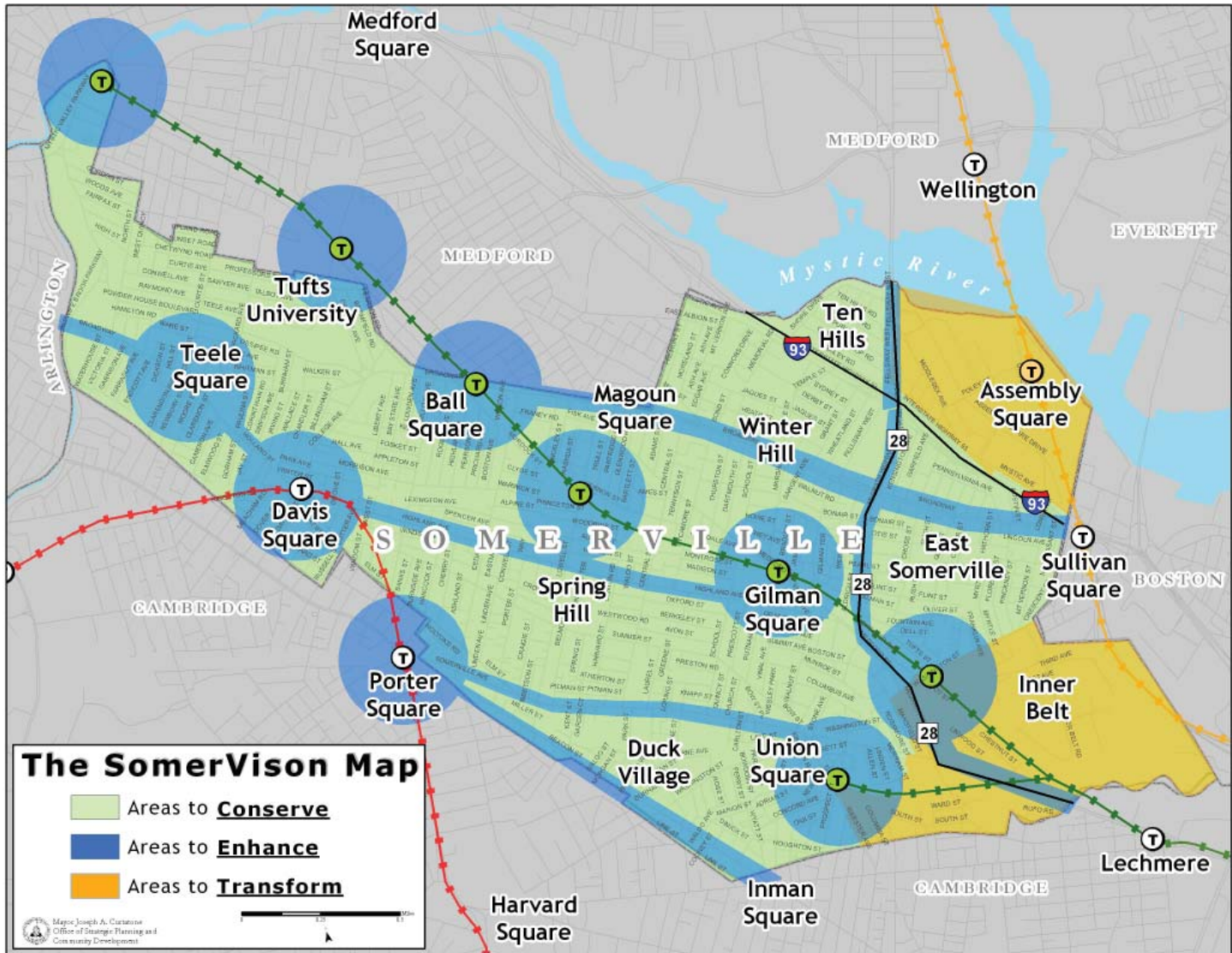
*85% of New Development in Transformative Areas* as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character

*The Somerville Vision Numbers cannot be separated into parts and cannot be separated from the Somerville Vision Map in order to advocate for a specific action by the City. They must be viewed in the context of entire Comprehensive Plan including the backup information in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.*

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*



# Our Vision: The SomerVision Map



*The SomerVision Map illustrates our Vision for the community to:*

## Conserve

our great residential neighborhoods

## Enhance

our funky squares and commercial corridors

## Transform

opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville.



Photo: Juliette Melton



## 4 • Somerville Vision Goals



The Somerville Vision Goal Statements were written by the sixty Somerville residents serving on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. They were reviewed with the public during a series of workshops in 2011, as well as through an online survey. They are intended to guide the Comprehensive Plan's recommended Policies and Actions. For a complete list of Policies and Actions, see Appendix 1.

### A. Neighborhoods

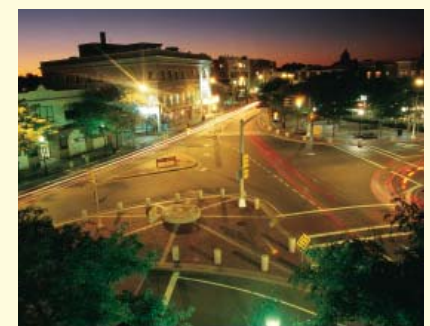
- I. **Engage** community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.
- II. **Strengthen** and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.
- III. **Protect** and promote a diverse, interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.
- IV. **Preserve** and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy.
- V. **Facilitate** transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.
- VI. **Improve** our shared neighborhood environmental quality.
- VII. **Foster** vital, healthy, inclusive and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, play, do business, learn and serve.

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# SomerVision Goals

## B. Commercial Corridors, Squares, and Growth Districts

- I. **Promote** municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.
- II. **Make** Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
- III. **Support** a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.
- IV. **Invest** in the talents, skills and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.
- V. **Link** our corridors, squares and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.
- VI. **Transform** key opportunity areas, such as Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards and the southeastern portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines to compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.
- VII. **Facilitate** thoughtfully-designed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and reuse opportunities in commercial corridors, squares and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.



# SomerVision Goals



## C. Resources

- I. **Increase** the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.
- II. **Ensure** that Somerville has a mix of spaces for creative production, performance and exhibition, and that art is incorporated into the built environment.
- III. **Help** local arts and cultural institutions, such as theatres, film and art festivals, museums and libraries to succeed, network and grow.
- IV. **Strengthen** existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.
- V. **Approach** our waterfront as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.
- VI. **Design** and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm (e.g., streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces) that fosters community connection.
- VII. **Create** and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.
- VIII. **Ensure** that the Somerville municipal government, residents and business communities are well prepared and equipped to address emergency situations.
- IX. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.



Photo: Chris Devers

# SomerVision Goals

## D. Transportation & Infrastructure

- I. **Create** a mass transit network accessible to all in all parts of the city, with improvements that allow for easy use and seamless intermodal connections.
- II. **Increase** active and alternative transportation options, reduce congestion and promote workplace-based policies and incentives for mode choice, work hours, and employment location.
- III. **Expand** bike and pedestrian use by transforming existing infrastructure with accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.
- IV. **Use** technology and infrastructure improvements to balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, private vehicles, and mass transit, reduce congestion and pollution, decrease road space dedicated to automobiles, and unlock economic development potential, while having a fiscally sound road maintenance program.
- V. **Manage** parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner, to balance transportation, economic development and residential goals.
- VI. **Connect** the city: retrofit, redesign, and build roads, bridges, paths and rights-of-way to improve transportation networks and link neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond.
- VII. **Provide** a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained and financially solvent and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.
- VIII. **Improve** stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage and support desired levels of future growth.
- IX. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.
- X. **Move** toward energy self-sufficiency by increasing supply of locally generated power and reducing per capita overall energy demand.
- XI. **Ensure** the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, uses the best available technologies, has redundancy, and supports the desired level of future growth.



Photo: Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership

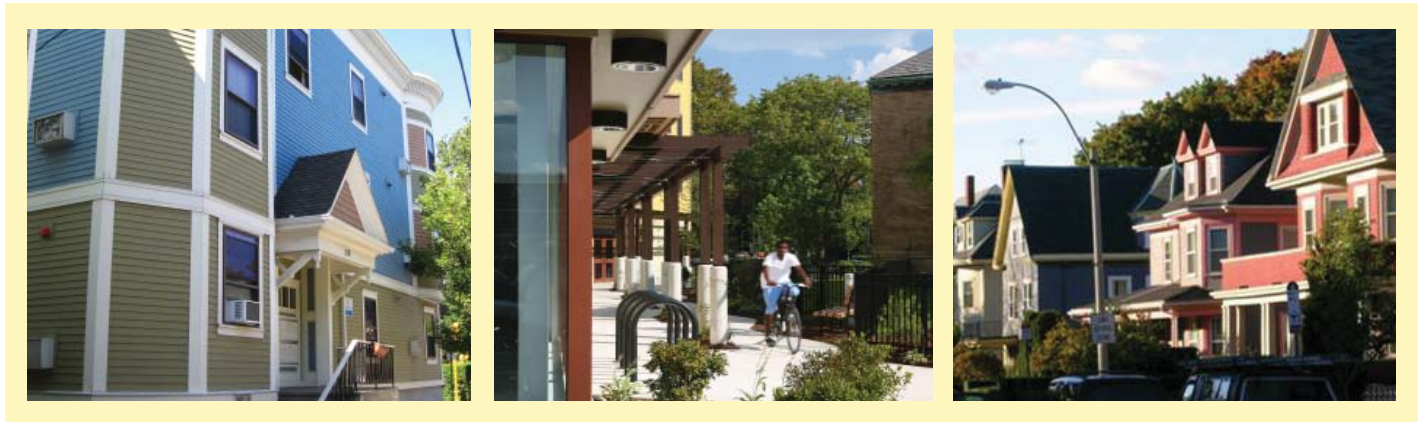


# SomerVision Goals



## E. Housing

- I. **Preserve** and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups.
- II. **Promote** mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development to provide new housing and employment options.
- III. **Mitigate** displacement of low and moderate income residents by retaining the existing affordable housing stock and by creating policies that allow residents to remain in their homes in the face of a changing city.
- IV. **Create** a diversity of programs that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.
- V. **Expand** financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.





## 5 • Implementation Priorities



The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range policy plan. It sets the table for specific projects and programs to implement its goals. These six short-term and medium-term implementation priorities will allow us to address many of the most pressing goals, policies and actions recommended in the Somerville Vision Plan. For the complete Implementation Plan, please see Appendix 3.

A. **Station Area Planning:** The Comprehensive Plan can't do it all. Area plans must be prepared by residents of individual neighborhoods, since all neighborhoods have a unique role in making Somerville a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. The plans for each area will focus on land use, urban design and transportation, with other topics to be determined by participants. Federal funding from a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities grant will help to launch area plans around the six Green Line stations in 2012.

### *Station Area Planning Should Include:*

- a. Union Square / Boynton Yards
- b. Inner Belt / Brickbottom / McGrath Highway
- c. Gilman Square
- d. Lowell Street / Somerville Junction / Magoun Square
- e. Ball Square
- f. Route 16 / Mystic Valley Parkway
- g. Assembly Square / Sullivan Square
- f. Davis Square / Porter Square

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# Implementation Priorities



Poster: Meagan O'Brien

B. **Quality-of-Life Strategies:** At the end of the day, most municipal functions can be viewed as quality-of-life strategies. Somerville has been recognized as one of the most livable cities in the nation, and our efforts around public safety, open government, cultural programming, parks and recreation, the business environment and public education all play key roles. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that each of these areas can best be addressed when they are coordinated and planned for in a strategic fashion.

### *Quality-of-Life Strategies Should Include:*

- Public Education programs, including SomerPromise
- Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Public Safety initiatives
- Civic engagement programs
- Small business assistance
- Employer recruitment



C. **Housing Activities:** Somerville is a vibrant, walkable urban community - the kind of place where people want to live, raise a family and retire. All across the country, the demand for housing that is close to jobs, services and transit is already high, and will only increase over the next twenty years. The SomerVision process has emphasized housing policy from day one. Our city must continue to offer a range of housing options in terms of price, space, location and services. Our strategies must be sensitive to supply and demand. We must be entrepreneurial in the way we fund affordable housing, and we must respect property rights while leveraging private investment for the public good. As we do in so many aspects of civic life, Somerville will lead by example and look out for its own.

### *Housing Activities Should Include:*

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Homeowner & renter assistance
- Homelessness prevention programs
- New housing development





# Implementation Priorities

D. **Sustainability Programs:** Cities are more sustainable than suburbs or rural communities. Somerville residents have spoken loud and clear: the City should take the lead in efforts to promote sustainability, and the Comprehensive Plan is a perfect way to address economic, environmental and social sustainability at the same time. Zero-sort recycling will help Somerville to reduce its environmental footprint, and so will the creation of thousands of new jobs within walking distance from our homes. Rooftop solar panels on new buildings are important because they help us cut down on our utility bills, not just because they reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's all part of the same story.

## *Sustainability Programs Should Include:*

- a. Solid waste programs
- b. Energy efficiency programs
- c. Stormwater management policies
- d. Transportation demand management
- e. Public health programs, including air quality and access to fresh foods



E. **Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements:** Over the last few years, Somerville has made a generation's worth of improvements to our transportation and utility infrastructure. Projects like Somerville Avenue, Magoun Square, and Washington Street have already made a positive impact on our quality of life, and big-ticket improvements in Assembly Square, Broadway in East Somerville, and on Beacon Street are underway. But we cannot rest on our laurels. The Green Line must be completed, the Community Path must be extended, and sewer, sidewalk, bridge and roadway improvements around the City must be funded and built. Each infrastructure project gives our residents and business owners the opportunity make Somerville's neighborhoods safer, more accessible and more attractive.

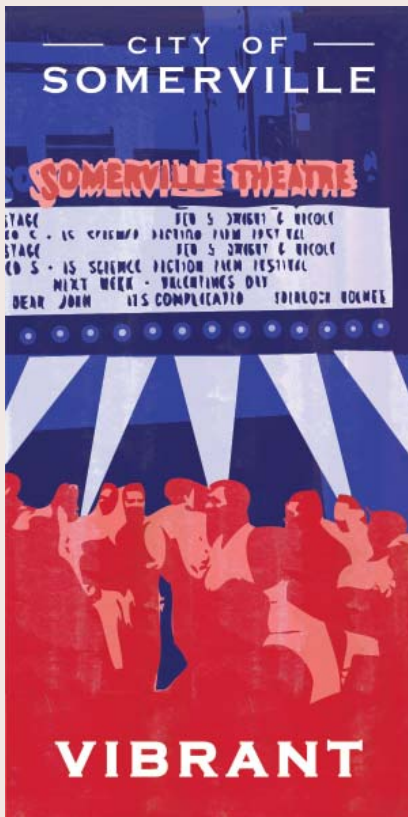
## *Infrastructure Improvements Should Include:*

- a. Transit service improvements
- b. Street repair, repaving and painting
- c. Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility
- d. Sewer and storm drainage
- e. On-street, off-street and resident permit parking
- f. A city-wide multi-use path system



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

# Implementation Priorities



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

- F. **Zoning Code Overhaul:** The more Somerville residents and businesspersons study it, the more we realize that the City's zoning ordinance is outdated, and provides no predictability. Not for investors, and not for abutters. Neighbors, developers and public officials are forced to guess as to the City's vision for its future. The SomerVision Steering Committee has articulated more than five hundred action statements, and an overhaul of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance is a critical element of more than one hundred. Somerville deserves a zoning ordinance for the twenty-first century: one that helps us conserve our great residential neighborhoods, enhance our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transform our opportunity areas as illustrated on the SomerVision Map in Chapter 3.

## *Zoning Code Overhaul Should Include:*

- a. Review and overhaul of the code, to address ease of its use
- b. Predictable results for high-quality urban design, using innovative tools including form-based codes
- c. Protection of existing single and two family homes
- d. Simplification of the process for establishing and growing a small business
- e. Parking regulations that reflect Somerville's urban character
- f. Reflection of the capacity of properties to handle development
- g. Identification of appropriate and inappropriate small additions including dormers
- h. Sustainable development features / incentives
- i. Sliding scale impact fees to provide for off-site benefits
- j. Contextual sign regulations
- k. Strategies to address the visual impacts of telecommunications infrastructure
- l. Consistency with the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and actions
- m. Consistency with area plan goals, policies and actions

## **Plan Updates:** *A Regular Five-Year Review of the Plan will allow the City to:*

- a. How much progress have we made toward meeting our goals, policies and actions?
- b. What new demographic and economic information is available to help us make sure the Plan remains relevant?
- c. Has public opinion shifted on any issues that are addressed in the Plan?



## 6. Conclusion



### Somerville's best days are ahead of us.

We are already one of the most dynamic, diverse and livable cities in the United States. Our community has moved forward in spite of the economic recession, and we have united around a clear message: making Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to the generations of Somerville residents who built a solid foundation of community identity: independence, pride, entrepreneurship, neighborliness, civic participation, tolerance. We have experienced first-hand the failed policies of the past that eliminated trolley service, built highways through the heart of urban neighborhoods, and told employers and families that they had no place in America's cities.

We've come full-circle in Somerville, right back to our revolutionary roots. Families and employers want to be here. Our students want to stay here after graduation, and our seniors want to retire here. They all recognize our authenticity, our commitment to community, and the clarity of our vision.

That vision is a city where you live near where you work, near where you shop, near where you go to school; where trolleys and subways bring you into downtown Boston, and bring people from downtown Boston to Somerville's funky squares and great neighborhoods; where your children can get a great public education, can ride their bikes in the street, and can afford to find a home when they grow up. That vision is SomerVision.

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*



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# 1 • Goals, Policies and Actions 2010-2030

## Appendix 1: Goals, Policies and Actions: 2010-2030

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# A. Neighborhoods



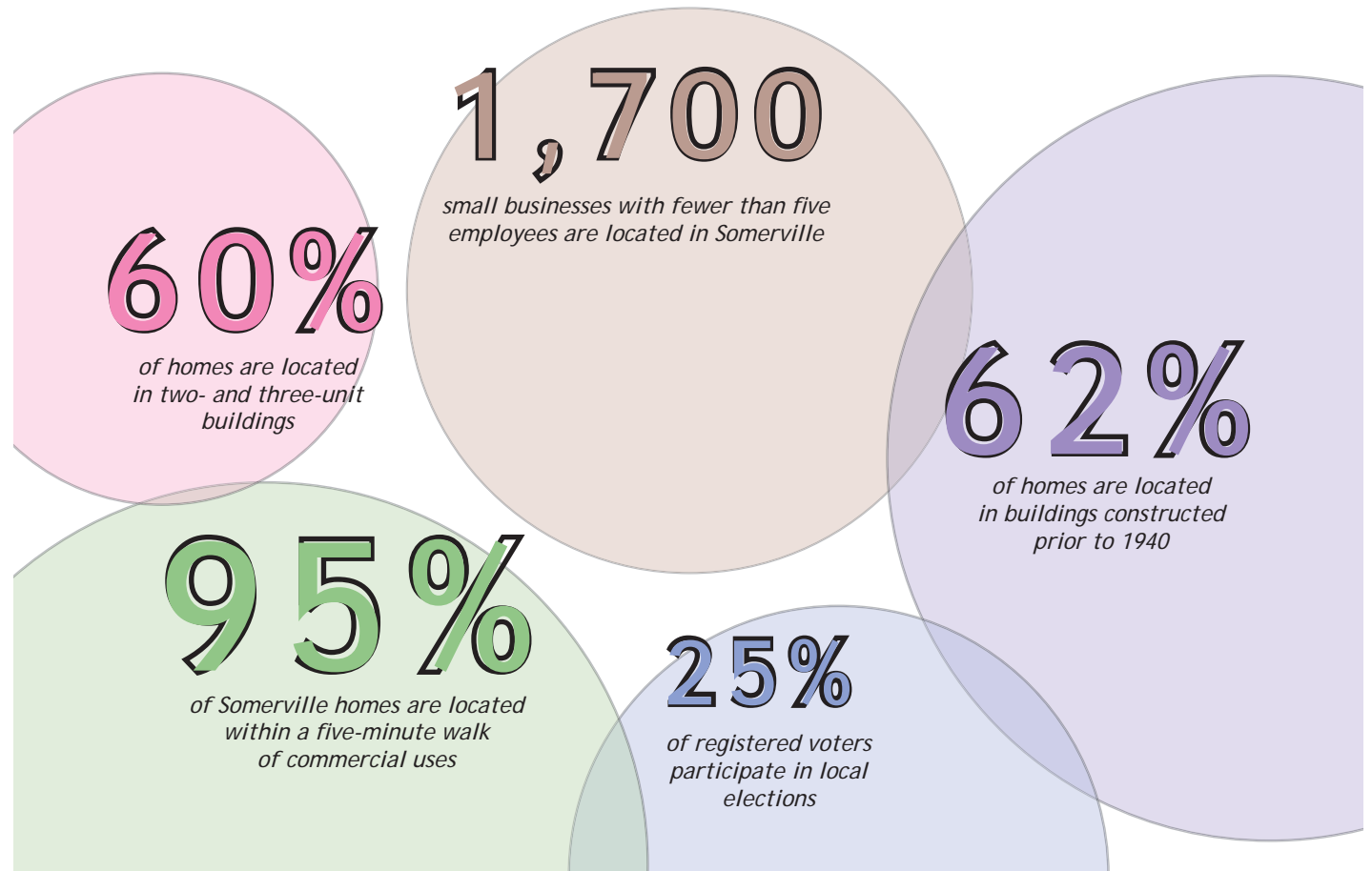
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# Neighborhoods Introduction



## Introduction

Somerville's character reflects the unique identity of each of our great neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan will support the City and its partners in efforts to reinforce Somerville's excellent quality of life through vital, healthy, inclusive, and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, do business, learn, serve, and play.





# Neighborhoods Introduction

## Summary of Goals:

- I. **Engage** community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.
- II. **Strengthen** and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.
- III. **Protect** and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.
- IV. **Preserve** and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy.
- V. **Facilitate** transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.
- VI. **Improve** our shared neighborhood environmental quality.
- VII. **Foster** vital, healthy, inclusive and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, play, do business, learn and serve.



# Neighborhoods Quality of Life

## Participation

*What's it all about?*

Somerville's people are our greatest asset. Community meetings should be welcoming and accessible to people of all physical and linguistic abilities, because we come up with our best ideas when all community members have a chance to be involved.



*The 311 Constituent Services program connects residents and visitors with city services.*



*Somerville's ResiStat program is a national model for civic engagement.*

### I. Goal: Engage community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.

A. *Policy: Somerville should work to increase public participation in civic activities, including reducing barriers to participation and increasing diversity in civic activities to reflect the City population.*

1. Action: Encourage volunteer neighborhood-level participation across the city, particularly in forums for discussion of local issues and neighborhood impacts.
2. Action: Provide translators at meetings when appropriate.
3. Action: Provide opportunities for public input in policy decisions, through variety in format, scheduling, location and technology.
4. Action: Ensure that meetings are held in accessible buildings.
5. Action: Implement more collaborative processes for engaging neighbors in review of development projects and City priorities.
6. Action: Provide quality meeting space for neighborhood gatherings across the city.
7. Action: Encourage the active engagement of students in community forums to gather their unique perspectives.

## City's Translation Services

In 2004, Somerville became a national leader in open government, establishing the Constituent Services Department (311) to improve customer service. 311 provides translation services to increase access to information in the most common languages spoken in the City. Residents and visitors may simply dial 311 from any Somerville telephone or 617-666-3311 from outside of Somerville to speak with an operator who speaks Creole, Portuguese, or Spanish during regular business hours. The dedicated TTY line for hearing-impaired constituents is 1-866-808-4851. Translators are also available to attend community meetings when requested, and to translate documents related to City services.

# Neighborhoods

## Civic Engagement

*B. Policy: City information should be disseminated in a format that is easy to access and provides a convenient feedback process, with information available on-line and through more traditional means.*

1. Action: Update and improve the City's website to provide a more integrated and interactive on-line experience that reflects Somerville's energy and diversity, and conveys relevant information about city events, development projects, public works and other policies.
2. Action: Expand awareness and distribution of the "Somerville Resident Welcome Package" with information about city government, including contact information for Aldermen.



### Diversity in Somerville

In every phase of our history, Somerville has been a gateway for immigrants. According to US Census data, foreign-born residents represent nearly 30% of the total population. The most recent generation of immigrants is primarily composed of people arriving from Brazil, El Salvador, Haiti and China. Each of Somerville's immigrant groups adds economic and social value to the community.

# Neighborhoods

## Neighborhood Centers

### Neighborhood Centers

*What's it all about?*

The planned MBTA Green Line extension will help revitalize several of Somerville's historic neighborhood commercial centers. Business owners will have access to more regional customers, and Somerville residents will have more opportunities to shop, work, and play without having to use a car.



*The historic commercial district at Gilman Square has suffered since passenger rail service ended in the 1950's. A new Green Line station can help restore the neighborhood's vitality.*

**II. Goal: Strengthen and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.**

*A. Policy: The City should establish policies and regulations that support neighborhood development with a strong relationship to transit.*

1. Action: For areas around the future Green Line stations at Gilman Square, Lowell Street, Ball Square, and Route 16, establish zoning regulations that will facilitate mixed-use transit-oriented development that is appropriately scaled and designed for each unique neighborhood context.
2. Action: For future Green Line station areas, establish zoning regulations to support commercial business activity within walking distance of the station that serves the basic needs of residents, and serves as a destination for transit riders.
3. Action: For future Green Line station areas, establish parking requirements that reflect the transit-oriented nature of each neighborhood center.

*B. Policy: The City should support neighborhood-center development consistent with existing and future area plans.*

1. Action: Support development projects that are consistent with the community vision reflected in recent zoning amendments adopted for Union Square and the Broadway corridor.
2. Action: As neighborhood planning and visioning is conducted in other neighborhood centers and squares, support future development projects that are consistent with those visions.
3. Action: Encourage construction of mixed-use buildings with active, publicly-accessible first floor uses and upper story office or residential uses.
4. Action: Revise the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to simplify the process of sign approval, ensure that signs are appropriately sized and placed for their location, and minimize visual impacts on pedestrian-oriented neighborhood centers.

# Neighborhoods

## Small Business & Entrepreneurship

### III. Goal: Protect and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.

#### A. Policy: The City should establish policies, regulations and fees for small neighborhood businesses that are fair, clear, and designed to encourage entrepreneurship.

1. Action: Review zoning regulations and other regulatory processes to ensure that appropriate businesses can be easily permitted in designated areas, such as around transit stations.
2. Action: Update zoning regulations to allow small retail and business uses in existing storefronts in residential zones, provided that they meet neighborhood needs with minimal impact.
3. Action: Evaluate parking requirements for new development in neighborhood business areas, and consider reducing them to promote commercial activity.
4. Action: Encourage and allow small craft manufacturing businesses to locate with other commercial uses, provided that neighborhood impacts are minimized.
5. Action: Continue outreach to sole proprietors and small businesses owners, through Main Streets and other programs, to encourage greater participation in civic activities.

#### B. Policy: The City should identify designated areas for neighborhood corner stores with a scale and mix of uses that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and community vision; and within these areas, reduce barriers to small retail and mixed-use development.

1. Action: Use zoning regulations to encourage an environment where most Somerville households can walk to meet their basic needs, with a particular emphasis on access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
2. Action: Use zoning to encourage construction and retention of neighborhood corner stores in mixed-use buildings with upper story residential uses.

### Corner Stores

#### *What's it all about?*

Somerville has hundreds of local businesses that contribute to neighborhood character, while providing products and jobs for residents. Corner stores are a great example of small businesses that have historically been integrated into residential neighborhoods. Zoning regulations should be reviewed to make sure that these types of local businesses can continue to succeed in Somerville.



# Neighborhoods

## Small Business & Entrepreneurship



*Small businesses at Powder House Circle employ Somerville residents and provide services to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.*



*Historic commercial buildings in Teele Square contain a variety of small businesses, many of which are locally-owned.*

3. Action: Encourage retail activity that will provide fresh food and other unique products, enhance social connections, and reinforce Somerville's culture of funky independent businesses and small micro-enterprises.

*C. Policy: The City should encourage appropriately-sited home-based businesses and live/work uses.*

1. Action: Establish zoning regulations that encourage home-based business and live/work environments.

2. Action: Expand options for home-based businesses by allowing use of historic carriage houses and other outbuildings for live/work environments.

### Case Study: Green City Growers

Green City Growers (GCG) is one of Somerville's most exciting new small businesses. GCG installs and maintains organic vegetable gardens for homeowners, businesses, restaurants, and schools in greater Boston, with a focus on engaging people of all ages in food production to create more awareness about where food comes from and how to eat healthy. GCG's services are comprehensive, from installing a raised-bed garden at your home to running an education program at your local business, school or community center.



# Neighborhoods

## Neighborhood Character

IV. Goal: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy.

A. Policy: *The City should protect and preserve the character of neighborhoods composed of single-family, two-family and three-family homes.*

1. Action: Ensure that changes in neighborhoods continue to preserve trees, front yards, useable porches, contextual materials, and green space.
2. Action: Develop policies to limit visual and noise impacts of utility equipment on private lots, including air conditioner units and satellite dishes in visible front yards.
3. Action: Enforce regulations against parking in front yards and storing of unregistered vehicles.
4. Action: Develop and enforce minimum maintenance standards for storage of trash and upkeep of yards.
5. Action: Develop a more comprehensive policy for curb-cuts to minimize the impacts of new driveways and pavement on neighborhood character and on-street parking.
6. Action: Enforce the City's noise ordinance based upon its objective reasonable noise standards and apply it fairly and uniformly.
7. Action: Establish policies and an action plan for addressing illegal units including timelines for compliance and establishment of an amnesty program for units that are brought into compliance within an defined time period.

## Neighborhood Form

*What's it all about?*

Somerville's unique neighborhood character includes the look and feel of our buildings, as well as the spaces between them. City policies around landscaping, parking, building design and construction can be used to preserve and enhance the character of our great neighborhoods.



# Neighborhoods

## Neighborhood Character



*Somerville's architectural history is one of our greatest assets. Several properties on Summer Street recently received historic preservation awards.*



*Historic homes on Columbus Avenue have been preserved, adding character and value to the neighborhood. Owners have restored original siding, trim and windows, or installed historically-accurate replacements.*

*B. Policy: The City should ensure that neighborhood properties can adapt and change to meet the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the neighborhood.*

1. Action: For small home improvement projects such as windows, dormers and small additions that currently require special permits, establish a more efficient design review system that will reduce review time but continue to ensure that neighbors are protected from impacts of these improvements.
2. Action: Establish design standards for new windows, dormers and small additions that use illustrations and clear language to explain project impacts and project review processes.
3. Action: Establish guidelines that use illustrations and clear language for residents seeking to change fences, add landscaping, install replacement windows, and change siding materials.
4. Action: Establish clear design standards for circumstances where more intensive housing development would meet community needs while reflecting neighborhood context.

*C. Policy: The City should continue to protect and preserve its architectural history.*

1. Action: Continue to pursue Historic District designation for properties worthy of protection from impacts of exterior changes.
2. Action: Ensure that designated properties have access to grants, loans, and zoning opportunities that will allow for contextual rehabilitation and upgrades while minimizing financial impact on owners.
3. Action: Support state and federal historic preservation tax credit programs, and encourage the establishment of more tax credit options for small historic properties, while encouraging owners to participate in the designation of appropriate structures to the National Register to make them eligible for federal credits.
4. Action: Use Neighborhood Preservation Districts where appropriate to prevent the demolition of residential properties that contribute to neighborhood context, while ensuring that contextually appropriate change is defined and facilitated.



# Neighborhoods

## Neighborhood Infill

V. Goal: Facilitate transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.

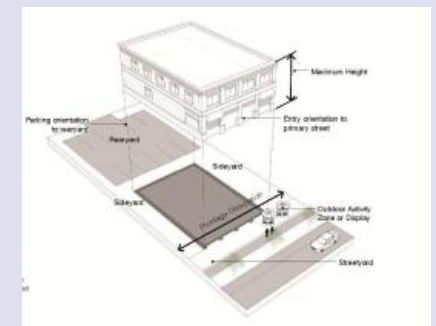
A. Policy: Zoning regulations in Somerville should provide clear and consistent direction including design standards and guidelines for contextual infill development.

1. Action: Prepare a comprehensive update of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance including form-based codes to specify the neighborhood character, scale, shape, setback, street presence, landscaping, and parking that is contextual for individual neighborhoods, while encouraging infill development to utilize innovative green technologies, including green roofs and pervious pavements.
2. Action: Ensure that residential zoning requirements reflect neighborhood context as well as the development capacity for individual lots, thereby minimizing the need to reduce the size of development proposals on a case-by-case basis.
3. Action: Review parking regulations to ensure that they do not require infill projects to provide an excessive number of parking spaces and paved areas at the expense of on-site landscaping.
4. Action: Encourage redevelopment of surface parking lots that are located in and around neighborhood centers, as appropriate.
5. Action: Require infill development to provide contextual setbacks, landscaping and parking.
6. Action: Require infill development to provide adequate sidewalks, trees, landscaping, lighting, and safety features.
7. Action: Require infill development visible from and interacting with public ways to use high-quality and engaging design, including elements such as bays, porches, street-front landscaping and inviting front doors.

## Form-Based Codes

*What's it all about?*

Zoning regulations are often difficult for property owners and neighbors to use because of dense text and long and confusing lists of allowable and prohibited uses. Form-based codes are more user-friendly, because they present information in clearly-drawn diagrams and simple text. In communities like Somerville, form-based codes offer a more predictable way to encourage project designs that fit within existing neighborhoods.



# Neighborhoods

## Neighborhood Infill

### Infill Development

*What's it all about?*

Infill refers to redevelopment of land that is located between existing buildings. It is important for this type of development to fit within the context of its surroundings, but old-fashioned zoning regulations like Somerville's make it difficult. Modern zoning regulations address this challenge head-on, providing a clear understanding of what types of building, landscaping, and parking can fit within an existing neighborhood.



*The Visiting Nurses Association building at 259 Lowell Street is an example of infill development that enhances the neighborhood. An abandoned three-story warehouse was demolished to construct the assisted living residences.*

*B. Policy: The City should adopt policies and regulations for infill development that support continued diversity in its population, income and housing stock.*

1. Action: Develop station area plans to focus infill development around neighborhood Green Line stations.
2. Action: Review policies that allow the addition of units in new structures by-right, and develop strategies to address impacts on neighborhood character and the diversity of housing stock.
3. Action: Ensure that residential infill development meets or exceeds affordable housing requirements under the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance.
4. Action: Strengthen incentives for residential infill development to provide a mix of unit sizes and types, including multiple-bedroom units with adequate size for families.
5. Action: Review the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, evaluate its application in neighborhoods identified on the SomerVision Map as priorities for conservation, and ensure that infill projects utilizing its affordability bonuses reflect neighborhood character for size and scale of structures.

*C. Policy: Infill development should contribute to the fiscal health of the city.*

1. Action: Encourage mixed-use infill development on busy streets and near transit.
2. Action: Establish a sliding scale impact fee program for infill development to address neighborhood impacts, if allowed by state law.
3. Action: Require new development that does not provide on-site recreational opportunities to provide financial support for local parks and open spaces, if allowed by state law.

# Neighborhoods Environment

## VI. Goal: Improve our shared neighborhood environmental quality.

### A. Policy: *The City should provide information and support to help residents make sound environmental choices.*

1. Action: Publish online and printed informational materials to help residents understand the impacts of environmental choices.
2. Action: Implement zero-sort recycling and take other steps to encourage all residents to recycle to the maximum extent possible.
3. Action: Facilitate access for residents interested in purchasing rain barrels and composting bins.
4. Action: Consolidate access to resources, including energy grants, in one place where residents can understand eligibility.
5. Action: Provide information to residents and businesses regarding rebates and incentives for energy-efficient lighting.
6. Action: Provide information about access to grants and rebates, and benefits for use of small scale solar.
7. Action: Encourage property owners to limit the impacts of exterior lighting on adjacent properties and the night sky.
8. Action: Develop guidelines for landscaping and gardening that prioritize native and native ally species of plants.
9. Action: Encourage residents to undertake soil testing to ensure that soil is safe for children and edible gardening, and provide information on how such testing should be done.
10. Action: Provide information on how to build and maintain raised garden beds, especially for properties with questionable soil safety.

## Environmental Quality

### *What's it all about?*

We all share a responsibility to reduce water and energy consumption in our neighborhoods. Recycling and efficiency programs help keep our neighborhoods safe, attractive, and affordable. The City should continue to provide information to residents about resources and programs that support these efforts.



*Rain barrels capture water that can be reused for watering plants. They also reduce the risk of flooding.*

# Neighborhoods Environment

## Waste Management

*What's it all about?*

In Somerville, trash and recycling pickup are important City services. Informational brochures for residents are published in four languages, and provide guidance on storage and disposal of solid waste.



Call **311**, or visit  
[www.ci.somerville.ma.us](http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us)  
and click on "311" for more  
information

*B. Policy: The City should promote public awareness of the environmental impacts of activities on individual lots.*

1. Action: Increase public awareness of impacts of waste management and recycling.
2. Action: Provide information to residents on impacts of paving surfaces and reduction of tree cover.

*C. Policy: The City should protect neighbors from the adverse environmental impacts of decisions made by individual property owners.*

1. Action: Pursue a program to reduce impervious surfaces, including but not limited to developing a minimum pervious lot coverage requirement and incentives for more plantings.
3. Action: Develop a permitting process for paving of private lots to ensure that development is consistent with zoning and stormwater policies.
4. Action: Review and implement setback regulations for impervious driveways, potentially requiring a pervious buffer to eliminate runoff into neighboring lots.
5. Action: Investigate shifting of a portion of the City's sewer fee towards a new stormwater fee that reflects off-site runoff from lots.
6. Action: Review zoning to ensure that lots are required to include and/or retain landscaped areas that can be used by residents to enjoy the outdoors.

## Pervious Driveway

Eden Frye, the owner of 23 Milton Street, installed a pervious driveway that provides benefits for both her property and the surrounding neighborhood. The driveway was constructed using attractive pavers and highly absorbant plants such as pachysandra and vinca. The City is currently considering incentives to promote these types of projects.



# Neighborhoods: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play and Raise a Family

## East Somerville: The world down the street

East Somerville has a mix of attractive homes, the historic Broadway business district, a young and diverse population and unmatched access to downtown Boston. But the neighborhood was cut off from the rest of Somerville by the construction of elevated highways in the 1950's and 1960's, and suffered disinvestment during the 1970's and 1980's.

### *Community Organizing*

Reflecting the tough, scrappy and entrepreneurial spirit of Somerville, community members took matters into their own hands. Residents, business owners and elected officials have worked tirelessly to restore neighborhood pride and investment, and in 2006 their efforts culminated in the formation of East Somerville Main Streets, a nonprofit organization dedicated to neighborhood revitalization.

### *Public and Private Reinvestment*

Public and private investment has brought important services to East Somerville. New public facilities such as the Capuano Early Childhood Education Center and the East Somerville Police Substation have been opened. Creative policies around open space have been pioneered, helping the City to purchase properties for new parks at Cross Street East and at the corner of Pearl Street and Florence Street. The City has funded housing rehabilitation, lead abatement and homebuyer assistance programs since 2000, and private property owners have invested to rehabilitate the neighborhood's historic building stock.

To promote reinvestment in the Broadway business district, residents engaged in a community visioning process in 2008 and 2009, building consensus around a shared vision of walkable streets, refurbished storefronts and affordable housing. In 2010, the City adopted progressive new zoning regulations to implement that vision, and in 2012, the \$8 million Broadway Streetscape project will break ground.

Visit East Somerville and you can immediately feel the sense of energy and optimism that pulses through the neighborhood. Community festivals are frequent, and local businesses are thriving. As the next chapter of East Somerville's exciting history unfolds, residents and community partners know that their perseverance is paying off, and that their neighbors throughout Somerville want to experience the world just down the street!



# Neighborhoods: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family



*The redevelopment of the Carli Fence Site is an example of infill development at a highly visible location on the Community Path.*



*The site was previously a dilapidated one-story warehouse. In 2010, it was redeveloped into seven residential units with studio/office space, using a design that is sensitive to the existing character of the neighborhood.*

## 28 Newberne Street: Reconciling Industry and Neighborhoods

Since the 1800's, Somerville's neighborhoods have been defined by their relationship to the railroads that have crisscrossed the city. Even today, warehouse and industrial facilities can be seen scattered alongside railways in otherwise residential neighborhoods. The former Carli Fence site, located just outside Davis Square on Newberne Street, provides a recent example of an isolated industrial property being redeveloped in a manner sensitive to the local neighborhood character.

### *Context-Sensitive Design*

Until recently, the site was an eyesore for users of the Somerville Community Path between Davis Square and Willow Avenue. A dilapidated, one-story warehouse structure and series of garages faced the path, surrounded by a rusty chain-link fence. The property was sold in 2009, and the new owner prepared redevelopment plans and concept designs that were presented for neighborhood feedback. Abutters and other community members emphasized the need for the site to connect to the public Community Path. The final project plan included seven residential units, structured parking, and a small office space.

Today, the redevelopment is complete, and the first residential units have been occupied. The new building is oriented toward the Community Path, with an engaging facade, a second-story deck, and a large garden facing the path. Views from Newberne Street and Willow Avenue are equally attractive.

### *Lessons Learned*

The 28 Newberne story includes valuable lessons for future infill development in Somerville. Neighborhood input is often much more driven by the design of a building than by the uses provided for within the building. Building heights are important, but so are facade treatments, window placements and parking garages. To increase predicability for neighbors, the City can explore progressive zoning regulations such as form-based codes, which emphasize good design and make it easy for developers to give our community what we want: attractive, well-planned, contextual infill development that contributes to the character of our great neighborhoods.

# Neighborhoods: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## *Preservation Awards Program*

Somerville's history is one of our greatest assets. The American Revolution began here, and our urban environment tells powerful stories from every period of history. The City has developed a series of creative partnerships to publicize Somerville's story, including the well-known Preservation Awards Program.

### *Recognizing Preservation Efforts*

Each fall the City identifies properties that have been rehabilitated or renovated in a manner consistent with the structure's architectural history. The Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC) reviews all projects and selects the winning entries.

The Preservation Awards Program includes a unique element for career development for Somerville High School students. Photographs of the winning properties are provided to high school teachers in the Art Department and the Pre-Engineering Program. Students are given an assignment to interpret and reproduce images of winning properties using their chosen media. Visual artists use watercolors or chalk; students with an interest in traditional architecture might prepare pencil drawings; and aspiring engineers prepare digital models using Computer Aided Design and Drafting (CADD) software. All students are encouraged to perform site visits with City staff, property owners and local architects and engineers.

### *Celebrating Preservation*

Through partnerships with local businesses, winning artwork is professionally framed and displayed around the City. An annual Preservation Awards ceremony is held to honor property owners, students, faculty members and community volunteers for their roles in this unique partnership. The Somerville Preservation Awards Program illustrates how public education, historic preservation and economic development go hand in hand in Somerville, and how effective stewardship of our cultural legacy depends on our ability to get future generations excited about Somerville's past.



*2010 Awards Ceremony*



*2011 Student Project*



*2011 Awards Ceremony*



# B • Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts



*Somerville: an exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

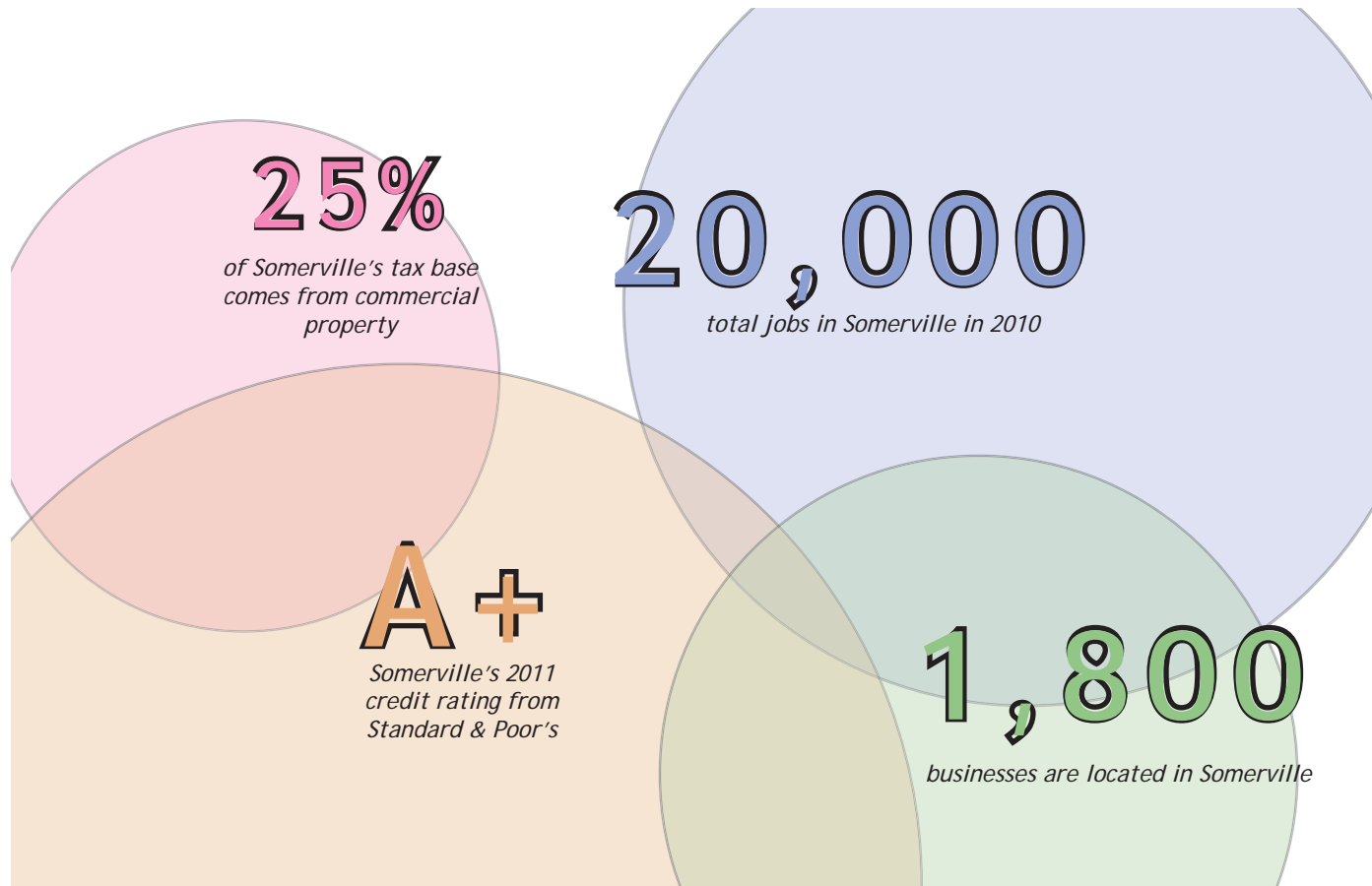


# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Introduction

### Introduction

Throughout our history, economic activity in Somerville has been centered around rivers, railways and roads, resulting in a network of unique commercial corridors, squares, and growth districts. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to support and enhance that historical pattern of development, channeling entrepreneurial energy into existing commercial districts to grow the City's tax base and expand economic opportunity for all Somerville residents, workers and business owners.



*Davis Square, a key economic engine for Somerville, boasts rapid transit access to Cambridge and Boston.*



*The Ames Envelope site on Somerville Avenue is a successful example of transitioning from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge economy.*

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Introduction

### Paying for City Services

#### *What's it all about?*

Somerville provides excellent public services, despite spending the least amount of money per resident in all of Massachusetts. With cuts to federal and state funding, we will need to rely more on our local economy to pay for schools, roads, and park projects.



### Summary of Goals:

- I. **Promote** municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.
- II. **Make** Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
- III. **Support** a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.
- IV. **Invest** in the talents, skills and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.
- V. **Link** our corridors, squares and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.
- VI. **Transform** key opportunity areas, such as Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards and the southeastern portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines to complement the neighborhoods of Somerville.
- VII. **Facilitate** thoughtfully-designed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and re-use opportunities in commercial corridors, squares and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.



# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Financial Self-Sufficiency

I. Goal: Promote municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.

A. Policy: *The City should utilize land use planning and zoning to increase the commercial tax base.*

1. Action: Rewrite the City's zoning ordinance to reduce barriers to commercial redevelopment, while taking into account local desire for sustainable development, increased fiscal independence, and contextual planning and design, and ensuring active community participation in the decision making process.
2. Action: Support statewide efforts to clarify and update the Commonwealth's statutes for municipal planning and zoning.

B. Policy: *The City should leverage creative financing options to foster commercial development.*

1. Action: Consider District Improvement Financing (DIF) (M.G.L. 40Q) to reinvest in public infrastructure and economic development projects consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and/or approved Area Plans.
2. Action: Explore Tax Increment Financing (TIF) (M.G.L. 40 S.59) to attract and support catalytic development projects consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and/or approved Area Plans.
3. Action: Encourage establishment of Business Improvement Districts (BID) (M.G.L. 400) to improve services and amenities in commercial squares and districts.

C. Policy: *City-owned property should, where appropriate, be utilized to stimulate economic development activities or serve as catalysts for such activities.*

1. Action: Where appropriate, consolidate and/or relocate municipal facilities in order to efficiently use municipal land and buildings to meet the needs of the Somerville community.
2. Action: Prepare surplus City-owned parcels for disposition and/or redevelopment.

### Tax Base

*What's it all about?*

Only ten percent of Somerville's land is used for commercial purposes, meaning that the City budget relies heavily on residential property taxes. The Comprehensive Plan will help Somerville to grow its local economy and pay for high-quality public services today and tomorrow.



*Zoning has been updated around Union Square and McGrath Highway to encourage economic development.*

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Financial Self-Sufficiency



*Historic interpretation centers can help tell the story of our heritage and attract tourists to Somerville.*



*SomerStreets celebrates neighborhoods with a series of festivals throughout the summer.*

*D. Policy: The City should expand the local economy by leveraging the arts and historic and cultural tourism.*

1. Action: Increase the number of out-of-town visitors by promoting arts, cultural and other civic events.
2. Action: Document historic structures, places and events and incorporate into promotional and marketing efforts.
3. Action: Expand Local Historic District designation and encourage application for National Historic designation of significant properties to preserve our shared history and sense of place.
4. Action: Develop historic interpretation centers at Prospect Hill, Powder House and other significant historic sites in Somerville.
5. Action: Convene a working group to develop a Tourism Action Plan.
6. Action: Seek to increase the inventory of hotel and bed & breakfast rooms.



### Hotel Development in Somerville

Hotels, inns, and bed & breakfasts are important economic engines. In addition to bringing visitors to shop and dine in Somerville's local business districts, hotels generate substantial tax revenues for the City. Today, only two hotels and one bed & breakfast operate in Somerville, but market research has shown that demand exists for additional facilities. To meet this demand, projects are planned in Assembly Square, Davis Square and Porter Square.

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Job Development and Emerging Businesses

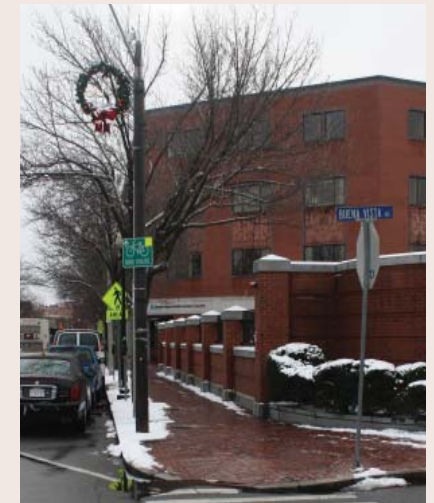
II. Goal: Make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high quality jobs.

A. Policy: *The City should promote job creation, with a goal of reaching a one-to-one ratio between jobs and resident workforce in Somerville within the next 20 years.*

1. Action: Consider the number of new jobs created when reviewing land use permit applications.
2. Action: Develop job creation criteria and local hiring incentives for commercial development projects seeking City subsidy.
3. Action: Maintain strong partnerships with local business advocacy groups, including the Somerville Chamber of Commerce, Main Streets organizations, Somerville Local First, the Davis Area Resident-Business Initiative, and others.
4. Action: Support partner organizations that provide small business development assistance (including business planning, financial management, marketing, and other counseling and technical assistance).
5. Action: Work with partner organizations to create, maintain and market a Somerville Business Directory.
6. Action: Create a business-to-business mentoring program to strengthen existing businesses and foster business development.



*Somerville boasts thriving retail and food service sectors.*



*Employers in health, education and social services employ thousands of Somerville residents, at a range of income levels.*

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Job Development and Emerging Businesses

### Job Development

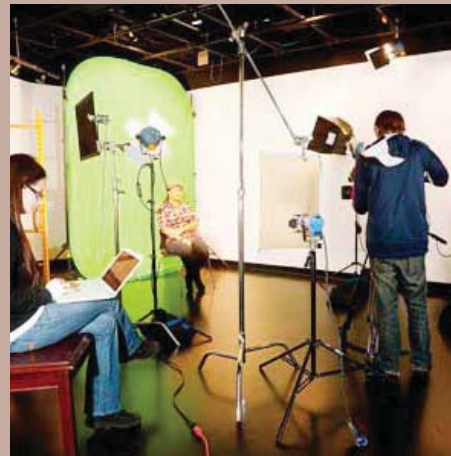
*What's it all about?*

Economic development is about people: local businesses, local jobs, and tax revenues that fund public services for Somerville residents. Somerville has few jobs relative to the number of workers living in the city. Implementing this Comprehensive Plan will encourage growing Somerville businesses to stay here, and will attract the next generation of entrepreneurs to create jobs in our community.



### *B. Policy: The City should promote growth in strategically-targeted economic sectors.*

1. Action: Analyze trends in existing and emerging economic sectors and their future for relocation to Somerville.
2. Action: Establish incentives for incubator, start up, and other shared space business centers within the targeted economic sectors.
3. Action: Partner with organizations that provide technical and financial assistance to entrepreneurs and small businesses.
4. Action: Pursue Commonwealth designation as a Platinum Bio-Ready Community, consistent with the Somerville Biotechnology Ordinance (Somerville Municipal Ordinance Section 6, Article IV).
5. Action: Develop and maintain partnerships with local universities to position Somerville as a first choice for commercialization of academic research.



### Creative Industries in Somerville

Somerville is on the cutting edge of the “Creative Economy”, which includes craft manufacturing, design, and multimedia businesses. A leading firm in this sector is Powderhouse Productions, New England’s largest independent television production company. Powderhouse was founded in Somerville in 1994, and owner Tug Yourgrau has since grown the company to more than 100 employees. The firm’s Davis Square location is an amenity to workers, most of whom commute via bicycle or transit and patronize local Somerville businesses for food and shopping needs.

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Business Environment

III. Goal: Support a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.

A. Policy: The City and its partners should market Somerville as a location for business.

1. Action: Promote Somerville as a location for sustainable businesses.
2. Action: Partner with business advocacy groups and institutions to develop high quality print and multi-media marketing materials to attract new and expanding businesses.
3. Action: Develop and maintain an online database of available properties for re-tenanting, reuse and redevelopment.
4. Action: Develop a Business Retention Program to keep existing businesses whose products and operations are consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and/or adopted Area Plans in Somerville by soliciting feedback and addressing their needs.
5. Action: Actively assist businesses in becoming more environmentally sustainable.

B. Policy: The City should continue efforts around permit streamlining to facilitate the process of opening a business in Somerville, while ensuring a transparent public review process.

1. Action: Regularly update and expand the City's Business Welcome Kit.
2. Action: Create a permit and license application system that allows for online application together with online issuance of permits/licenses, as appropriate.
3. Action: Create a publicly-available electronic tracking system for license and permit applications.
4. Action: Consider creating an in-house permit ombudsman position to guide applicants through the regulatory process.

### Small Business

*What's it all about?*

New England can be an expensive place to do business. The City is committed to lowering the cost of starting or operating a business by reducing red tape, improving transportation and utility infrastructure, and working with landlords to improve commercial properties.



*In 2009, Winter Hill's Maryom Hair Design used the City's Storefront Improvement Program to pay for facade improvements.*

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts Business Environment

## Commercial Space

### *What's it all about?*

When Ames Envelope relocated to Wisconsin in 2009, one of Somerville's largest commercial facilities was left vacant. The City partnered with the owner of the property to find tenants, identifying the growing Artisans Asylum nonprofit as a potential fit. In 2011, Artisans Asylum signed a lease for 25,000 square feet of space, bringing energy and vitality back to a key Somerville commercial district.



*C. Policy: The City should maintain its unique and authentic character.*

1. Action: Consider updating the Zoning Ordinance to limit the number of formula businesses.

*D. Policy: The City should support the development and retention of incubator, entry level and mid-level business space.*

1. Action: Work with property owners and real estate professionals to analyze, improve and market existing commercial spaces.
2. Action: Work to develop flexible and affordable commercial spaces that are managed by nonprofits.
3. Action: Update the Zoning Ordinance to reduce barriers to home-based businesses.

## Business Advocacy in Somerville

Somerville is fortunate to have a great network of business organizations. The Somerville Chamber of Commerce, East Somerville Main Streets, Union Square Main Streets and Somerville Local First play a key role in supporting entrepreneurs through advocacy, marketing, and technical assistance. In the future, Business Improvement Districts are likely to be another organizational model through which business owners can work together to revitalize Somerville's commercial neighborhoods.





# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Human Capital

### IV. Goal: Invest in the talents, skills and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.

*A. Policy: The City should pursue the creation of a network of workforce development programs that train residents for jobs today and in the future.*

1. Action: Publicize existing collaborations with community stakeholders that prepare residents for “new economy” jobs as well as traditional jobs, with a particular emphasis on youth, transitional workers, and immigrant populations.
2. Action: Establish new collaborations to train residents for medical, laboratory and new technology jobs.
3. Action: Continue and expand the Mayor’s Summer Jobs program.
4. Action: Expand school-to-work programs and improve adult education and ESL classes.
5. Action: Support and encourage wider participation from nonprofit organizations in job-training and workforce readiness efforts.
6. Action: Identify a Somerville representative to serve on the State’s Workforce Board.

### Biotech Comes to Somerville High School

Somerville High School is preparing students for the next generation of high-skill jobs. In 2011, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council named SHS its “Innovative School of the Year.” By investing in school laboratory space, creating specialized new courses for science students, and establishing partnerships with research universities and industry giants, the High School is providing Somerville youth with the skills and career networks to succeed in college and in the workplace.



### Workforce Development

*What's it all about?*

City government can play a role in helping residents to gain the skills and contacts necessary for career development. Adult education, public computer labs, and job training programs can expand economic opportunities for Somerville residents.



*In between raising a family and working at Harvard Dining Services, Melani Bizarria, originally from Brazil, found the time to attend school to earn her GED at SCALE.*

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts Connectivity



*Completed in 2010, the Somerville Avenue Streetscape project has improved safety, aesthetics and amenities between Porter Square and Union Square.*



*In 2012, the City will begin construction on a streetscape improvement project for Broadway in East Somerville.*

## **V. Goal: Link Somerville's Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts to support future development and economic activity.**

### *A. Policy: Somerville should be connected to major research universities and to Kendall Square.*

1. Action: Identify the routes to major institutions including Tufts, Harvard, MIT, and Boston University and develop plans to increase access by all modes of transportation.

### *B. Policy: The City should provide great streetscapes and wayfinding to connect commercial corridors and squares.*

1. Action: Implement an annual review of streetscape improvement priorities.
2. Action: Prepare development standards for existing commercial districts that encourage infrastructure improvements such as undergrounding of utility lines, widening of sidewalks, and the creation of bike lanes and bike parking.
3. Action: Create a great civic space in Union Square.
4. Action: Develop and implement a wayfinding system.
5. Action: Investigate opportunities to build municipal or private garage parking structures that will help address the parking needs of multiple users within a commercial area, thereby making more private land available for revenue-producing development.
6. Action: Improve intra-city transportation to link residential neighborhoods to Somerville's employment and commercial centers.
7. Action: Reduce artificial physical barriers between Inner Belt and Brickbottom, and between East Somerville and West Somerville.

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Transformative Development

VI. Goal: Transform key opportunity areas, such as Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards, and the southeastern portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines and complement the neighborhoods of Somerville.

A. Policy: *The City should establish a clear vision for the desired scale and type of redevelopment within transformative mixed-use districts that speak to the City's economic goals; following upon an active public process to develop the vision, increase the flexibility and reduce the complexity of the permitting process.*

1. Action: Complete the Area Plan that is currently underway for Inner Belt/Brickbottom.
2. Action: Initiate Area Plans for Assembly Square, Boynton Yards, and the eastern portion of Union Square.
3. Action: Make Area Plans flexible enough to respond to changing economic and development patterns and establish a regular schedule to update the plans.

B. Policy: *Overall development in transformative districts should have a net positive fiscal impact to the City.*

1. Action: Develop metrics by which development proposals in each transformative district are to be judged.
2. Action: Require that land use permit applications include projected fiscal impacts of the proposed development on the City.

### Opportunity Areas

*What's it all about?*

Heavy industry, rail yards, and elevated superhighways in eastern Somerville have divided our neighborhoods, polluted our air and soil, and allowed economic growth to pass us by. The transformation of Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom and Boynton Yards into walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods will make Somerville a healthier, more prosperous and more attractive place to live, work, play and raise a family.



Somerville Avenue at Medford Street.

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Transformative Development

### Green Line

*What's it all about?*



The MBTA Green Line Extension will create new opportunities for local business development in Union Square, Gilman Square, Magoun Square, Ball Square, and along Route 16. Each neighborhood served by the Green Line will engage in its own planning process in 2012 and 2013 to determine what to conserve, what to enhance, and what to transform during the next cycle of community growth.

*C. Policy: The City should promote site assemblage and redevelopment in transformative districts.*

1. Action: Identify gateway catalyst sites where redevelopment would have the most impact.
2. Action: Work with property owners and developers to prepare assemblage and redevelopment plans that support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and/or adopted Area Plans.
3. Action: Identify sites where parcels are too small, too isolated or otherwise risky for transformative development and consider City-led site assemblage activities.
4. Action: Seek federal and state brownfield funding to assess and remediate contaminated properties.

*D. Policy: The City should support public and non-profit sector catalytic projects that advance area plans.*

1. Action: Make Somerville the next expansion area for development spun off from MIT.
2. Action: Identify opportunities for projects that serve a regional market such as performing arts venues, museums, health care and sports facilities to create regional destinations.



### A New Front Door for Somerville

Since 1950, visitors entering Somerville from Boston and Cambridge on the McGrath Highway have been greeted by an unwelcoming sight (and smell): a two-acre, 70-foot tall solid waste transfer facility. In a clear message to the entire metropolitan region, the City announced in 2010 it would terminate the facility's lease, clean up the property, and plan for green, pedestrian-oriented redevelopment of this key gateway to the city. This transformation is expected to jump-start reinvestment in Somerville's neglected industrial districts around the McGrath Highway.

# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Commercial Reuse & Infill

VII. Goal: Facilitate thoughtfully designed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and reuse opportunities in Commercial Corridors, Squares and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.

A. Policy: *the City should establish a clear vision for the desired scale and type of redevelopment within transformational mixed use districts that speaks to the City's economic goals; following upon an active public process to develop the vision, seek to increase flexibility and reduce the complexity of the permitting process.*

1. Action: Prepare Area Plans and zoning in the vicinity of new Green Line Stations at Gilman Square, Lowell Street/Magoun Square, Ball Square, and Route 16 to encourage appropriate density and uses proximate to transit.
2. Action: As part of a citywide rezoning process, establish a clear vision and appropriate land use policies for Davis Square, Porter Square, Teele Square, Powder House Circle, Winter Hill, and Broadway in East Somerville.
3. Action: Require the Special Permit Granting Authority to make a finding that applications for zoning relief in Neighborhood Mixed Use and Urban Mixed Use Districts support and promote the goals, policies and actions of the Comprehensive Plan and approved Area Plans before granting relief.

### Area Plans

*What's it all about?*

A Comprehensive Plan can't do it all. Therefore, the SomerVision plan recommends that the City prepare more specific Area Plans for many of Somerville's commercial corridors, squares and growth districts. In 2010, the City received a federal grant to prepare Area Plans around the six new Green Line stations. This grant funding will help the City to engage residents and business owners in each station area, ensuring that future economic growth is sensitive to local needs.



# Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts

## Commercial Reuse & Infill

### Commercial Infill

*What's it all about?*



*Infill redevelopment at 130 Broadway in East Somerville.*

The Somerville Zoning Ordinance discourages investment in the City's business districts, while providing little protection for nearby residents. Recently, public support has grown for revitalization of Somerville's squares and corridors, resulting in landmark zoning amendments for the historic commercial centers of Union Square, East Somerville and Winter Hill.

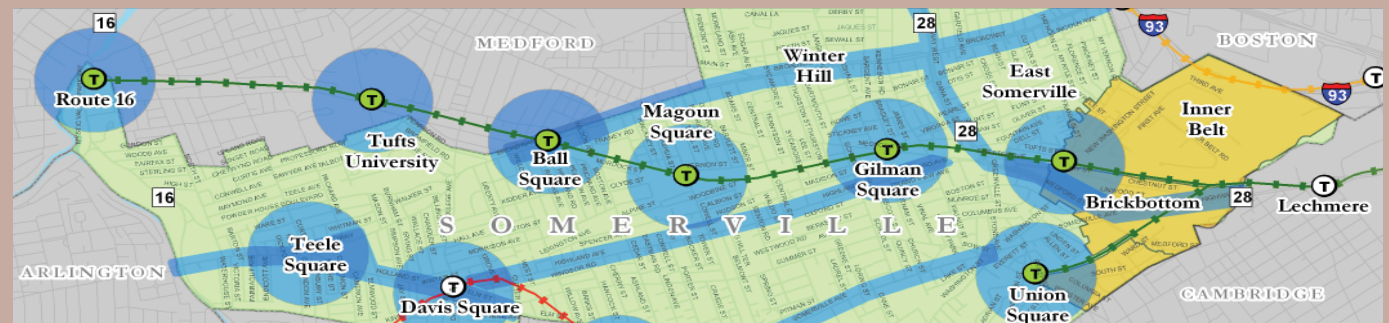
*B. Policy: The City should develop a parking policy that promotes commercial re-use and infill development.*

1. Action: Rewrite zoning to reduce parking requirements in Neighborhood Mixed Use and Urban Mixed Use Districts taking into account access to transit and the propensity for customers to walk or bike to area businesses.
2. Action: Establish and manage the Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Parking program to optimize shared parking options and redevelopment potential.

*C. Policy: The City should establish defined policies to address the sensitive interface of commercial and residential uses.*

1. Action: Update zoning to utilize graduated height and density limits that scale downward closer to residential interfaces.

### Future MBTA Green Line Route through Somerville



# Commercial Growth: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## Sunbug Solar

For solar energy experts SunBug Solar, locating in Somerville just made sense. Founded in 2009, the 10-employee company designs and installs systems for homeowners, businesses and nonprofits throughout the state. V.P of Marketing and Residential Sales, Ben Mayer, offers a few reasons why Somerville “is perfect for a young, aggressively growing business such as ours.”

### *1. Business diversity*

As with any organization, SunBug Solar thrives when the businesses that surround it are both healthy and diverse. This trait certainly applies to Somerville, which has seen strong business growth and steadily rising wages in recent years. “Rather than being hooked to one big manufacturing center, the city is home to a diverse collection of businesses supplying a wide range of services,” says Mayer. “This diversity provides support and makes it a smart place to do business.”

### *2. Somerville has an educated population*

While solar technology is 50-plus years old, widescale solar adoption is a relatively new phenomenon. So it’s important to have a customer base willing to try new things. Luckily for Sunbug Solar, Somerville’s population fits the bill. “Somerville residents are highly educated, environmentally aware, and generally forward thinking,” says Mayer. “Since people are new to solar, it often gets adopted through peer groups and community building. We’ve been able to do this effectively in and around Somerville.”

### *3. High quality of life*

Cheney Brand, SunBug Solar’s founder, has been a Somerville resident since 2000; Mayer has resided here since 2005. “The costs are low considering quality of life, which is very high due to the sense of community, excellent transportation, and blend of residential and urban feel,” says Mayer, who enjoys raising his family in Davis Square.

### *4. Supportive local government*

“The City of Somerville has been open to new ideas, and we’ve had good experiences working with OSPCD staff,” says Mayer. SunBug Solar and OSPCD have worked together to figure out ways to promote solar for small businesses on the retail scale, and discussions are ongoing about leveraging funding for solar installations on awnings as part of the City’s Storefront Improvement Program.



*A Sunbug Solar employee in front of the solar panels at Fenway Park, which heat 1/3 of the hot water needed at the ballpark.*



*Residential Solar Panels installed by Sunbug Solar in Somerville.*

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

# Commercial Growth: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



*Silvia de la Sota, Owner*



*Aquacate Verde's improved storefront brings added vitality to Wilson Square.  
[aguacateverderestaurant.com](http://aguacateverderestaurant.com)*

## Silvia de la Sota, Aquacate Verde

For Silvia de la Sota, owner of the new Aquacate Verde restaurant in Wilson Square, Somerville is more than just a home or a place to do business. "Somerville represents the American dream," she says. "It allows me to be myself and grow."

De la Sota's Somerville story began in the late 1990's when she moved from her native Peru hoping to study at Harvard University. After volunteering and doing social work for several years, she won a scholarship to take classes at the Harvard Extension School and graduated in 2007. "My professor encouraged me to become a math teacher, but I wanted to do something more directly involved with the community," she says. She worked in the non-profit sector focusing on local public health issues for several years, but was laid off during the recession and soon found herself struggling to make ends meet.

That's when she turned to the City of Somerville for help. "Through the City I was able to get access to affordable housing," says de la Sota. "This helped me establish good credit and ended up being an important element in allowing me to become a business owner later on." When the owners of the popular Tacos Lupita restaurant put it up for sale, de la Sota jumped at the chance to try something new. "My family had a restaurant back in Peru, and I was looking for a change from non-profit work. So I used my good credit to get a loan from the bank and bought the restaurant." She renamed it Aquacate Verde ("Green Avocado" in Spanish) and contacted the City for advice about business and marketing strategies. She enrolled in the City's Storefront Improvement Program, which has provided her with funding to redesign Aquacate Verde's awning and exterior, and participated in Somerville's Best Retail Practices Program, which gave her access to free retail and marketing advice from a professional consultant.

De la Sota is thankful for the help that City staff have provided in her journey to becoming a business owner. "OSPCD staff, the health inspector, the licensing authorities, the police - I've had pleasant experiences with them all," she says. "They're very friendly and they've been helpful in allowing me to pursue my goals. I didn't have a lot of experience, but with their help I was able to find my way." Her restaurant has seen an ever-growing customer base since she took ownership in May 2011. Staying true to her interests in public health, she's made the menu healthier by using low-saturated oils and fresh seasonings and providing more vegetarian options.



# Commercial Growth: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## Altitude, Inc.

Altitude is a collective of creative thinkers united in a common purpose: to bring clients business success. Altitude believes that true innovation arises when talent and spirited intellectual engagement meet business acumen and a deep understanding of consumer needs and desires. Their expertise in design strategy, design innovation, product realization, and brand expression allows us to help clients clearly define their goals, differentiate themselves from competitors, lessen their impact on the environment, and offer solutions that are wholly relevant to consumers.

Altitude seeks to optimize the intersection of a company's mission, differentiation from competition, and relevance to consumers. They have expertise in every aspect of product development and brand communication, from long-range planning to management of the manufacturing process or implementation of brand expressions. Their past work also extends across several industries, each with its own particular demands and measures of success. What unifies this diverse portfolio is Altitude's holistic approach to business success.



*Brian Matt, Founder & CEO*

Altitude, Inc. is located on Highland Avenue in Davis Square. Founder and CEO, Brian Matt loves “the creative environment and the proximity to public transportation and the community path”. His thirty employees commute to work using every possible travel mode, and they enjoy the square’s restaurants and services. The livelihood and culture of Davis Square make it a great location for an innovative, smart business with a unique creative approach.

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





## C. Resources

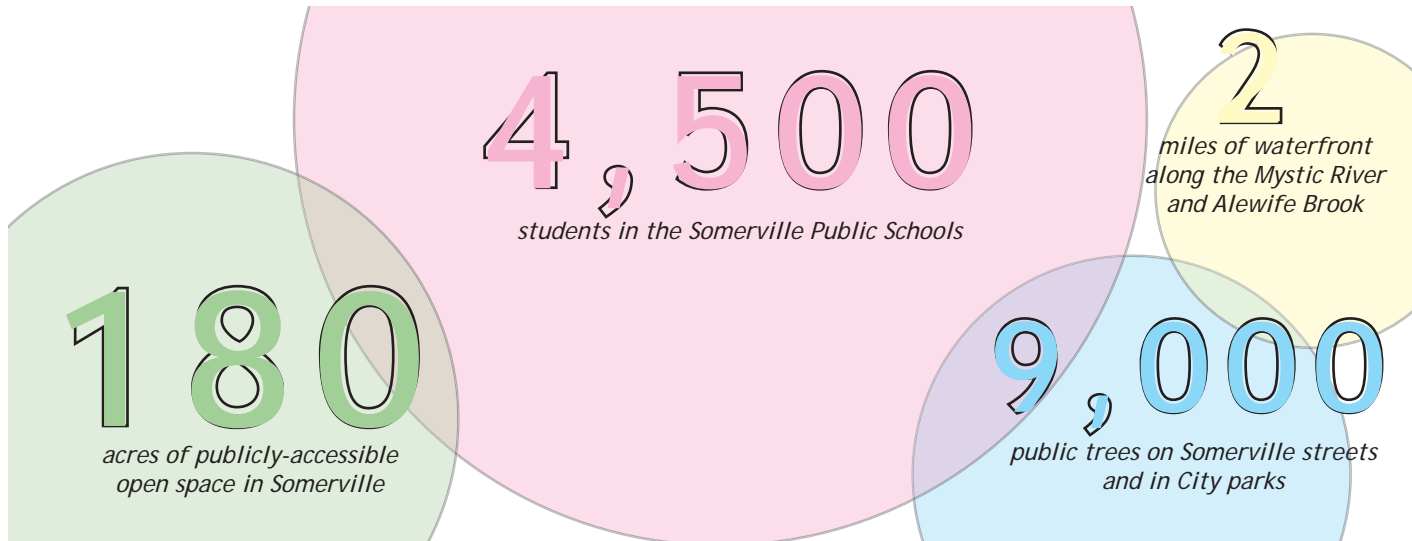


*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

# Resources Introduction

## Introduction

In Somerville, we strive for world-class public education, excellent public safety, diverse recreational opportunities and a culture of creativity. These resources are constantly changing to adapt to our residents' needs and the local economy. The Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for identifying, preserving and expanding the community resources that make Somerville a great place to live, work, play and raise a family.



# Resources

## Introduction

### Public Art



### Summary of Goals:

- I. **Increase** the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.
- II. **Ensure** that Somerville has a mix of spaces for creative production, performance and exhibition, and that art is incorporated into the built environment.
- III. **Help** local arts and cultural institutions, such as theaters, film and art festivals, museums and libraries to succeed, network and grow.
- IV. **Strengthen** existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.
- V. **Approach** our waterfront as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.
- VI. **Create** and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.
- VII. **Design** and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm that fosters community connection, including streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces.
- VIII. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.
- IX. **Ensure** the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, of the best available technology, redundant, and supportive the desired level of future growth.
- X. **Ensure** that the Somerville municipal government, residents and business communities are well prepared and equipped to address emergency situations.

# Resources

## Creative Community

### I. Goal: Increase the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.

#### A. Policy: *The City should foster a creative economy.*

1. Action: Market Somerville as a community that welcomes and takes pride in a strong arts presence.
2. Action: Prepare and analyze trends in existing and emerging creative business sectors to identify ways to encourage new clusters of creative activity/economy, and build upon the success of Davis and Union Squares.
3. Action: Promote and attract innovative businesses to Somerville, including companies focused on design, music, film, or multi-media.

#### B. Policy: *The City and its community arts partners should sustain and expand Somerville's prominence in the arts.*

1. Action: Consider expansion of the City's Arts Overlay District to invite and retain Somerville artists and spur cultural economic development.
2. Action: Partner with the Somerville Arts Council to develop an online arts directory and creative marketplace, and promote collaboration between arts-based Somerville organizations.
3. Action: Cultivate media relationships while identifying established and new media to aggressively market arts-focused events and opportunities to the public.

#### C. Policy: *The City and its community arts partners should help cultivate and maintain a creative community that is culturally diverse.*

1. Action: Ensure arts diversity by promoting culturally-specific arts events, publishing promotional materials in multiple languages, and utilizing community organization distribution networks.
2. Action: Encourage cross-cultural and cross-generational creative programs and art spaces that foster mentoring relationships and entrepreneurial networking.

### The Arts

*What's it all about?*



Somerville's arts community is one of the largest and most diverse anywhere. Promoting the arts helps Somerville's economy, strengthens public education, beautifies our neighborhoods and showcases our civic pride.



# Resources

## Creative Spaces



*Community space at the Brickbottom Artists Association.*

Somerville has artist lofts, and a fantastic organization to manage and promote them. The Brickbottom Artists Association is one of the oldest artists' communities in America, with 150 condominium units located in two former industrial buildings on Fitchburg Street. The rehabilitation of the buildings began in 1984. Today, Brickbottom is a bustling hub of activity in a dynamic post-industrial landscape. The facility contains a large enclosed courtyard with exotic vegetation and views into artists' workspaces.

**II. Goal: Ensure that Somerville has a mix of spaces for creative production, performance and exhibition, and that art is incorporated into the built environment.**

*A. Policy: The City should use zoning and public policy to foster space for a creative economy, promote live/work spaces, and retain affordable artist work spaces.*

1. Action: Support existing Arts Overlay District zoning and consider additional arts districts to help meet the need for inexpensive work and office space.
2. Action: Make zoning conducive to flexible use of space for live/work and design/production.
3. Action: Explore incentives for private owners to convert/sell/lease property to artists and self-employed creative businesses.

*B. Policy: The City should integrate arts awareness into its development and planning efforts.*

1. Action: Consider creating a municipal fund for public arts, with potential funding streams including a "percent-for-arts" requirement in Transit Oriented Districts.
2. Action: Explore mitigation funding to create public art across the city.
3. Action: Ensure that a multi-purpose performance space is developed within Somerville.
4. Action: Encourage developers to build non-profit performance/exhibit spaces into their projects.
5. Action: Provide at least one outdoor municipal public space that is designed as dual use for live performance.
6. Action: Promote the provision of low-cost indoor and outdoor spaces for artists to have opportunities to sell/display their products.

# Resources

## Creative Spaces

*C. Policy: The City should incorporate arts and creativity into public infrastructure recognizing the links between the arts and environmental awareness.*

1. Action: Explore opportunities for arts-based organizations and creative businesses to utilize the public landscape for art installations and contribute to the maintenance of these open spaces.
2. Action: Advocate for community-based public art at the new Green Line extension transit stations.

## Design Annex

Somerville has long been known for its “Design Cluster” - a robust network of architects, graphic and product designers, and information technology professionals who connect the worlds of art and commerce. Unfortunately, the design sector was hit particularly hard by the recent economic recession, and many of Somerville’s best and brightest found themselves unemployed or underemployed.

Union Square Main Streets rose to the challenge of supporting this critical segment of our community. By partnering with design professionals, a local property owner, and the City of Somerville, Main Streets developed a 1,400 square foot office space that has been dubbed the “Design Annex”: a shared professional facility for dozens of Somerville residents that offers a low-cost alternative to a home office.

In addition to critical office services (high-speed and secure wireless internet, printers and copiers, conference room, lounge, library, and kitchenette), the Design Annex provides quintessential Somerville attributes: sense of community and the opportunity for collaboration among entrepreneurs. By reducing risk for startup companies, fostering skill/knowledge development for design professionals and creating networking and marketing opportunities, the Design Annex has already become a unique resource for Somerville’s vibrant small business community.

## Open Studios

*What’s it all about?*

Every summer, Somerville Open Studios gives residents and visitors an inside look at artists’ workspaces. Organized tours and events help Somerville’s working artists tell their stories, sell their products, and celebrate the city’s cultural energy.



*Somerville Open Studios Map*



*Photo: Ken Richardson*

# Resources

## Cultural Institutions

### Our Libraries

*What are they all about?*

The Somerville Public Libraries are an important community resource. Fundraising campaigns in the community, partnerships with other cultural institutions, and creative grant funding applications are all critical elements of the City's strategy to ensure that all residents have access to quality libraries.



*Tufts students volunteering at the West Branch Library in Davis Square.*

**III. Goal: Help local arts and cultural institutions, such as theatres, film and art festivals, museums and libraries to succeed, network and grow.**

*A. Policy: The City and its community arts partners should strengthen existing arts, performance and cultural institutions.*

1. Action: Periodically (every five years) assess existing Somerville cultural institutions for physical, financial and programmatic health.
2. Action: Assist the Somerville Public Libraries in publicizing capital campaigns to ensure they develop and maintain state-of-the-art facilities.
3. Action: Cultivate a population of individual and business patrons to support the Somerville Museum and similar privately funded cultural and/or performance venues.
4. Action: Increase the recognition and use of public performance and exhibition venues, such as school auditoriums, parks, and other City-owned facilities.
5. Action: Review parking regulations for cultural institutions and encourage shared parking and other creative ways to meet demand without being burdensome.

*B. Policy: The City should assist with improving the coordination between cultural institutions.*

1. Action: Encourage the Somerville Historical Society and the Somerville Public Libraries to join efforts in curating and improving public availability of historical resources.
2. Action: Draw on the expertise and networks of the successful Somerville Garden Tour and Somerville Open Studios to promote other cultural institutions, programming and events.
3. Action: Provide online resources for nonprofit organizations to share information on grant opportunities, "wish lists" and common resources.



# Resources

## Cultural Institutions

*C. Policy: The City should study the creation of one or more Cultural Districts, under Cultural District Statutory Regulations adopted by the Commonwealth in 2010.*

1. Action: Work with the Somerville Arts Council, local cultural and business groups, faith-based partnerships, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and others to identify and map potential cultural districts, study their ability to benefit the City, and put forward qualifying districts for official adoption.
2. Action: If districts are created, integrate them into City policy and planning, including programs to promote the city and its businesses, and increase utilization of cultural assets.
3. Action: Ascertain demand for cultural and performance facilities in Somerville and develop a detailed action plan that determines how the City and partners can meet the identified demand.

## Cultural Identity

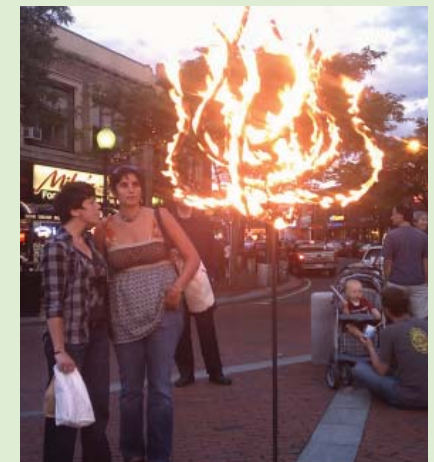
*What's it all about?*

Walk around Somerville's great neighborhoods and you'll notice that each has its own unique culture. Residents and local businesses create a sense of identity that is individual, but also tied to the Somerville identity. The Comprehensive Plan will help Somerville to preserve and promote what we love about our community.

## Happiness Survey

Somerville is on the cutting edge of measuring our residents' quality-of-life. The City of Somerville teamed up with researchers from Harvard University in 2011 to design and administer the nation's first-ever municipal happiness survey. The results have been telling: residents are happier when they live in neighborhoods where they can walk to shopping, services, jobs and parks. Happiness increases when the City offers creative services like single-stream recycling. The City plans to continue to ask its residents about their happiness, and use the results to inform policy decisions to ensure that Somerville becomes an even better place to live, work, play and raise a family.

*Photo: Steve McFarland*



# Resources

## Education

### Public Education

*What's it all about?*

Public education is a core value in our community. Somerville has made important progress during the last decade in early childhood education, public schools and adult learning. We must continue this progress, and strive to enhance educational and economic opportunities for all residents.



Photo: Jennifer McManus

#### IV. Goal: Strengthen existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.

*A. Policy: Somerville's public schools should aim to achieve success for all Somerville students, paying particular attention to those who are economically disadvantaged.*

1. Action: Work towards the availability of affordable early childhood programs for all Somerville children.
2. Action: Continue to serve students whose first language is not English.
3. Action: Continue to strengthen college prep programs at Somerville High School and formalize existing partnership with local universities.
4. Action: Plan for a flexible, modern vocational education curriculum that responds to industry demands and aims to prepare graduates of all economic backgrounds with the career skills for long-term local employment, using the best data, national best-practices and local partnerships.
5. Action: Continue to cultivate youth representation in City policy and program planning by supporting the existing Youth Council and Teen Empowerment programs.

### Teen Empowerment

Somerville's youth is one of our most important community resources. Established in Somerville in 2004, Teen Empowerment's mission is to empower both youth and adults as agents of positive individual, institutional, and social change. TE's youth works with adults in mutually respectful and supportive relationships, to use their voices creatively to inspire, lead, and empower their communities to achieve justice and peace. TE allows young people to participate in civic affairs relating to public health, education, public safety, the arts and economic development.



# Resources

## Education

*B. Policy: The City, the Somerville Public Schools, and their community educational partners should encourage innovative programs, mentoring, and scholarships to promote success for diverse populations.*

1. Action: Increase awareness of community partnerships and programs available through Tufts University and other higher education institutions in greater Boston.
2. Action: Build a partnership between the Somerville High School vocational program and higher education institutions that focuses on careers in high growth and in demand at the present time.
3. Action: Establish a structured partnership between local higher education institutions, the City of Somerville, and local employers who utilize the research skills and facilities of university faculty and graduate students to assist with projects that promote entrepreneurship and grow Somerville's economy.
4. Action: Define a community service policy based on the needs of the Somerville Public Schools in order to connect local non-profit institutions to valuable service opportunities.

### SomerPromise Alliance

In Somerville, we strive to ensure that every young person in our city has a chance at education and economic success. The SomerPromise Alliance is a citywide campaign to ensure that every child living in Somerville achieves his or her greatest potential, graduates from high school and is prepared for college or the workforce. SomerPromise brings together representatives from the City, its public schools, nonprofits and other service providers in order to improve opportunities and educational outcomes for Somerville's youth. SomerPromise began in 2009 with the support of Mayor Joseph Curtatone, the Somerville Public Schools, Tufts University, the Somerville Housing Authority and many local nonprofit organizations.

### Partnerships

*What's it all about?*

The Somerville Public Schools have been transformed during the last decade, earning recognition as one of the top-performing urban school districts in Massachusetts. Partnerships with institutions like Tufts University's Tisch College for Public Service have been an important part of education reform, providing research assistance, internship programs and publicity for our schools.



# Resources Education



*C. Policy: The City, in partnership with the Somerville Public Schools and other local educational institutions, should offer life-long learning opportunities so all community members may realize their fullest potential at home, in the workplace, and in the community.*

1. Action: Build on strong early education programs to ensure that the pre-school population is prepared for elementary school, and educate parents and guardians on the benefits of a Somerville education as well as the programs and choices available to their children.
2. Action: Ensure that outreach is multilingual and inclusive through partnerships with community organizations in Environmental Justice neighborhoods.
3. Action: Create and promote existing experiential learning opportunities in the schools and public open spaces.
4. Action: Increase awareness of existing programs open to Somerville residents, such as the SCALE adult education programs.
5. Action: Create living classrooms using parks as environmental teaching grounds.

## Capuano Early Childhood Education Center

Somerville offers free early childhood education services for residents. The Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood Education Center on Glen Street was built in 2003 with state-of-the-art facilities which have received national design awards. The school serves roughly four hundred kindergarten and pre-K students every year. The Capuano Center also offers a fee-for-service after-school day care program, and on-site community gardens and a turf soccer field provide recreational opportunities for the entire East Somerville community.



# Resources

## Waterfront

### V. Goal: Approach our waterfronts as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.

A. Policy: The City, in partnership with DCR, EPA and others, should improve the water quality and expand the recreational use of the Mystic River and the Alewife Brook corridors.

1. Action: Partner with Groundwork Somerville, the Mystic River Watershed Association and other community organizations to work on water quality improvements, such as invasive plant control.
2. Action: Support efforts to monitor and record wildlife and plant populations along the riverfront, and use this data in planning future waterfront development.
3. Action: Consider the creation of a living wall (e.g., sound and visual barrier that also contains plant materials) to address air quality issues and mitigate the impact of Route 93 on the Mystic River, boat launches, paths, and other waterfront vistas.
4. Action: Create infrastructure and educational outreach to support public water-based recreational opportunities and programs.
5. Action: Link existing neighborhoods, open space and recreational areas to the waterfront via public transit and safe pedestrian and bicycle access.
6. Action: Strengthen enforcement of sewage control, littering, illegal dumping, and illegal removal/cutting of plant materials in and around waterfront areas.
7. Action: Actively contribute to the implementation of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Mystic River Corridor Strategy Project.

## Waterfront

*What's it all about?*

Somerville has a waterfront! More than two miles of shoreline along the Mystic River and the Alewife Brook provide walking, boating and fishing opportunities for Somerville residents and visitors. We should be proud of these resources and work to improve accessibility, water quality and publicity.



*The Mystic River is cleaner than it has been for generations, and public access to the shoreline has improved.*

# Resources

## Parks & Recreation

### Recreation

*What's it all about?*

Public spaces bring Somerville residents together, and serve as a stage to showcase our legendary civic pride. They also encourage our residents and children to lead healthy and active lifestyles. We must continue to build new parks, plazas and gardens, while maintaining older public spaces and making sure that they are actively used.



**VI. Goal: Create and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.**

*A. Policy: The City should partner with local neighborhood organizations on the design, programming, and increased volunteer participation in public parks and open spaces.*

1. Action: Analyze existing parks and recreation spaces for cultural relevancy, changing neighborhood demographics and needs, and site-specific ecological, social and recreational opportunities.
2. Action: Notify community members and stakeholder groups of opportunities to participate in the design and renovation of parks and recreation facilities.
3. Action: Increase multilingual announcements and publicity for public events in parks and recreational areas.
4. Action: Partner with neighborhood community organizations, the Somerville Police Department, local businesses and interested residents to establish "Friends of the Park" groups to help with maintenance, neighborhood security, and parks programming.

### Shape Up Somerville

America's cities and towns can play an important role in improving people's health. Shape Up Somerville was created in 2004 as a partnership between the City of Somerville, Tufts University and the Cambridge Health Alliance. The program has earned national recognition for its work to reduce childhood obesity, increase physical activity in public schools, and promote access to fresh food for all Somerville residents.



# Resources

## Parks & Recreation

*B. Policy: The City should design new and renovated public open spaces using green technologies and methods that increase permeability, reduce energy costs and conserve public resources.*

1. Action: Assess open spaces to identify opportunities that improve sustainability.
2. Action: Favor plant species on public projects that are perennial and drought-tolerant.



### Groundwork Somerville: Schoolyard Gardens

The goal of Groundwork Somerville's School Gardens Program is to use gardens as a catalyst to empower elementary school students to make decisions that positively affect their own health and the health of the environment. Groundwork offers garden-based programming year-round for kindergarten through 8th graders, focusing on reaching youth as they begin to make their own choices about food and the environment. Groundwork strives to provide students at all Somerville public elementary and middle schools the opportunity to plan, plant, tend and harvest from their own garden. Groundwork also works with other programs serving at risk youth to engage their participants in nature- or gardens-based programming.



# Resources

## Public Realm



**VII. Goal: Design and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm that fosters community connection, including streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces.**

*A. Policy: The City should plan public realm renovations with attention to energy efficiency, environmental design, visual clarity and ease of maintenance.*

1. Action: Continue to increase the number of streets that bury electric utilities.
2. Action: Consider City ordinances to minimize visibility of satellite dishes and telecommunications equipment, enforce wire takedown when a communication service is discontinued, and improve visual appearance of infrastructure placed on public poles by private companies.
3. Action: Ensure that all street renovation projects create opportunities for planting trees to increase the city's urban tree canopy and that each tree has an adequately-sized tree pit to encourage tree health.
4. Action: Base tree selection on recommendations from the City's 2009 Urban Forest Management Plan.
5. Action: Design public school grounds to ensure quality recreational space, native wildlife habitat/ outdoor classrooms, plant biodiversity, reduced stormwater runoff, and energy efficiency.

*B. Policy: The City should continue to increase opportunities for urban agriculture.*

1. Action: Create safe soil quality specifications.
2. Action: Consider creating public greenhouse(s) for year-round growing opportunities and/or partner with groups doing such work.
3. Action: Continue to explore opportunities to add community gardens while developing plans to rehabilitate existing or add new parks.



# Resources

## Green Infrastructure

### VIII. Goal: Maximize environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.

#### A. *POLICY: The City should meet energy reduction goals by undertaking or requiring efficiency and renewal projects.*

1. Action: Ensure that zoning and other programs incentivize energy reduction measures for businesses and residential uses.
2. Action: Explore the installation of solar panels on street light poles as the technology becomes affordable.
3. Action: Continue to use LED lighting fixtures on new street fixtures as roadways are reconstructed.

#### B. *POLICY: The City should improve the water quality of the Mystic River and the Alewife Brook.*

1. Action: Ensure that erosion controls on construction projects are adequate to handle major storm events and protect the city's waterways.



*The City can encourage new development and renovations to include sustainable features, like solar panels, and help find grants to finance them.*



*The City can use sustainable features, like LED lighting, on its own properties to save power and money.*

# Resources

## Green Infrastructure / Energy

### Sustainability

*What's it all about?*

Walkable cities like Somerville are more sustainable than suburban or rural communities, because residents tend to drive less and live in multifamily housing. But we can do even more to reduce our environmental footprint. Policies around solid waste, energy efficiency and storm-water management can be used to preserve our environment while lowering the cost of living for Somerville residents.



*Technology such as urban wind turbines may enable Somerville and its residents to save on energy costs*

*C. POLICY: The City and property owners should assist in reducing the urban heat island effect through the use of efficient roofing, reflection and shading choices.*

1. Action: Establish and maintain a strategic tree planting plan for the entire city.
2. Action: Utilize light colored pavement wherever feasible on all public projects.
3. Action: Increase permeable surfaces (green roofs, gardens, etc.) on public projects.
4. Action: Create an Urban Forestry Division to establish policy and protocol to plant, prune and take down public trees.
5. Action: Map priority tree planting areas through aerial analysis.
6. Action: Increase the amount of privately maintained greenery in the public realm.
7. Action: Start a private property tree adoption program to provide street tree benefits on residential land.

*D. POLICY: The City should maintain an updated, strategic, and pragmatic sustainability plan.*

1. Action: Implement codes and policies that reflect and promote the best available technologies for new development and redevelopment projects.

### The Urban Heat Island

The city can get hot in the summertime. Part of the reason is known as the “urban heat island effect”. Cities like Somerville have high amounts of paved surfaces and parking lots, which retain more heat than vegetated areas on warm days. This means that our residents have to pay more in electricity costs to cool their homes, and extreme heat can result in health hazards. To minimize the impacts of the heat island effect, the City and property owners can plant more trees, improve landscaping and invest in rooftop treatments.



# Resources

## Energy

**IX. Goal:** Ensure the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, of the best available technology, redundant, and supportive the desired level of future growth.

**A. POLICY:** *The City should identify funding to upgrade utilities in key economic development areas.*

1. Action: Plan for utility infrastructure that can support the density anticipated under the zoning ordinance.
2. Action: Consider creating District Improvement Financing programs to provide dedicated revenue streams to pay for subsurface utility work and streetscape design improvements.

**B. POLICY:** *The City should strongly encourage utility companies to provide services in a way that improves the urban environment and aesthetics, while meeting future needs.*

1. Action: Advocate for the elimination of double-poles prevalent throughout Somerville.
2. Action: Advocate for the placement of cable, television, telephones and fiber optic wires underground during major street reconstruction projects.
3. Action: As feasible, bury utility vaults and transformers.
4. Action: In Union Square, mitigate the presence of large utility transformers by screening, moving, or burying, if possible.

**C. POLICY:** *The City should prepare for the desired level of business and residential development in transformational areas, in terms of power and connectivity capabilities.*

1. Action: Ensure the best technologies are available to residents and businesses.
2. Action: Monitor and anticipate business trends and match them with potential development areas.
3. Action: Analyze the need for fiber-optic or other telecom and develop a citywide action plan to implement recommendations.

## Utilities

*What's it all about?*



*Utility upgrades can offer increased efficiency for providers, more reliability for customers and better aesthetics for neighborhoods.*



*Double telephone poles are a common sight in Somerville.  
Photo: Wickedlocal*

# Resources

## Emergency Services & Preparedness

### Preparedness

*What's it all about?*

Somerville's first responders are highly-trained professionals serving our community. The Comprehensive Plan will help ensure that the City can continue to provide the resources our fire, police and public works personnel need to keep Somerville residents and visitors safe, secure and prosperous.



- X. Goal: Ensure that the Somerville municipal government and residential and business communities are well prepared and equipped to address emergency situations.**
- A. Policy: Somerville public safety officials should ensure that emergency systems operate regionally.**
1. Action: Coordinate locally and regionally to implement effective plans to respond to all hazards, disasters and threats.
  2. Action: Work with regional partners to implement and test emergency systems.
- B. Policy: The City should expand informational resources regarding public safety to residents.**
1. Action: Provide information to community members and assistance to prepare and respond to emergencies.
  2. Action: Develop neighborhood partnerships to promote a safe and healthy community.
  3. Action: Utilize existing neighborhood and cultural organizations' communication networks and outreach methods to provide recommended actions in an emergency situation.
- C. Policy: The City should improve local health and safety facilities and programs.**
1. Action: Develop plans to renovate or rebuild the Central Fire Station and public safety building to meet anticipated future programming and spatial needs.
  2. Action: Improve outreach to local businesses on emergency preparedness, including code regulations for maintaining the public health and water supply.

# Resources: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## Artisan's Asylum

For decades, American cities have experienced a loss of manufacturing jobs. At the same time, there has been a boom in arts-related industries. Somerville is working to bridge the gap between these critical sectors of the economy, and the Artisan's Asylum is one of our great success stories.

### *Meeting a Community Need*

In 2010, a group of entrepreneurs established a shared studio space in Somerville's Brickbottom industrial district. Following an upfront investment of \$40,000 in heavy machinery, and a lease of a 1,000 square foot facility, they were able to offer memberships to the newly dubbed "Artisan's Asylum". Members would be able to use specialized equipment for craft manufacturing and arts purposes, including sewing, woodworking, metalworking and electronics.

### *Growing in Somerville*

The founders of Artisan's Asylum had planned for everything except the level of enthusiasm generated by their opening. There was so much demand for memberships that within weeks, the facility was expanded to 9,000 square feet of space in the same building. By 2011, Artisan's Asylum needed to expand again.

At this point, the Asylum could have left Somerville, taking its amazing community of entrepreneurs with it. The founders approached the City of Somerville for advice, and a unique partnership was born. The City had been working with the owners of a large industrial facility near Union Square that had become vacant in 2009. Playing the role of matchmaker, the City connected the landlord with the tenant, and in mid 2011 the Artisan's Asylum leased 25,000 square feet of space in the former Ames Envelope factory. The facility is now a hub of creativity for the entire area, offering classes and retail services in addition to its core workspace rentals.

### *Classes Offered at Artisan's Asylum*

TIG Welding  
MIG Welding  
Clothing Design  
Fire-Eating  
Intro to Robotics

Intro to Mechanical Design  
Intro to Sewing  
Forming Sheet Metal  
Precision Machining  
Millinery (Hat-Making)

Wood Sculpture  
Advanced Photography  
Arduino for Beginners  
Intro to Making Whiskey  
Silkscreening  
Urban Poultry 101

3D Printing  
Introduction to Electronics  
Circuit Board Design  
Animatronics  
Intro to Leather Working  
Metal Sculpture



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

# Resources: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



Photo: David Dionisio

## SCALE: Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences

The Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE) is a public school for adults, offering classes in the English language, adult basic education and GED programs. The program serves roughly 1,200 students every year, offering free courses in math, English and other subjects. It represents a critical community resource supporting educational and economic opportunity for all Somerville residents.

### *Community Partners*

Founded in 1972 as an extension of the Somerville Public Schools, all of SCALE's classes are offered free of charge. The program's annual operating budget is funded by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, the Somerville Public Schools, and various small grants including: Harvard University Bridge to Learning and Literacy Program, and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. SCALE follows the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) Adult and Community Learning Services Curriculum Framework Guidelines, conducts uniform and standardized assessment, and complies with state and federal data reporting requirements.

### *General Educational Development (GED) Test Center*

SCALE's GED Test Center is the second largest in Massachusetts, and has awarded more than 18,000 GED credentials. The Adult Diploma Program (ADP) has awarded over 1,700 diplomas since 1981. Additionally, the program partners with ACCION USA to offer free seminars in business management, marketing, lending and other skills critical to entrepreneurs. Other special initiatives include civic education, student leadership development, and transitioning to community colleges.

An incredible network of staff, volunteers and donors help to keep SCALE running. The program's professional staff are well-known or leadership in adult education, locally and statewide. Staff are supplemented by trained volunteers who are placed in classes. The Student Council, the SCALE Council, Somerville Adult Literacy Community Planning Partnership, and Friends of SCALE (501(c)3) provide policy input, marketing and fundraising assistance, and guidance for continuous program improvement.

# Resources: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## Ed Leathers Park

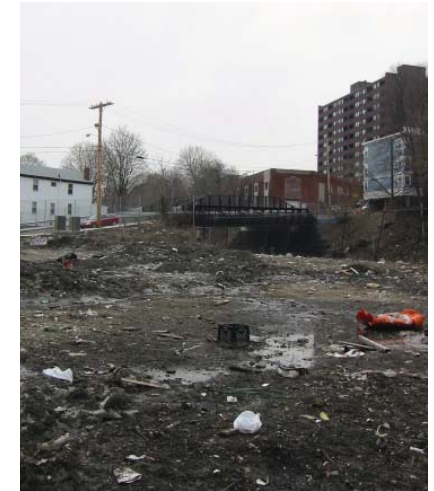
Edward L. Leathers Community Park, which opened in August 2008, is the exemplary result of active community participation, sound city planning, and creative “green” design. Situated on the former site of the old Kemp Nuts Factory, the one-acre park is located in one of the most economically- and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Somerville.

### *Community Vision for a New Park*

When the City acquired the Kemp Nut property in 1997, it began an extensive community outreach program to gauge residents’ preferences for how the space should be developed. The residents who attended the community meetings (many of them low-income immigrants who speak English as a second language) consistently opposed designs that would focus on active recreational uses such as basketball courts, baseball fields, skateboard parks, or playgrounds. Instead, the community preferred more “passive” green space in which residents could “escape” from the bustle of their urban surroundings to an open, tree-filled landscape. As a result of this public participation in the park design, the vision of a “green park” was pursued.

### *Design and Construction*

The new Edward L. Leathers Community Park includes a large grassy open space, sixty shade trees, hundreds of shrubs and groundcover plantings, a variety of play opportunities for children, and several walking paths which transition into surrounding neighborhoods and provide circulation within the park. Among the many notable design elements, there is an embankment along the rail corridor that serves as a viewing platform, a place to picnic, and a stage for community events and neighborhood cultural festivals. There is also an off-leash recreation area for dogs. Today the park is a hub of activity for the Gilman Square neighborhood, with a design that has truly reflected the desires of the dedicated residents who volunteered their time to improve our community.



*Former Kemp Nut Factory Site*



*Completed Ed Leathers Park*



## D. Transportation & Infrastructure



*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

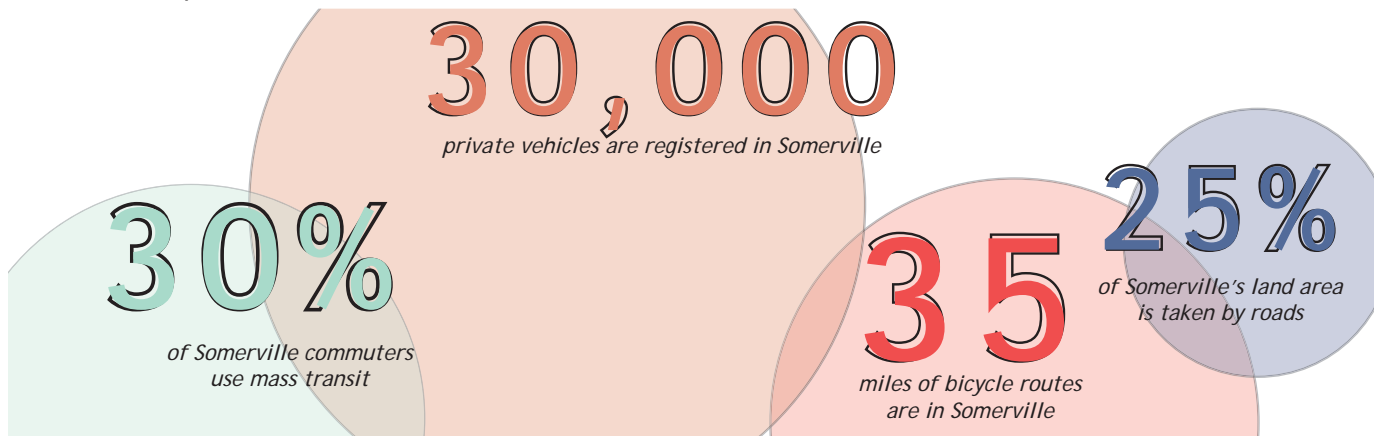


# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Introduction

### Introduction

Somerville's infrastructure provides the framework for how people interact with the city. It is how you transport yourself: via transit, walking, bicycling, or driving, as well as how you function once you get there: using utilities, water, and open space. The Comprehensive Plan will help our residents and policy-makers to maintain and improve these systems to support our continued success as a livable, green, and convenient place.



*Somerville's streets must provide for several major systems successfully: pedestrian, cyclist, vehicular traffic, parking (for cars and bikes), street trees, drainage, energy, and public transportation.*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Summary of Goals



### Introduction

Somerville's infrastructure provides the framework for how people interact with the city. It is how you move: via transit, walking, bicycling, or driving, as well as how you live once you get there: using utilities, water, and open space. Our goals will help our residents and policymakers to maintain and improve these systems to support our continued success as a livable, green, and convenient place.

- I. **Create** a mass transit network accessible to all parts of the city and all users, with innovative physical and informational improvements that allow for easy use and seamless intermodal connections.
- II. **Increase** active and alternative transportation options; reduce congestion and promote workplace-based policies and incentives for mode choice, work hours, and employment location.
- III. **Expand** bike and pedestrian culture by transforming existing infrastructure to accommodate for bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.
- IV. **Use** technology and infrastructure improvements to balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, private vehicles, and mass transit; reduce congestion and pollution; decrease road space dedicated to private automobiles, and unlock economic development potential while maintaining a fiscally sound road maintenance program.
- V. **Manage** parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner
- VI. **Connect** the city: retrofit, redesign, and build, as necessary, roads, bridges, paths and rights-of-way to improve transportation networks and link neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond.
- VII. **Provide** a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained, financially solvent and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.
- VIII. **Improve** stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage and support desired levels of future growth.
- IX. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems
- X. **Move** toward energy self-sufficiency by increasing supply of locally generated power and reducing per capita energy demand.
- XI. **Ensure** utility infrastructure is sufficient in capacity and quality, uses the best available technologies, has redundancy, and supports the desired level of future growth.

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## Mass Transit

- I. Goal: Create a mass transit network accessible to all parts of the city and to all users, with innovative physical and informational improvements that allow for easy use and seamless intermodal connections.
  - A. Policy: *The City should prioritize a connected regional transit network in decision-making around land use and development.*
    1. Action: Ensure that the MBTA Green Line Extension is completed as soon as possible.
    2. Action: Ensure that improvements to properties abutting existing street and rail rights-of-way are done in a manner that assures the viability of regional transportation projects.
    3. Action: Protect the right-of-way needed for the Urban Ring radial transit project.
    4. Action: Preserve the Fitchburg Commuter Rail right-of-way between the Union Square Green Line Station and Porter Square to allow for further extension of the Green Line or similar mass transit use in that location.
    5. Action: Advocate and plan for potential new Green Line stations at the Medford Street bridge/Pat's Tow and Inner Belt/Brickbottom areas of Somerville.
    6. Action: Ensure that the design of the Green Line station in Union Square does not preclude further extension to Porter Square and beyond.
    7. Action: Ensure that design of the Green Line station at College Avenue does not preclude further extension.
    8. Action: Work with the City of Medford to preserve the right-of-way along the Lowell commuter rail line between the College Avenue Green Line Station, Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway and the West Medford commuter rail station.

### Transit Service

*What's it all about?*

Somerville has many bus lines, but few options for mass transit. The planned Green Line, Orange Line and Urban Ring bus system are vital to the City's future; our residents, workers and business owners deserve better access to transit!



*At the Maxwell's Green project site, development plans complement the future Green Line and Community Path extensions as well as existing neighborhoods.*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Mass Transit

### Green Line

#### *What's it all about?*

The Green Line extension is an important opportunity to reconnect neighborhoods throughout the city that currently have no rapid transit access. Careful planning will ensure that it benefits as many residents as possible.



*The Green Line extension will give speedy service to areas of Somerville currently not served by the MBTA rapid transit/subway system.*

*B. Policy: The design of the Green Line Extension should reconnect the city by completing multi-modal connections and creating superb bus, bike and pedestrian access points.*

1. Action: Advocate for stations with layouts that provide safe and easy bus transfer points, including pull-ins in lieu of kiss-and-ride lots, wherever possible.
2. Action: Advocate for 360 degrees of access at each station, through safe, bright and accessible pedestrian connections.
3. Action: As street projects are undertaken near the Green Line stations, create efficient protected paths/networks to stations for pedestrians.
4. Action: Advocate for sufficient bike parking at each station, accounting for both quantity and quality.
5. Action: Ensure station areas include clear and attractive wayfinding elements that direct people using both images and words (in multiple languages if possible) and allow for dynamic messages.

*C. Policy: The design of the Green Line extension and other future transit projects should be leveraged to encourage sustainable, transit-oriented development (TOD) throughout the city.*

1. Action: Take advantage of multi-modal connection potential by promoting transit-oriented development at identified opportunity areas near new Green Line stations.
2. Action: Advocate for the Green Line extension to utilize environmentally sustainable design and construction practices that can offer environmental education and can be promoted by advocacy organizations as a "green destination".
3. Action: Incorporate active landscaping such as stormwater catchment and rain gardens into designs for the Green Line Stations and right-of-way.

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Mass Transit

*D. Policy: The City should advocate for improvements to the frequency of transit service, hours and user amenities along the MBTA bus and rail networks in Somerville.*

1. Action: Work with the MBTA to improve the bus network, taking into account north-south and cross-Somerville connections, access to the Green Line Extension (including potential redundancies) and future development areas, while emphasizing service to current transit-dependant customers.
2. Action: Advocate for increased wayfinding, amenities, and signage elements near and at bus stops.
3. Action: Advocate for real-time data on bus arrivals through mobile devices and at bus stops.
4. Action: Advocate for improvements to the comfort, access, safety and efficiency of the MBTA bus, subway, and rail system.
5. Action: Advocate for use of the best available technologies to improve bus efficiencies, including priority signalization to ensure bus service meets the MBTA bus reliability standards.
6. Action: Provide for bus pull-ins and/or bus lanes on city streets, where appropriate.
7. Action: Increase parking enforcement at bus stops.
8. Action: Paint bus boxes on streets to identify areas where parking is prohibited.
9. Action: Advocate for more frequent service on the Green Line.
10. Action: Consider advocating for a return of the commuter rail service, possibly including the restoration of stops in Somerville, especially those allowing transfer to the Green Line extension.
11. Action: Advocate for cleaner and more efficient buses, light rail, commuter rail and electric vehicles.
12. Action: Advocate for equipment updates to the MBTA commuter rail, including electrification and clean diesel to mitigate air pollution and reduce noise impacts of near rail rights-of-way.

## Bus Service

*What's it all about?*

Thousands of Somerville residents ride buses every day, and bus service will continue to be important even after the Green Line and Orange Line open. Better bus routes, new technology, such as traffic signal overrides and real-time bus tracking on electronic signs and mobile phones are all critical to improving bus service in Somerville.



*This Silver Line stop in downtown Boston includes an enhanced shelter, clear signs, and a brightly painted bus lane.*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Alternative Transportation - Mode Choice & Lifestyle

### Alternatives

*What's it all about?*

Traveling by foot, bike, and transit is good for the environment, but it's also good for residents and businesses! If fewer people drive, the city will have less traffic, cleaner air, healthier children, safer and more attractive streets, and better accessibility for those who do not or cannot drive.



*Walk-Ride Days publicize efforts to get Somerville residents out of their cars and interacting with their neighbors.*

**II. Goal: Increase active and alternative transportation options; reduce congestion and promote workplace-based policies and incentives for mode choice, work hours, and employment location.**

**A. Policy: The City should implement transportation policies and programs that reduce automobile use.**

1. Action: Support Walk-Ride Days and the goal of shifting mode choice to more active and sustainable means by having the City sponsor/promote the event and encourage local elected officials and municipal employees to participate.
2. Action: Encourage the establishment of Transportation Management Associations (TMA's) for business areas underserved by transit and new development areas.
3. Action: Encourage expansion of the Tufts transportation system and make it more useful for residents; encourage the addition of a stop at Teele Square.
4. Action: Identify and implement incentives to decrease vehicle use at municipal offices and schools, such as providing discounted MBTA passes, charging for parking, and making showers and lockers available to employees who wish to commute actively.
5. Action: Promote alternative transportation "commuter challenges" for private entities while also participating as a municipality.
6. Action: Continue to assist with elder transportation options, including existing services (MBTA's The Ride program and SCM Community Transportation) and other programs as they evolve.
7. Action: Explore options to encourage walking and cycling to school, including safety initiatives and implementing remote vehicular drop-off points at Somerville Public Schools.
8. Action: Encourage new commercial/retail development to offer delivery services, especially bicycle delivery, thereby reducing the need for vehicular trips.
9. Action: Explore using pedal trucks for some deliveries or municipal services.
10. Action: Explore subsidized bikeshare pass programs for municipal employees and City businesses.
11. Action: Consider zoning incentives for businesses that implement employee-based programs such as

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Alternative Transportation - Mode Choice & Lifestyle

discounted MBTA Charlie Cards, parking policies that discourage single-occupancy commuting trips to work and/or provide facilities like showers and bike storage that accommodate alternatives modes.

### *B. Policy: The City should support vehicle sharing programs.*

1. Action: Support regional efforts to implement the Hubway bikeshare system, and implement the project citywide in Somerville as soon as possible.
2. Action: Explore policies and regulations that support ride share programs (pay-per-hour carpooling or communal car usage) as both commercial enterprises and nonprofit programs.
3. Action: Support the efforts of local car sharing businesses such as ZipCar, iCar or Relay Rides by providing their information to new residents and at City Hall.
4. Action: Consider incentives for large-scale residential developments to make on-site spaces available to car share operators.

## Bikeshare

### *What's it all about?*

The Hubway system launched in Boston in July 2011 and will launch in Somerville in 2012. The system is planned to include 5,000 bikes at 300 kiosks in Somerville, Cambridge, Boston and Brookline. The bikes offer quick, inexpensive options for round trip and one-way transportation around town, and can be quicker and cheaper than driving and parking.

## Vehicle Sharing

The cost of owning an automobile grows every year, and more and more Somerville residents who do not need to drive every day are discovering that car sharing makes financial sense. One service estimates its members save an average of \$500 per month by not owning a car, due to savings on purchase/lease payments, gas, maintenance, insurance, and parking. Car sharing also frees up parking spaces, which creates opportunities for better bus stops, bicycle parking, electric vehicle stations and other creative uses!



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

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Bikes & Pedestrians

### Pedestrian Safety

*What's it all about?*

Investing in better crosswalks, signs and traffic signals will increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Our streets will also become more attractive and inviting, which is good for property values and local businesses.



*A strong pedestrian network provides both safe crossings and a pleasant experience.*

**III. Goal: Expand bike and pedestrian modes by transforming existing infrastructure to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.**

**A. Policy: The City should systematically evaluate its bike and pedestrian networks to ensure safe and efficient travel.**

1. Action: Develop a pedestrian plan which prioritizes improvement areas and makes Somerville a world-class walking city; include implementation strategies and timeline.
2. Action: Ensure pedestrian safety issues are addressed in areas surrounding schools and parks.
3. Action: Develop a bicycle plan, including implementation strategies and a timeline, focused on making Somerville a world-class bicycling city.
4. Action: Identify the most dangerous pedestrian areas and prioritize improvements to these areas.

**B. Policy: The City should ensure that every transportation project results in improved pedestrian access.**

1. Action: Ensure all public streets have sidewalks and crosswalks that are well-maintained, safe, and accessible at all times of year.
2. Action: Ensure or exceed ADA compliance on street reconstruction projects.
3. Action: Implement the most appropriate forms of pedestrian signal timing (concurrent, exclusive, or leading pedestrian interval) as determined by site-specific vehicular conditions and pedestrian behavior.
4. Action: Ensure decisions regarding paving materials account for mobility of those in wheelchairs or with other disabilities.
5. Action: Continue to implement bump-outs and other traffic-calming measures to allow for greater pedestrian movement across major thoroughfares.
6. Action: Consider expanding the mission of the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee to include pedestrian issues, or consider a separate Pedestrian Committee



# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Bikes & Pedestrians

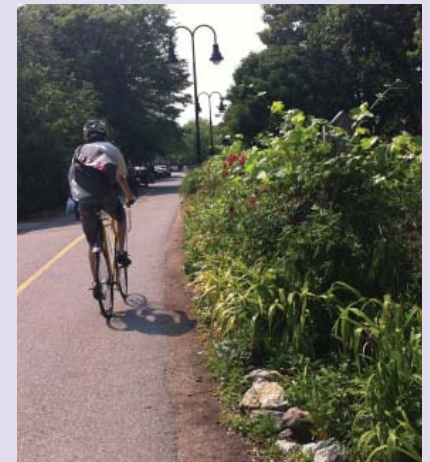
### *C. Policy: The City should preserve rights-of-way for auto-free, multi-use paths.*

1. Action: Ensure construction of Community Path Extension from Lowell Street to the Inner Belt area, concurrent with Green Line construction or sooner, if possible.
2. Action: Ensure the design and construction of a multi-use bridge from Inner Belt to North Point to support the Community Path Extension, the Urban Ring, and vehicular circulation.
3. Action: Preserve and plan for a multi-use path, parallel to and alongside when possible, the Fitchburg commuter rail line from Brickbottom to the Porter Square station to improve connectivity between Union Square and Porter Square.
4. Action: Preserve and plan for a multi-use path from Assembly Square to the Inner Belt along the Orange Line right-of-way to connect with the Community Path Extension.
5. Action: Coordinate with the City of Medford to promote a multi-use path along the Lowell commuter rail line from the terminus of the Green Line Extension to the West Medford commuter rail stop, to connect the commuter rail system to the Green Line.
6. Action: Advocate for completion of the Alewife Brook and Mystic River path network in coordination with the state's Mystic River Master Plan, with projects including constructing a boardwalk under Wellington Bridge/Route 28; building a public path over or parallel to the Amelia Earhart Dam to connect Assembly Square with Everett/Boston; and extending the path that currently ends at Draw 7 Park to Everett and Charlestown.
7. Action: Create connections from Somerville's neighborhoods to existing and future multi-use paths using wider sidewalks, bump-outs, and connections to nearby parks.
8. Action: Consider a Brickbottom-Inner Belt connection and/or multi-use path connection to Grand Junction rail-trail if plans move forward in Cambridge.

### Community Path

*What's it all about?*

The Somerville Community Path is a neighborhood amenity, a vital open space and an important transportation route. The path currently runs from the Cambridge city line to Cedar Street, and is planned to extend through Somerville all the way to North Station in downtown Boston.



*Community Path near Davis Square*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Bikes & Pedestrians

### Bicycle Facilities

#### *What's it all about?*

Somerville residents have demanded better bicycle facilities, and the City has responded. Since 2009, more than 30 miles of bike lanes and shared lanes have been created on our streets, and new bicycle parking facilities have been installed in every Somerville neighborhood.



*Beacon Street is a bicycle highway. This lane was opened in 2008 and extended in 2010.*

#### *D. Policy: The City and local businesses should increase bicycle parking.*

1. Action: Provide bike racks in all major road reconstruction projects, at an average of one rack per 200 linear feet.
2. Action: Establish and promote a Bike Rack Request Program.
3. Action: Ensure that the number of bike parking spaces required in the Zoning Ordinance is adequate to meet demand and not tied to the number of car parking spaces required.
4. Action: Evaluate the pilot On-Street Bike Parking Program, allowing multiple bicycles to be parked in the space of on-street vehicular parking spaces.

#### *E. Policy: The City should improve on-street bike infrastructure, prioritizing bike lanes over sharrows.*

1. Action: Regularly review parking demand and investigate new street design strategies to identify opportunities and accommodate bikes.
2. Action: Increase safety of bikers via signage and public awareness campaigns, alerting cyclists to rules of the road and safe bicycle operating procedures.
3. Action: Evaluate and promote the latest advances in bike infrastructure to determine applicability to Somerville streets, including cycletracks, contra-flow bike lanes and painted bicycle boxes at intersections that allow bicycles in front of stopped traffic.
4. Action: Continue to support the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee through meetings with relevant City departments, creation and review of its annual bike report, and assistance with publicity campaigns.
5. Action: Ensure safe usability of bike infrastructure by enforcing no parking, double-parking, or driving in bike lanes.
6. Action: Develop a comprehensive street painting plan.

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Roads/Transportation Network

IV. Goal: Use technology and infrastructure improvements to balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and mass transit; reduce congestion and pollution; decrease road space dedicated to private automobiles, and unlock economic development potential while maintaining a fiscally sound road maintenance program.

A. Policy: *The City should efficiently manage traffic flow to reduce pollution and congestion.*

1. Action: Provide synchronized light systems that allow for coordinated vehicular movement and throughput at desired speed together with safe and convenient pedestrian crossings; evaluate the use of pre-emptive pedestrian signals and bus-triggered signals.
2. Action: Evaluate existing traffic and reduce congestion by improving stop lights, pedestrian crosswalks, signage, and enforcement.
3. Action: Evaluate evening light-cycles and traffic patterns to determine more appropriate signal lengths or the potential of turning the cycle to blinking lights in order to reduce idling and improve traffic flow.
4. Action: Support innovative experiments to test new strategies for improving traffic flow.
5. Action: Plan for local infrastructure to accommodate the latest car technologies, such as plug-in electric hybrid vehicles.
6. Action: Expand the enforcement of the anti-idling laws throughout Somerville and lead by example.
7. Action: Work with the Commonwealth and bordering municipalities to coordinate regional computerized traffic signals and upgrades when feasible.

B. Policy: *The City should continuously strive to increase safety for all users on its roadways.*

1. Action: Create and promote a 'share the road' educational safety campaign targeting all modes of travel.
2. Action: Develop and maintain a five-year plan for sidewalk and street repair and reconstruction projects.

## Intersections

*What's it all about?*

Somerville has lots of complex intersections that were not designed for modern traffic. To improve safety and convenience for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, the City and the state must work together on improvements of roadways and intersections, including the use of traffic signals with modern timing technology.



# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Roads/Transportation Network

### Traffic Calming

*What's it all about?*

Most of Somerville's roads are small-scale urban streets that are shared by many users. Traffic calming refers to engineering and design efforts that improve the appearance of the street and make it safer for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Common strategies include narrowing lanes, widening sidewalks, and bumping out crosswalks.



*A bumpout makes visibility easier for pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists, adds green space, and shortens crossing lengths.*

3. Action: Advocate for the passage of a 25 mph speed limit as the given, unmarked, speed limit on all city streets, lowering it from the current 30 mph speed limit.
4. Action: Implement traffic calming measures as roads are being reconstructed to slow vehicles.
5. Action: Ensure the enforcement of traffic violations in order to promote safety on the streets.
6. Action: Evaluate whether using automated speed cameras and red light cameras at intersections is effective for making streets safer for all users; if so, work with the state to allow their usage.
7. Action: Support cycling safety campaigns, including the promotion of helmets and lights.
8. Action: Ensure that snow continues to be plowed adequately on all streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths, including State-owned and managed bridges.
9. Action: Increase enforcement of snow-removal violations on sidewalks.
10. Action: Continue to support creative partnerships in snow removal, such as partnering teens with elderly residents.
11. Action: Store road salt for de-icing in an environmentally secure way.
12. Action: Ensure that sensitive environmental areas are not being treated with road salt or other de-icing materials.

### Vehicle Idling

Breathing the exhaust from car and truck engines is bad for our residents' health. One way to reduce exposure to vehicle exhaust is to limit idling. State law limits vehicle idling to no more than five minutes, with exceptions for vehicles being serviced, vehicles making deliveries that need to keep their engines running (refrigerated trucks, for example), and vehicles operating accessories (such as power lifts). The City of Somerville is currently working with state officials on public education around the impacts of idling.

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Parking

V. Goal: Manage parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner to balance transportation, economic development and residential goals.

A. Policy: *The City should preserve or create adequate parking to accommodate local needs, but not to the detriment of other modes of travel.*

1. Action: Develop a detailed parking plan for the City, customizing appropriate policies for specific areas that take into account access to rapid transit stations, business districts, and other factors.
2. Action: Inventory existing public and private parking resources and centralize data for a greater understanding of parking supply in Somerville.
3. Action: Ensure that adequate handicap parking is provided.
4. Action: Reduce surface parking and promote aesthetically pleasing parking structures to serve multiple users; ensure that parking structures are architecturally compatible with their location and pedestrian friendly in design, including active uses on the ground floor where appropriate.
5. Action: Where feasible and practicable, convert existing parking spaces into other uses such as bike parking, sidewalk expansions, or green spaces.
6. Action: Prioritize parking to benefit the most users within the smallest amount of space, such as shared vehicle programs, carpooling spaces, on street bike parking and bike share program.
7. Action: Review the zoning ordinance to establish parking regulations that take into account proximity to transit and urban character, enhance the public transportation investment and minimize auto use in these areas.
8. Action: Reserve parking spaces for car sharing vehicles, hybrid vehicles, or plug-in electric vehicles.
9. Action: Maintain a public outreach initiative to explain parking policies and how parking management strategies are being used to reach desired objectives.

### Parking Policy

*What's it all about?*

Technology is changing the way cities manage parking. In recent years, Somerville has worked with leading researchers to study parking issues, and to create smart regulations based on local data and economic development needs. The City will continue to evolve its policies and procedures to best serve residents, businesses and visitors.



# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Parking

### Parking Supply

#### *What's it all about?*

Somerville has roughly four square miles of land, and our roads take up one square mile. To make the most of what we have, parking supply should be managed strategically for residents and businesses while also ensuring that Somerville remains bicycle and pedestrian friendly.



*Parking Day, an international event, explores alternative uses for the space typically used as parking spots. What would you like to see at the side of the street? A green sitting area? A musical performance? A food vendor?*

*B. Policy: The City should pursue the best available technologies when revisiting parking in commercial zones.*

1. Action: Ensure parking kiosk signs can safely double as bike parking racks so as there is no reduction in bike parking as parking meter technologies change.
2. Action: Regularly review best practices for parking policies, pricing structure, and new technologies.

*C. Policy: The City should continue to reevaluate parking policy to reflect the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.*

1. Action: Study the use of visitor and residential permit parking policy to evaluate any changes to policy; consider amending the City's parking permit options to extend visitor parking limits.
2. Action: Identify and implement demand-pricing measures and undertake other efforts to reduce demand for resident parking permits, including the evaluation of price increases.
3. Action: Incentivize residents to give up their residential parking permits by offering discounted transit, car-sharing, or other active transportation options.
4. Action: Evaluate a parking policy that requires vehicles to be moved every forty-eight hours, thus avoiding unnecessary pollution and energy consumption caused by unnecessarily moving vehicles.
5. Action: Amend the Business Parking Permit Program to allow greater flexibility to business owners, potentially allowing those who own a business in Somerville to park throughout the day.
6. Action: Allow customers to purchase parking permits and visitor passes online.
7. Action: Make parking permits available at City Hall, DPW and the Public Safety Building.
8. Action: Maintain a high-level of customer service related to parking, including readily available parking cards, more parking kiosks with multiple payment methods, and easy access to permits, payments and policies.
9. Action: Ensure that parking enforcement is accurate, and the appeals process is clear and efficient.

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Highways, Bridges, Rail Rights-of-Way

VI. Goal: Connect the city: retrofit, redesign, and build, as necessary, roads, bridges, paths and rights-of-ways to improve transportation networks and link neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond.

A. Policy: *The City should improve transportation infrastructure in areas identified for new development, and create inviting streets for all transportation modes.*

1. Action: Design and construct an alternative to the 'tubes' in the Inner Belt that allows for greater vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the district.
2. Action: Increase access to the Brickbottom area by connecting it to the Inner Belt beneath the future Green Line right-of-way.
3. Action: Study options to eliminate the barrier created by McGrath Highway.
4. Action: Plan and develop a transportation network in the Boynton Yards area that allows for greater connectivity to surrounding districts and within Boynton Yards.
5. Action: Complete and implement the Union Square Transportation Plan.

B. Policy *The City should advocate for infrastructure projects that mitigate the adverse impacts of highway infrastructure, with particular attention to providing greater access and connectivity to pedestrians and bicyclists and addressing health and quality of life impacts experienced by abutters.*

1. Action: Advocate for the conversion of McGrath Highway into a surface-level, tree-lined urban boulevard, crossable by pedestrians at every intersection, with accommodations provided for bicyclists.
2. Action: Improve existing crossings under Interstate 93 to address pedestrian and bicycle safety and enhance the attractiveness of areas including the Kensington Underpass, Lombardi Street, McGrath Highway, and Wheatland Street.
3. Action: Identify a long-term strategy for the design of the Interstate 93 / McGrath Highway interchange and ensure any approved development does not block the vision.
4. Action: Create an additional access point under Interstate 93 to better connect East Somerville

### Reconnecting Neighborhoods

*What's it all about?*

Somerville's highway and railroad corridors divide our neighborhoods and prevent residents from enjoying open spaces and supporting local businesses. Improving pedestrian and bicycle connections over, under and through these barriers is vital to reclaiming Somerville's neighborhoods, growing our economy and improving quality of life.



*Current connection under McGrath Highway at Somerville Avenue*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Highways, Bridges, Rail Rights-of-Way

### Grounding McGrath

#### *What's it all about?*

The McGrath Highway was designed with the look and feel of an expressway, but it actually functions with no better efficiency than an urban boulevard. Our residents have made it clear that the elevated sections of McGrath should be grounded, and the roadway should be redesigned. The state's current Grounding McGrath study is an important step toward knitting our historic neighborhood fabric back together.



*Concept design of Washington Street intersection, courtesy Sarah Spicer.*

with Assembly Square.

5. Action: Install sidewalks along Mystic Avenue near the McGrath Highway / Interstate 93 intersection, and ensure crosswalks reflect how pedestrians use the area, particularly to and from Foss Park.
  6. Action: Work with the Commonwealth to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across and along Route 16/Alewife Brook Parkway/Mystic Valley Parkway.
  7. Action: Improve the connections over and access along Mystic Avenue/Route 38, providing greater comfort and access to pedestrians and bicyclists, and safer conditions for vehicles.
  8. Action: Ensure bicyclists have a safe and clearly marked way through the McGrath Highway / Interstate 93 intersection.
  9. Action: Encourage the City of Boston and MassDOT to improve the conditions between Broadway in East Somerville and Sullivan Square, providing adequate lighting and safety standards for the Somerville residents using the MBTA Station at Sullivan Square.
  10. Action: Explore the possibility of a connection from the MBTA Station at Sullivan Square to the residential neighborhood in East Somerville, near Perkins Street.
  11. Action: Investigate taking control of the Somerville portions of Route 28, Route 16, and Mystic Avenue.
  12. Action: Urge MassDOT and USDOT to fully mitigate the impact of Interstate 93, including air and noise pollution.
- C. Policy: The City should unlock its current rail-bound land areas by creating or improving connections through, under or over existing barriers.*
1. Action: Connect Inner Belt Road to North Point with a bridge designed to accommodate vehicles, the Urban Ring bus rapid transit system, and the Community Path.
  2. Action: Connect the Inner Belt to Brickbottom in at least one place south of Washington Street and north of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail right of way.
  3. Action: Ensure the pedestrian connection under the Fitchburg commuter rail at Sacramento Street is safe and well maintained.



# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Highways, Bridges, Rail Rights-of-Way

*D. Policy: The City should advocate for regular bridge safety inspections by state and federal agencies.*

1. Action: Require an annual update on the condition of bridges in Somerville.

**VII. Goal: Provide a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained, financially solvent and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.**

*A. Policy: The City should maintain an updated, strategic, and pragmatic water master plan.*

1. Action: Promote water conservation through educational campaigns and incentives and promotion of technologies such as low-flow household appliances and efficient irrigation systems.
2. Action: Study and consider implementation of a tiered-pricing system for water usage to encourage judicious use of water, potentially including a higher per gallon price as volume per capita increases.
3. Action: Meter and monitor water use in all public buildings.
4. Action: Encourage the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to conduct a leak detection program in Somerville, and create a strategy to fix any leaks.

### Somerville's Infrastructure History

Roadways and railroads built in previous generations still have a profound effect on Somerville's development. The Fitchburg and Lowell rail lines made industry possible in Boynton Yards, Union Square, and the Inner Belt. McGrath Highway and Interstate 93 divided residential neighborhoods in Somerville, and encouraged the construction of suburban shopping plazas. Today, Somerville must reassess its relationship with rail lines and highways. How can they be changed to serve Somerville's residents as well as the metropolitan region?



### Inner Belt and Brickbottom

*What's it all about?*

Somerville residents want to grow our local economy, and the Inner Belt and Brickbottom districts can be walkable, funky urban neighborhoods that support job creation with a mix of daytime and nighttime activity. Pursuing this vision will require reconnecting these neighborhoods across the rail lines and highways that slice through them today.



# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Sewer & Stormwater

### Sewer Separation

*What's it all about?*

Somerville has an old “combined” sewer system that often puts sewage and stormwater in the same pipes. This means that during storms, the system can overflow, spilling raw sewage into our rivers or even backing up sewer pipes into homes. To minimize these risks, cities can improve infrastructure to separate stormwater from sewer water. Low-cost stormwater management plans can also minimize the need for expensive construction by limiting the amount of storm drainage entering the system.

**VIII. Goal: Improve stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage systems and support desired levels of future growth.**

**A. Policy: The City should provide a stormwater and sewer system that is able to accommodate extreme events without flooding or causing combined sewer overflows (CSOs).**

1. Action: Continue to separate sewer and stormwater drains by working with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency and others to develop strategies and secure funding.
2. Action: Develop and adopt a comprehensive Action Plan that will produce a stormwater system with the capacity to accommodate flooding, greater frequency and intensity of storms, and rising sea levels.
3. Action: Establish and ensure new development follows stormwater management guidelines.
4. Action: Investigate the potential cost and benefit of installing pumping stations at key areas to alleviate flooding issues.
5. Action: Ensure all catch-basins are cleaned on a regular and sufficient basis.

### Somerville Sewers

Somerville’s collection system consists of 62 miles of sewer, 68 miles of combined sewers, and 35 miles of storm drains. The pipes range in diameter from six inches to more than three feet. The largest pipes serve what were historically rivers and streams, such as the Millers River in Union Square and the Tannery Brook near Davis Square. Our sewer system drains more than 150 million gallons of stormwater and wastewater every day, with most of this flowing to a headworks in Chelsea and from there to the regional treatment plant in Boston Harbor.



*Deer Island in Boston Harbor*

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Sewer & Stormwater

*B. Policy: The City should create incentives and zoning regulations to infiltrate stormwater and to limit stormwater runoff from entering the wastewater system.*

1. Action: Establish a permitting requirement for increased impervious surface for projects in residential districts that do not otherwise require a zoning or building permit.
2. Action: Heighten enforcement of non-compliance with sewer and stormwater regulations.
3. Action: Create incentive or educational programs for green roofs, rainwater catchment systems, rain gardens and other stormwater re-use options.
4. Action: Ensure that any new City projects include provisions for water and drainage runoff.
5. Action: Make rain barrels available at more frequent intervals and advertise broadly.
6. Action: Design street reconstruction and renovation projects to capture and release stormwater runoff slowly, where feasible.
7. Action: Design and install landscaped medians to increase pervious surface and capture runoff where possible.
8. Action: Continue to increase the number of healthy street trees and, where possible, incorporate climate-appropriate vegetation to slow velocity of stormwater runoff on both private and public lands.
9. Action: Consider designing and implementing systems to harvest rainwater and collect stormwater for irrigation use in new parks and other public projects.
10. Action: Investigate the potential use of grey water systems in public and private projects.

### Stormwater Runoff

*What's it all about?*

Stormwater runoff is bad for taxpayers and bad for the environment. When water goes into storm drains, we pay for it to travel all the way to the regional sewage treatment plant in Boston Harbor. We can save money and energy by adding pervious surfaces to our driveways and yards, instead of impervious surfaces like concrete and asphalt.



*Pervious pavers use materials that allow water to percolate through.*

# Transportation & Infrastructure: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



*Dedication of the Beacon Street bike lanes in 2010.*

City of Somerville Bicycle + Pedestrian Counting Program

**CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!**

APRIL 26, 27, 28 + MAY 3, 4, 5, 2011

Spend an hour (or two, or three!) counting pedestrians and bicyclists at an intersection in Somerville. Results will be tabulated and shared in an effort to better understand the trends in bicycle and pedestrian travel patterns. Help make Somerville a better place to take and walk!

New volunteers are expected to come to a short training, held Thursday, April 21 from 5:00 - 5:30 pm at Somerville City Hall (93 Highland Avenue, 3rd Floor Conference Room). To sign up and for more information contact Kathleen Ziegenfuss at 617.622.6600 ext. 2529 or kziegenfuss@somerville.gov. Thank you for your participation!

*Enthusiastic Somerville residents have volunteered to collect data on bicycle traffic around the city.*

## *Somerville: Bicycle-Friendly Community*

For many years, the Boston metro region had a reputation as a difficult area in which to bicycle. Over the last decade, Somerville has implemented a series of bicycle infrastructure improvements and policy innovations that have transformed our city into one of the most bike-friendly communities in Massachusetts. The positive impacts include reduced traffic congestion on our streets, improved air quality in our neighborhoods, healthier residents, and more vibrant business districts.

One major reason for this change is the City's commitment to on-road bicycle routes. In 2010, the City added ten miles of pavement markings to improve sharing of the road between bikes and cars. In 2011, eleven more miles were added, bringing the total to more than thirty miles. These projects are informed by survey data collected every spring and fall to better understand bike traffic in our neighborhoods. In 2011, the League of American Bicyclists recognized our progress, naming Somerville a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community.

Of course, many cyclists are looking for off-street routes for recreation or commuting. Today, the Somerville Community Path provides a direct link from West Somerville neighborhoods to the Davis Square MBTA station, and to the eleven-mile Minuteman Commuter Bikeway that runs west to Lexington and Concord. The Community Path is currently being extended east from Cedar Street to Lowell Street, and plans are in the works to extend it all the way through Somerville into downtown Boston.

The City has made noteworthy improvements regarding access to bicycles, bike parking, and bike safety, and is committed to continuing support for each. The Hubway bike sharing system is scheduled to open in Somerville in 2012. Bike parking is more convenient than ever, with bike racks and corrals installed in every neighborhood of the City. And to ensure that both cyclists and drivers know the rules of the road, the City has introduced a bike and pedestrian safety campaign combining education and enforcement.

# Transportation & Infrastructure: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## *Assembly Square: Creative Infrastructure Finance*

Somerville is about to benefit from the first new MBTA station to be built in twenty-five years. This remarkable investment in the future of our city and the regional economy would not be underway without a groundbreaking set of financial tools created by federal, state and municipal officials, in partnership with private developers and engaged Somerville residents.

For more than twenty years, our community has been planning for the revitalization Assembly Square. This 150-acre waterfront industrial district is isolated from the rest of Somerville by elevated highways, and although one rapid transit line and two commuter rail lines run through it, there are no stops to serve the area. Somerville residents and business owners established a shared vision for Assembly Square in a 1996 master plan, imagining a walkable, active neighborhood that featured parkland along the Mystic River and a mix of residential and commercial uses. But in order to realize this vision, hundreds of millions of dollars in roadway, sewer and stormwater improvements would be needed.

The City, the Commonwealth and Assembly Square's master developer entered into a unique sharing of financial responsibilities for these infrastructure costs. Major elements of the project financing include:

- Infrastructure Investment Incentive program
- Growth District Initiative
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- District Improvement Financing

As of early 2012, a new road and sewer network for the district has been completed. The first new buildings are under construction, as is the new MBTA Orange Line rapid transit station at Assembly Square. The partnership between public agencies and private developers will ultimately produce more than one billion dollars of private investment, thousands of new housing units for Somerville families, thousands of new jobs for the Massachusetts economy, and a world-class riverfront destination for residents, employees and visitors.



*Assembly Row is under construction, and will produce more than ten acres of publicly-accessible open space. Image courtesy of Federal Realty Investment Trust.*

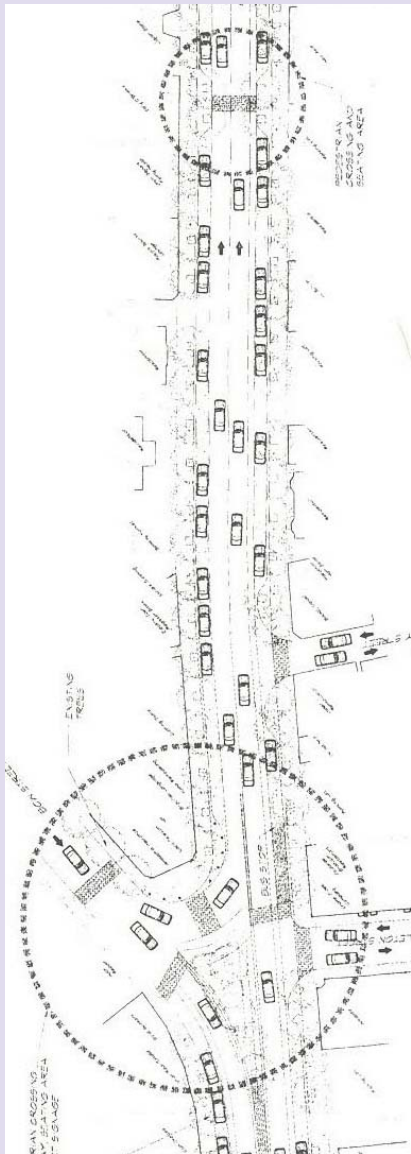


*Progressive design guidelines will ensure a high-quality pedestrian experience. Image courtesy of Federal Realty Investment Trust.*

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

# Transportation & Infrastructure: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



## *Somerville Avenue: Achieving Multiple Community Benefits*

When older cities like Somerville plan to rehabilitate aging underground utilities, opportunities often exist to do more than just fix the pipes. The recent upgrades to Somerville Avenue illustrate how we can plan to achieve multiple objectives in a single infrastructure project.

Somerville Avenue is an historic thoroughfare, stretching more than a mile from Union Square west to Porter Square. The road's history reaches back to the days of the American Revolution, and many of Somerville's earliest industries thrived along it during the nineteenth century. One of Somerville's most important sewer lines runs underneath Somerville Avenue, draining many of the neighborhoods around Teele Square, Davis Square and Spring Hill. In 2006, the City and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority began the process of upgrading this critical drainage infrastructure.

City officials knew that such a large project represented a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the community to achieve many goals simultaneously. Partnering with the Massachusetts Highway Department, the City prepared designs for traffic improvements at key intersections. Public works staff collaborated with regional utility providers such as NSTAR to bury electric lines in underground vaults. Business advocates helped plan for pedestrian improvements that would make Somerville Avenue more attractive for shoppers, such as widened sidewalks, new street trees and ornamental lighting. Bicycle advocates ensured that the new roadway would include dedicated bike lanes in both directions. Somerville's arts community contributed public art installation, benches and new wayfinding signs.

In 2010, the \$7 million streetscape and deep utility project was officially completed, and a new chapter in Somerville Avenue's proud history began. A series of street festivals known as "SomerStreets" has helped to celebrate and publicize the diverse benefits of the Somerville Avenue project.

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# E. Housing



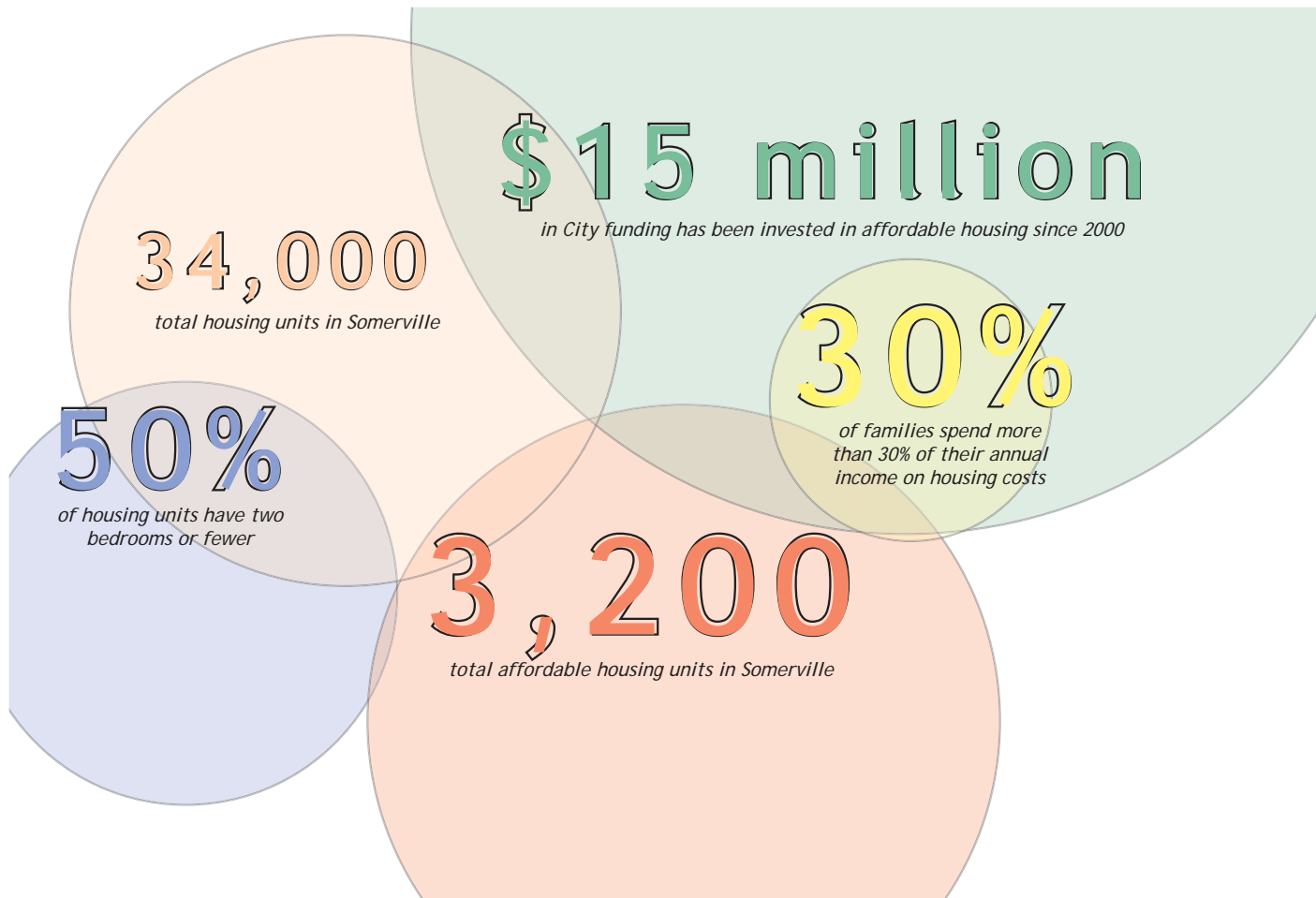
*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*



# Housing Introduction

## Introduction

Somerville's tight-knit residential fabric makes it a community of neighborhoods, and of neighbors. From apartment buildings to triple-deckers, single family homes to condominiums, Somerville's foundation is the structures we live in: our housing. The Comprehensive Plan provides a foundation for efforts to ensure that Somerville's housing stock continues to meet the needs of existing and future residents.



The variety of housing choices in Somerville provides an opportunity for all residents to find a place to call home.

# Housing Introduction



## Summary of Goals:

- I. **Preserve** and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups.
- II. **Promote** mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented development to provide new housing and employment options.
- III. **Mitigate** displacement of low and moderate income residents by retaining the existing affordable housing stock and by creating policies that allow residents to remain in their homes in the face of a changing city.
- IV. **Create** a diversity of programs that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.
- V. **Expand** financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.



# Housing Choice

I. Goal: Preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups.

A. Policy: The City should adopt programs and regulations to increase affordable housing, in part through additional affordable housing creation.

1. Action: Conduct a "Housing Needs Assessment" every five years to determine the current and future housing requirements of the varied population of the city.
2. Action: Identify ways the current Zoning Ordinance can be amended to promote more affordable housing construction in proximity to transit stations, along transportation corridors, and in areas of the City that are prioritized for growth.
3. Action: Incentivize the development of units of all sizes to encourage residents to stay in the community by considering: a) reducing parking requirements; b) removing the existing connection between the number of parking spaces and the number of bedrooms; and c) clearly delineating where multi-unit housing should be located.
4. Action: Encourage housing units to be designed in accordance with universal design guidelines for visitability and adaptability.

## Universal Design

"Universal Design" is a term that refers to ensuring that buildings, streets, sidewalks and parks are accessible to all people, both with and without disabilities. Examples of universal design include wide hallways and doors that allow an adequate turning radius for wheelchairs, door handles with levers rather than those that require grasping, and stairless entries and smooth transitions between rooms. Designers also think about "visitability" meaning that homes to be accessible for anyone to visit, regardless of who lives in the unit. The final element of Universal Design is "adaptability", meaning that homes should be built so that adding additional accessibility features is possible and not cost-prohibitive.

## Housing Needs Assessment

*What's it all about?*

Good plans require good information. To get an accurate picture of current housing conditions, the City relies on a Housing Needs Assessment. This study tracks housing supply and demand, costs for renters and owners, physical conditions of housing stock, and special needs for elderly, disabled and homeless populations. The most recent Housing Needs Assessment was completed in 2005; an update will begin in 2012.



# Housing Choice

## Inclusionary Housing

### *What's it all about?*

In 1990, the City adopted an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance to help create permanently affordable housing using private funding. Under this ordinance, new development projects with eight or more housing units must reserve 12.5% of the units for families with low or moderate income. Units built through the Ordinance are offered for sale or rent to income-eligible households at below market rates and are kept affordable forever.

5. Action: Provide a menu of options to fulfill inclusionary housing requirements that takes into account unit size, affordability and tenure type, and promotes the development of affordable housing units based on the results of the updated Housing Needs Assessment.
6. Action: Consider increasing the percentage of affordable units required city-wide as mandated in the Inclusionary Housing Zoning Ordinance from 12.5% to 15% if a need is determined by the updated Housing Needs Assessment.
7. Action: Consider adopting Somerville median income limits as the basis of determining eligibility and cost of affordable units, to expand the affordability of housing units.



*Union Place, outside Union Square, is an example of a development that triggered the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, creating over 131 housing units with 25 as affordable units.*



*This property on Beacon Street also included one Inclusionary unit.*

# Housing Choice

*B. Policy: The City should promote policies that protect tenant and landlord rights and clarify landlord and tenant responsibilities.*

1. Action: Consider adopting a revised Condominium Conversion Ordinance to strengthen landlord and tenant rights, and clearly define an enforceable process to meet or exceed state standards.
2. Action: Conduct a public education program to provide information to residents, homeowners and elected officials that clearly delineates the obligations, predictability and public benefits in the process for granting and denying condominium conversion permits under the ordinance.
3. Action: Conduct public education on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities.

*C. Policy: The City should encourage the development and preservation of rental housing throughout Somerville to maintain a balance between rental and homeownership units tied to the Housing Needs Assessment.*

1. Action: Consider incentives for rental housing along transit corridors.
2. Action: Prioritize funding for affordable rental units along transit corridors.

*D. Policy: The City should promote the development of senior-friendly housing based on the results of a Housing Needs Assessment.*

1. Action: Revise the Zoning Ordinance to reduce parking requirements and increase allowable units for development projects housing seniors.
2. Action: Encourage more adaptable universal design guidelines for new development.
3. Action: Consider using rehabilitation program funding to encourage universal design improvements in existing units.

## Senior Housing

### *What's it all about?*

The City and its partners have made important progress in developing affordable housing for seniors. Along Alewife Brook Parkway, the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) and the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) recently worked with the City to produce nearly 200 independent and assisted living units, with many on-site services for residents.



*SHA's Capen Court provides 95 independent senior housing units.*

# Housing Choice



*The Somerville Community Corporation's St. Polycarp's Village Phase project won the 2011 HUD "Door Knocker Award" for its innovative use of green and energy-efficiency measures, which include a green roof and solar panels.*



*The City is using grant funds through the HUD Healthy Homes program to measure the health benefits of air filtering technology in homes adjacent to highways.*

*E. Policy: The City should promote the adoption of housing designs that incorporate green building technologies and amenities that include more open green space.*

1. Action: Establish an educational program for the community to discuss new green building guidelines and technologies.
2. Action: Work with utility companies, housing developers and businesses to establish programs to provide incentives to homeowners and renters to make green building improvements.
3. Action: Research model programs from other communities that have adopted green building design requirements.
4. Action: Actively pursue outside funding to support green building practices.
5. Action: Update the zoning ordinance to provide incentives for development of housing that incorporates green building technologies.
6. Action: Prioritize funding for affordable housing developments that incorporate green building components.
7. Action: Limit the amount of paving permitted to discourage conversion from green to paved space.
8. Action: Consider funding and regulatory incentives for provision of air handling systems in housing developments near highways.

## Green Building Principles

All over the world, communities are encouraging green building practices, which provide economic as well as environmental benefits to builders, residents and neighbors. Green building can encompass everything from project siting to construction practices to property management, and can include retrofitted properties as well as new construction projects.

Since green building practices can reduce the operating costs of a property, units are often more affordable for residents. Technologies such as air filtration and non-toxic building materials provide health benefits for residents. Projects are often designed to meet national certification standards (such as the U.S Green Building Council's LEED Program), although green building practices can also be incorporated into projects without certification.

# Housing

## Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development

**II. Goal: Promote mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development to provide new housing and employment options.**

*A. Policy: The City should facilitate the development of additional housing in close proximity to transit stations.*

1. Action: Revise the zoning ordinance to allow for higher density housing developments proximate to transit stations and along arterial streets served by transit.
2. Action: Reduce parking requirements for housing units close to transit stations.
3. Action: Organize and coordinate community stakeholders to promote mixed-use development.

*B. Policy: The City should promote the provision of mixed-use development in commercial districts.*

1. Action: Reduce parking requirements for mixed use developments.
2. Action: Allow for shared parking arrangements where possible in mixed use developments.
3. Action: In commercial districts, when considering applications for special permits for new commercial developments that are below the allowable Floor Area Ratio, evaluate whether a housing component should be included.

### Shared Parking

Building parking lots and garages is extremely expensive. Research shows that these costs get passed on to the consumer, making housing less affordable. Shared parking allows multiple users to share a parking space, which reduces the number of spaces needed on a site. In mixed-use developments, shared parking arrangements take advantage of the fact that different types of users have different time periods when they need a space. For example, a resident of an apartment building who drives to work will need a parking space only at night and on weekends. An office worker on the same site only needs a space during weekdays. By sharing, both users can save money, and land can be used more efficiently.



### Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development

*What's it all about?*

The latest research shows that housing located within walking distance of jobs, services, and public transportation is usually more affordable than housing that requires a car to get everywhere. In the early twentieth century, every neighborhood in Somerville was served by streetcar transit, and featured small businesses and services. The SomerVision Plan recommends building new housing near our existing transit stations on the MBTA Red Line and Orange Line, and around the new Green Line stations, and ensuring that a convenient mix of jobs and services is available for our residents.

# Housing Displacement

## Impacts of Transit

### *What's it all about?*

Somerville has always been a diverse community, and our residents value that diversity. New transit service often makes neighborhoods more desirable, and therefore more expensive. To help keep Somerville affordable for all residents, the City and its partners can buy and preserve residential properties around the new Green Line and Orange Line stations for residents with low and moderate income levels.



### III. Goal: Mitigate displacement of low and moderate income residents by retaining the existing affordable housing stock and by creating policies that allow residents to remain in their homes in the face of a changing city.

#### A. Policy: *The City should encourage preservation of affordability, especially in the vicinity of transit stations.*

1. Action: Conduct a community dialogue about neighborhood change and the importance of encouraging existing residents to stay in the City.
2. Action: Consider establishing a tenant purchase and/or rent-to-own program with ready access to transit lines.
3. Action: Consider expanding the length of time units proximate to transit must remain affordable when they receive funding through Somerville housing programs such as lead abatement, down payment and housing rehabilitation.
4. Action: Provide technical and financial support to non-profit and for-profit developers seeking to acquire “expiring use” properties to maintain long-term affordability.
5. Action: Actively seek outside funding to support the preservation of “expiring use” properties.
6. Action: Encourage collaboration between for-profit and non-profit agencies to expand affordable development opportunities.
7. Action: Encourage area universities to work with the City to create more housing on campus.
8. Action: Publicize and explore ways to expand the “Take the T” Home Mortgage Program.
9. Action: Create a land bank to acquire strategic properties around transit stations, and collaborate with for-profit and non-profit agencies to preserve and develop affordable housing.
10. Action: Seek additional funding to support land banking efforts.
11. Action: Participate in studies by academic groups and other partner organizations around displacement and how to mitigate its impacts.



# Housing Homelessness

## IV. Goal: Create a diversity of programs that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

*A. Policy: The City should undertake efforts to ensure that a range of housing options and services exist so that families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can be housed rapidly and successfully.*

1. Action: Actively seek local, state and federal funds to develop permanent housing with access to supportive services for households that have been homeless.
2. Action: Facilitate the creation of additional transitional units with supportive services for individuals and families with specific needs
3. Action: Target job training and programs to unskilled individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
4. Action: Actively seek additional funds and prioritize funding to reduce and prevent homelessness.
5. Action: Reach out to regional groups to explore regional solutions for addressing homelessness.
6. Action: Create a continuum of housing from independent living to supportive housing so that families and individuals can be successfully housed based on a Housing Needs Assessment.
7. Action: Support legislative actions that emphasize homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing.
8. Action: Reevaluate the Ten Year Plan to Reduce Chronic Homelessness every five years and amend as necessary.

*B. Policy: The City should ensure that a cohesive network exists to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless.*

1. Action: Actively seek additional funds for programs to support families and individuals on the verge of becoming homeless.



*Two of the units at the Somerville Community Corporation's Gilman Street property are reserved for formerly homeless households.*



*Just A Start's Next Step Transitional Living Program provides apartments for young mothers and their children who were at risk of homelessness.*

# Housing Resources & Capacity

## Resources

### *What's it all about?*

The City has invested more than \$15 million in affordable housing since 2000, but to achieve our goals, we need additional funding sources. Private funds, as well as innovative municipal financing tools can help ensure that if federal and state funding decreases, we are still able to build and preserve affordable housing in Somerville.



*Commercial developments like the proposed Self Storage Facility at 50 Middlesex Avenue trigger the Somerville Linkage Ordinance and provide funds for affordable housing.*

## V. Goal: Expand financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.

### A. Policy: *The City should actively seek creative and expanded funds for affordable housing development after careful study and consideration.*

1. Action: Consider a District Improvement Financing program for the purpose of affordable housing, particularly along the Green Line Corridor and proposed transit stations.
2. Action: Consider a real estate transfer tax to support the development of affordable housing.
3. Action: Consider establishing a local bank task force to explore ways of expanding the Community Reinvestment Act to encourage local banks to invest in the Somerville community.
4. Action: Conduct a public education program to encourage passage of the Community Preservation Act.

### B. Policy: *The City should ensure that there is an established basis for fees on development.*

1. Action: Conduct an updated nexus study of Somerville's Linkage Fee Ordinance every five years.
2. Action: Review model linkage ordinances from other cities and towns, and consider revising the City's linkage fee ordinance to lower the threshold for participation, while also taking into account use and size of activity.
3. Action: Review and update the linkage fee and square footage thresholds every five years.

## What is a Linkage Fee?

The Somerville Linkage Fee Ordinance was passed in 2000 to increase the supply of long-term affordable housing and mitigate the impact of large-scale development on the supply and cost of housing in the city. The ordinance is triggered by commercial developments seeking a special permit for space over 30,000 square feet, and requires a fee of \$3.91 for every additional square foot of space. Fees are administered by the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust for the creation of affordable rental and home ownership units.

# Housing Resources & Capacity

## *C. Policy: The City should encourage energy efficiency in housing throughout Somerville.*

1. Action: Establish an Energy Efficiency and Weatherization Program that enables low-income families to reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.
2. Action: Broaden income qualification guidelines if possible to qualify residents between 60% and 120% of area median income to ensure greater access to the program to further improve the City's housing stock.
3. Action: Establish a partnership with utility companies that service the Somerville area to create greater opportunities for grants or rebates for households that don't necessarily qualify for other funding.
4. Action: Encourage utility companies to expand public education programs and offer greater incentives to utilize "energy star" appliances and other energy efficient systems.
5. Action: Actively seek outside funding to support energy efficiency in housing.

## *D. Policy: The City should promote policies that plan for highest and best use of City-owned assets.*

1. Action: When identifying publicly-owned properties available for disposition, determine whether an affordable housing component could/should be included.
2. Action: Continue to develop a comprehensive housing website with resources and links to federal, state and local housing programs and initiatives.

## Residential Energy Efficiency

The average Somerville family spends more than \$2,000 on energy bills every year, with roughly half of that money spent on home heating and cooling. Public, private and nonprofit agencies implement programs to help residents save by decreasing energy consumption: the MassSave program is a well-known example. The City of Somerville recently developed a Residential Energy Efficiency Program to help renters and homeowners to obtain a home energy audit performed by a qualified contractor, and then making efficiency investments based on the audit. The City is also exploring ways to make federal funding available to assist low- and moderate-income residents with the costs associated with improvements.

## Energy Efficiency

### *What's it all about?*

Most of us notice the spike in our oil and gas bills every November, and in our electricity bills every May as we respond to the changing seasons by running the heat or the air conditioning. Efficiency improvements often provide low-cost ways to reduce energy expenses.



*Poorly insulated roofs, walls, doors and windows are often responsible for high heating bills. Poorly functioning systems such as dryer vents or plumbing vent stacks also contribute to air leaks in a home.*

# Housing: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



## St. Polycarp Village Phase I

Somerville's nonprofit organizations play a key role in affordable housing development, and are well-known both regionally and nationally for their excellent work. The St. Polycarp Village apartments on Temple Street are a recent example. Built in 2009 by the Somerville Community Corporation, the project's first phase was given the prestigious national 20th Anniversary Door Knocker Award as a model of sustainable design in affordable housing using the HOME investment partnership program administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### *Affordable Housing*

St. Polycarp's Phase I includes 24 affordable apartment units, including a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units to ensure opportunities for families with and without children. Three of the units are reserved for families earning less than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), nine units are targeted for families earning less than 50% of AMI, and twelve units are for families earning less than 60% of AMI. Of these, four units are reserved for clients of the Department of Mental Health and two units are reserved for formerly homeless individuals. The project also includes a mixed-use component, with roughly 6,000 square feet of retail space providing convenience shopping for nearby residents.

### *Creative Finance and Sustainable Design*

Like most affordable housing projects in Somerville, the St. Polycarp's development leveraged public funding, with nearly \$1 million from federal sources and the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund. To help keep costs low for residents, cutting-edge energy and water conservation technologies were used. And since Interstate 93 (and the 250,000 cars it carries every day) are located just across Mystic Avenue, sophisticated air filtering systems were included to protect residents from unhealthy air pollution.



# Housing: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family

## Visiting Nurses Association Senior Living Community

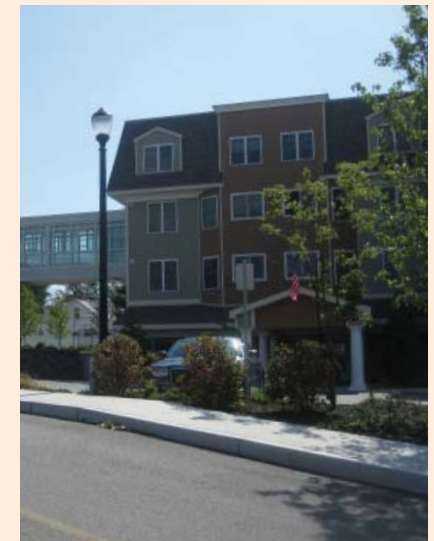
Somerville is on the forefront of affordable housing development for seniors. The VNA Senior Living Community at Alewife Brook Parkway has earned national recognition as America's first continuing-care retirement community for low- and moderate-income seniors and disabled persons. In partnership with the City of Somerville, the VNA purchased an abandoned elementary school property to build 99 units of housing in close proximity to parklands along the Alewife Brook and Mystic River, as well as a future Green Line station.

### *Service-Enriched Approach*

Surveys of Somerville's senior population have shown a strong desire among residents to "age in place", spending retirement years in the community they love. The VNA Senior Living Community represents a unique opportunity for Somerville seniors to remain in their community, even as their health needs and physical abilities may change. Residents have access to services including an on-site pharmacy, visiting nurses and visiting physician and nurse practitioner programs, a wellness center, country store, and beauty salon. A lively social network exists, and is growing: the Somerville Housing Authority recently completed a 95-unit development next door, and will begin construction of a 40-unit senior housing facility and community center on an adjacent property in 2012.

### *Sustainable Design and Features*

The VNA building is also a model of green design. Electricity is produced on-site using rooftop solar panels and a natural gas generator. Construction materials were selected to emphasize energy efficiency as well as to provide a healthy indoor air quality environment. Most importantly, the Senior Living Community is located in Somerville, providing residents, guests and staff with access to the culture and amenities of Somerville, Cambridge and Boston.



# Housing: Success Story!

Making Somerville an even more exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family



## Maxwell's Green: Transit-Oriented Residential Development

One of Somerville's most exciting redevelopment projects is currently underway. The Maxwell's Green residential development offers a great story of a partnership between state agencies, municipal government, engaged neighbors and the private sector that has reclaimed a neglected industrial property to help meet Somerville's housing needs.

### *Transit-Oriented Housing*

The Maxwell's Green project is being built on a five-acre former industrial site directly adjacent to the planned MBTA Green Line Extension station at Lowell Street. Residents of the two hundred housing units will be able to board a train directly to downtown Boston when the Green Line project is completed. This transit access also allows the project to build fewer expensive parking spaces, freeing up money for important community benefits such as green design, affordable housing and publicly-accessible open space.

### *Community Benefits*

Maxwell's Green will be a project that is truly integrated into the fabric of Somerville's neighborhoods. On-site green space will be open to the public. Community advocates worked with city and state officials and the private developer to extend the Somerville Community Path from Cedar Street to Lowell Street, with multiple access points to and through the Maxwell's Green development. As a result, residents will be able to walk or bicycle along the path to Davis Square, and eventually all the way to Boston's North Station.

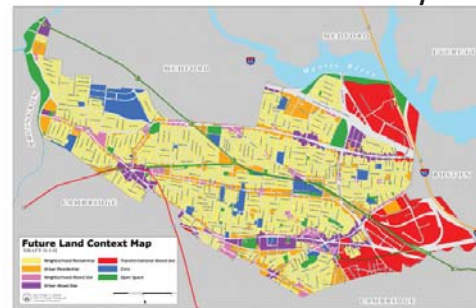
Another important benefit of the project is the developer's provision of housing units affordable to low- and moderate-income residents. Twenty-five of the two hundred units will be reserved for affordable housing, under the requirements of Somerville's inclusionary zoning ordinance. When the construction is completed, Maxwell's Green will reflect the best of Somerville's urban character: a diversity of income levels, a celebration of walking and bicycling culture, and an emphasis on green and sustainable living.



## 2. The Numbers and the Maps

Included in this Appendix are three maps and a set of target numbers. Each is a part of an interactive set of priorities for Somerville's growth and development between 2010 and 2030. The first two maps deal with future land context and future transportation networks. The third map is the SomerVision Map, featured on page 17. This map, along with the SomerVision Numbers, summarizes the Comprehensive Plan's balanced approach to making Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.

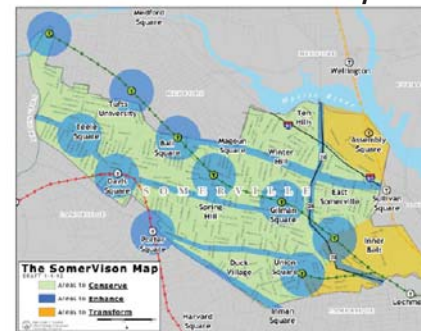
*Future Land Context Map*



*Future Transportation Context Map*



*The SomerVision Map*



*Somerville: an exceptional place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

## Appendix 2

# The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories



### The Future Land Context Map

In February 2011, the SomerVision Steering Committee began a five-month phase of its work designed to build consensus around the scale and mix of future development in Somerville. The process began with a photo exercise: hundreds of photos of buildings and land uses were printed and distributed to the Steering Committee. Committee members engaged in a series of small group discussions around the simple question, “Does the building form or land use in this picture represent something we want to see in Somerville in the future?”

Committee members then took the photos that were identified as appropriate for Somerville and were tasked with grouping similar photos together to create categories, based on form, scale and use. A remarkable degree of consensus across each group’s list of categories was evident, and after additional discussion, the Future Land Context Categories were developed based on this exercise. They are:

- Neighborhood Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Urban Mixed Use
- Transformational Mixed Use
- Civic
- Open Space

The categories are described in more detail on the following pages. A poster exercise was designed to allow Steering Committee members to apply these categories to individual properties in neighborhoods across Somerville. Small groups used magic markers to color in wall-sized maps based on their individual vision for future development in each neighborhood. Again, the results were compared across groups, and after additional discussion a high degree of consensus was reached.

Over the course of an additional three months of public meetings, the Steering Committee applied the Future Land Context Categories across all 15,000 tax parcels in Somerville. The results are a fine-grained illustration of three basic principles: conserving residential neighborhoods, enhancing squares and commercial corridors, and transforming opportunity areas. The map follows the categories, on page 136.



# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories

Category	<p><b>Neighborhood Residential</b></p>
Intent	<p>Create, maintain, and enhance residential areas characterized by one to three dwelling units typically found on local serving streets.</p>
Desired Character + Uses	<p>This area should remain predominantly residential in character with allowances for schools, churches, private clubs, home-based businesses, and small-scale civic institutions. Additionally, characteristics of this area may include: tree-lined front yards, thoughtfully designed infill development, street-fronting buildings, and backyards with landscaping and gardens.</p>
Intensity	<p>The most common development type is one-, two-, and three-family structures.</p>



# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories



Category	Urban Residential
Intent	Create, maintain, and enhance areas that are appropriate for multi-unit, mid-rise residential uses in locations with good access to transportation and other services.
Desired Character + Uses	This area should remain predominantly residential in character, with allowances for schools, churches, private clubs, home-based businesses, medium scale civic institutions, and office conversions of structures along corridors that retain residential form.
Intensity	Structures are expected to be multi-story in height with a strong presence on the street and parking screened from view.

# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories

Category	Neighborhood Mixed Use
Intent	Distinguish, create, maintain, and enhance mixed use neighborhood commercial centers. These centers are typically characterized by small-scale, pedestrian-oriented street frontage with a mix of retail, personal and business service, office, and eating and drinking places. These areas also include small-scale educational, cultural, entertainment, and light industrial uses where buffered from residential uses.
Desired Character + Uses	This area should consist of a mix of commercial uses that are pedestrian-oriented and largely serve nearby neighborhoods, together with upper story residential or commercial uses. Strip malls will be discouraged. Auto-oriented uses will be limited to places where design can mitigate for the nature of the business.
Intensity	Structures are expected to be multi-story in height and vertically and horizontally integrated, with residential units or business uses above an array of small scale street-level commercial uses.



# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories



Category	Urban Mixed Use
Intent	Identify, create, maintain, and enhance mixed use commercial centers. These centers are typically characterized by small- and medium-scale, pedestrian-oriented street frontage with a mix of retail, personal and business service, office, and eating and drinking establishments. These areas can include medium-scale educational, cultural, entertainment, and light industrial uses, and small-scale auto-related uses where buffered from residential uses.
Desired Character + Uses	This area should consist of a mix of commercial uses that are pedestrian oriented and serve nearby neighborhoods, the rest of Somerville, and shoppers from across the Boston Metro Region, together with upper story residential or commercial uses.
Intensity	Structures are expected to be multi-story in height and vertically and horizontally integrated, with residential units or business uses above an array of small- or medium-scale street-level commercial uses. Large-scale commercial uses where appropriately designed for their surroundings are also possible. Design of new structures should be high-quality with accentuated facades and that step back at the upper floors.

# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories

Category	<h3>Transformational Mixed Use</h3>
Intent	<p>Create and maintain walkable mixed-use districts centered around access to rapid transit. Strategic public and private investment will transform these areas into regionally recognized employment centers supported by open space, high rise residential, and regional and local serving commercial uses. Sizable entertainment, cultural, education, sports and medical/hospital facilities would also be appropriate where they support and promote the employment center concept.</p>
Desired Character + Uses	<p>This area will consist of a mix of office, commercial, light industrial, residential, open space, entertainment, education, sports, medical and other uses/facilities that support creation of dynamic, diverse, walkable, sustainable, and transit-oriented neighborhoods. Integrate clean, high-value, multi-story industrial uses where appropriate, minimize their impact.</p>
Intensity	<p>Structures are expected to consist of high rise construction (greater than 55 feet) that is oriented to the street, pedestrian friendly, and vertically and horizontally integrated. Publicly accessible open space shall also be required.</p>



# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories

Category	Civic	
Intent	Create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for educational, governmental, and hospital facilities.	
Desired Character + Uses	Future development includes educational, governmental, and hospital facilities located in a campus-like environment.	
Intensity	These campus-like areas will contain a mix of structures designed to meet the needs of the user(s) while being compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.	



# Appendix 2

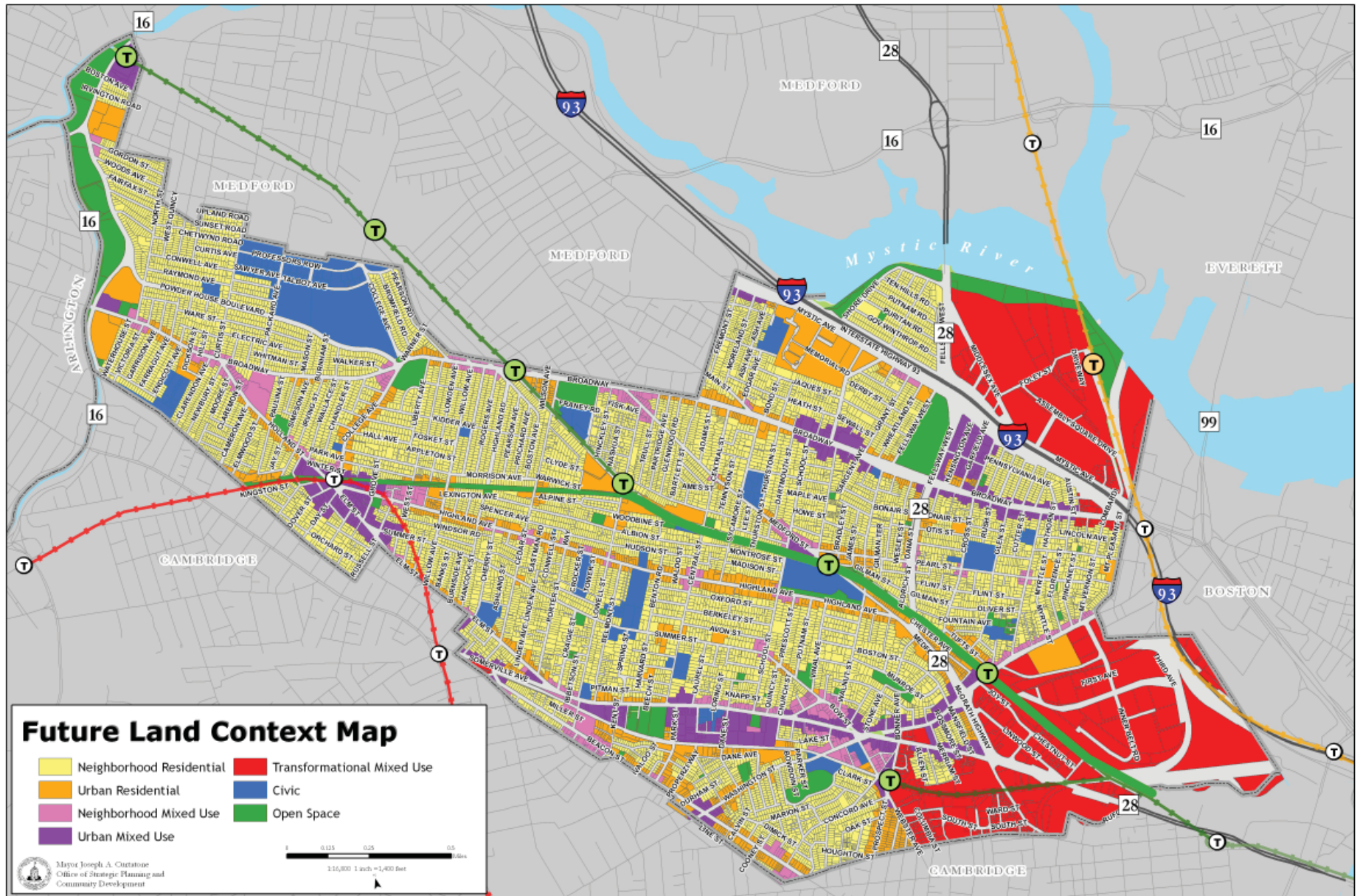
## The Maps: Land Context & Building Form Categories



Category	Open Space	
Intent	Create, maintain, and enhance areas for recreational or resource conservation uses that address community needs for psychological and physical well-being, relief from the urban environment, and nature conservation.	
Desired Character + Uses	Parks, playgrounds, paths, cemeteries, reservations and urban wilds.	
Intensity	No development other than facilities and amenities that support the recreation or conservation use are expected.	

# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Future Land Context Map





# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Future Transportation Context Map

### The Future Transportation Context Map

The Future Transportation Context Map provides guidance for decisions about capital projects and transportation investments. The map provides a framework for decision-making. It serves as a reference point, while encouraging further discussion to implement a regulatory and capital planning strategy that will achieve the desired outcomes.

Improvements on the transportation map are divided into three categories:

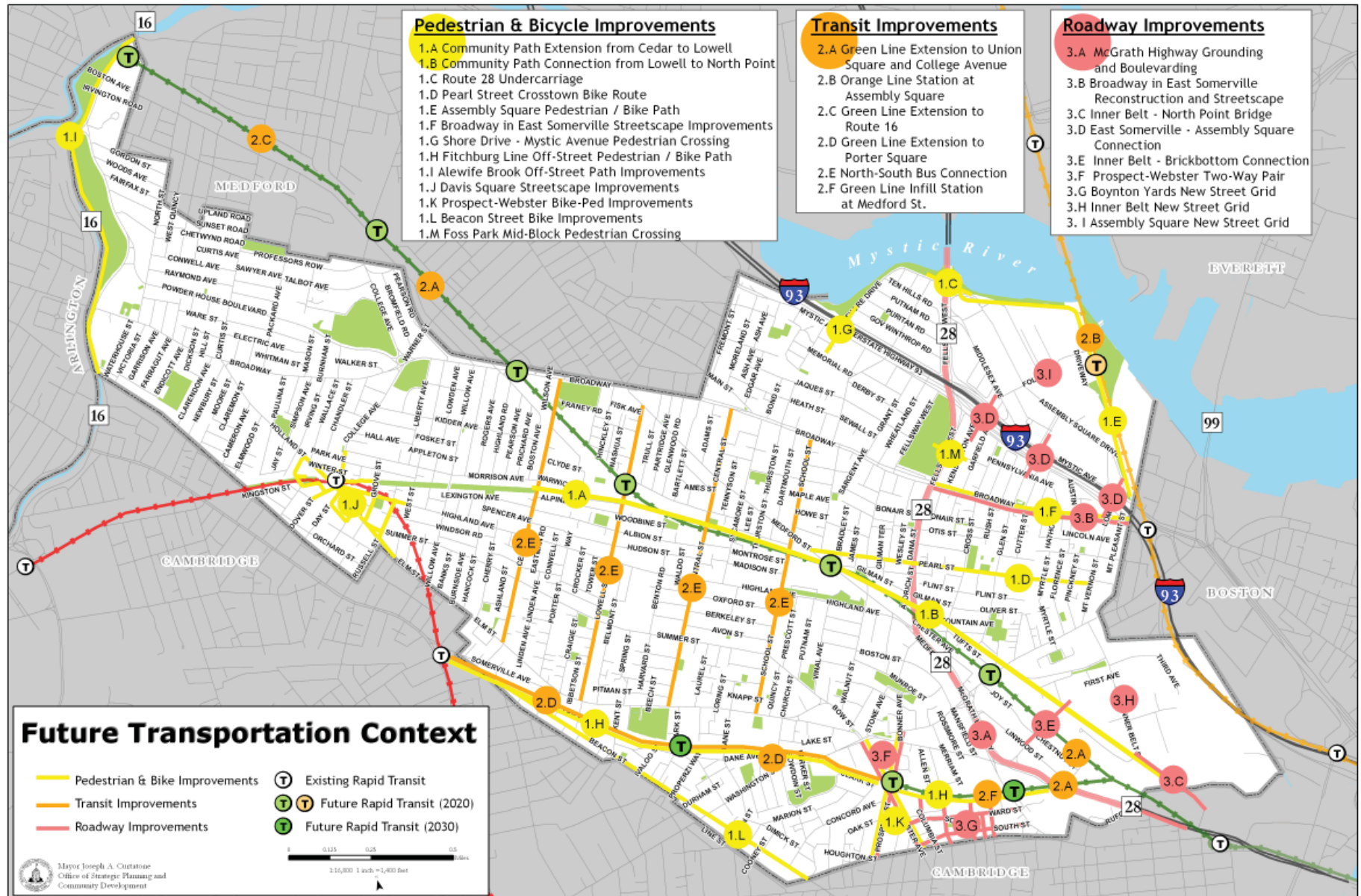
- Pedestrian / Bicycle Improvements
- Transit Improvements
- Roadway Improvements

The transportation map was developed by the SomerVision Steering Committee in a method similar to that of the Future Land Context Map. Members participated in meetings where small groups identified transportation goals that were then incorporated into a combined map. The map is on page 138.



# Appendix 2

## The Maps: Future Transportation Context Map



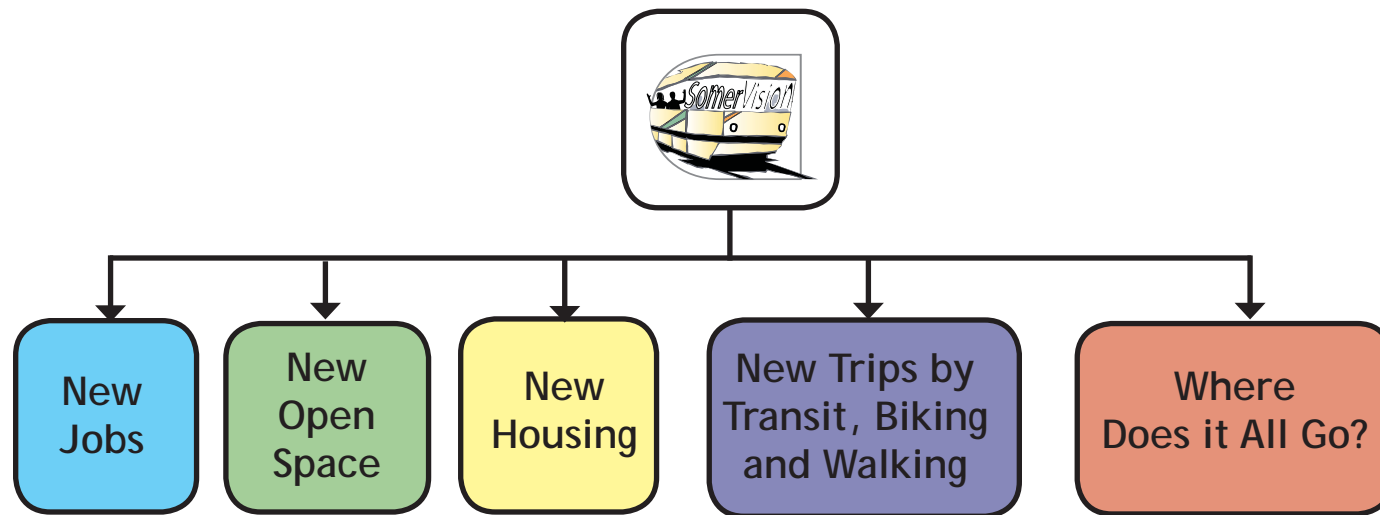
# Appendix 2

## The Numbers and the Maps: The SomerVision Numbers

### Introduction

The SomerVision Steering Committee came to consensus around the idea that the Comprehensive Plan must set ambitious, yet achievable numeric targets for the future. The challenge was to figure out how to create a small, understandable, meaningful set of targets that are not just compatible, but inseparable. Our community needs major job growth, without major traffic impacts. We need creation of new parks and open spaces, but require new funding sources to pay for them. We need a housing market that provides more choice for Somerville's families, but without shoehorning incompatible development projects into the middle of existing residential neighborhoods.

The SomerVision Numbers are based on real data, and are consistent with our shared values as a community. They cannot be separated into parts. One cannot advocate to meet one goal at the expense of the others. The goals must work together to conserve the neighborhoods we love, enhance the squares we use, and transform the parts of the City that are poised for growth. The SomerVision Numbers give the City and its partners a clear way to explain that at the end of the day, the Comprehensive Plan is all about balance. The strategy behind the numbers is introduced on the following pages.

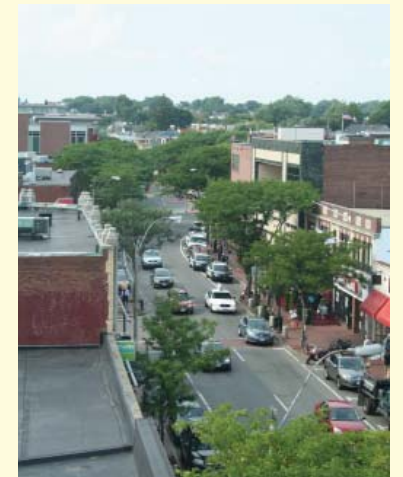


### SomerVision

*It's all about balance.*

"In a City of four square miles, we must make every inch count".

Mayor Eugene C. Brune in his 1982 inaugural address



# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Map: Areas to Conserve, Enhance & Transform

The SomerVision Map illustrates our Vision for the community to:

### Conserve

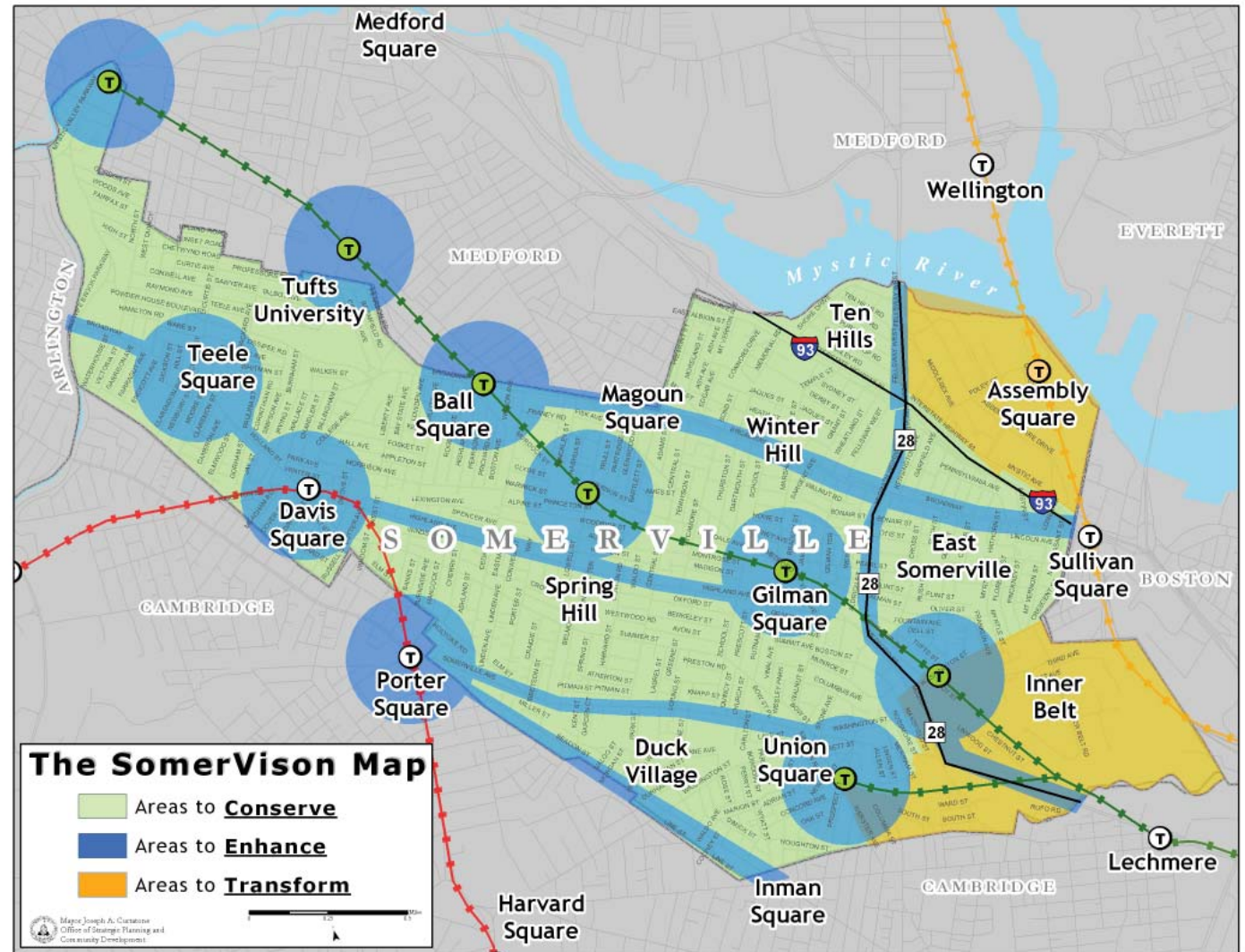
our great residential neighborhoods

### Enhance

our funky squares and commercial corridors

### Transform

opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville.



# Appendix 2

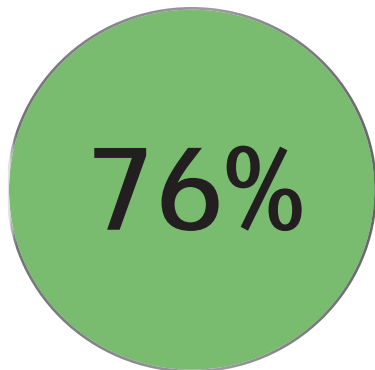
## The SomerVision Numbers: Areas to Conserve, Enhance & Transform

### Land Area

Somerville only covers about 4 square miles of land area, which translates to roughly 2,640 acres of land. The SomerVision Numbers are based upon the SomerVision Map, which is a simplification of the Future Land Context Map into three key concepts: Areas to Conserve, Areas to Enhance, and Areas to Transform.

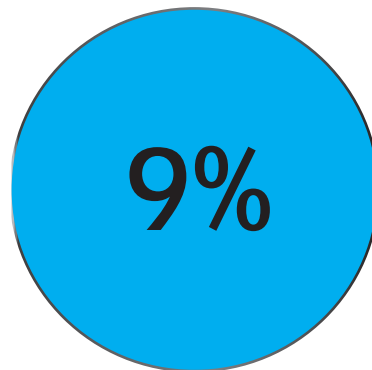
The SomerVision Map identifies Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards and the southeastern part of Union Square as Areas to Transform. Together, the Areas to Transform cover approximately 365 acres of land, or 15% of Somerville. Roughly 9% of the City is located in Areas to Enhance, along corridors and key squares. The remaining 76% is located in Areas to Conserve. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that 85% of new development over the next twenty years should occur in the Areas to Transform.

### Areas to Conserve



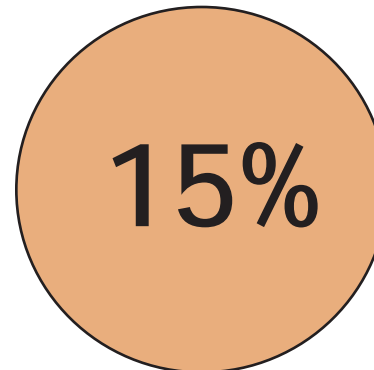
2,000 acres

### Areas to Enhance



237 acres

### Areas to Transform



365 acres

### SomerVision

*What's it all about?*

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan is both a neighborhood preservation plan and a plan for growth. The three-year public process confirmed that our residents want to conserve our great residential neighborhoods, enhance our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transform opportunity areas on the City's eastern and southern borders.



# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Areas to Transform

### Areas to Transform

*What's it all about?*

Industrial districts on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville represent a major opportunity for our City to achieve its goals of job growth, open space creation, and housing development. By improving infrastructure and updating zoning regulations, the City can help property owners in these areas to realize the full value of their land while steering development pressure away from other parts of Somerville.



*Waste Transfer site in Brickbottom*

### Areas to Transform

Assembly Square	<i>125 acres</i>
Inner Belt	<i>115 acres</i>
Brickbottom	<i>65 acres</i>
Boynton Yards	<i>35 acres</i>
Union Square	<i>25 acres</i>
<hr/>	
Total	<i>365 acres</i>

# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Share of City Growth

### Where does it All Go?

The SomerVision Numbers were developed in a series of meetings with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The process began with land area. In places like Assembly Square, roughly 80% of the total land area can be used for buildings, with 20% reserved for roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure. Based on this buildable area, a proportional share of growth was calculated. These shares add up to 85% of the total citywide growth for 2010 to 2030.

	<i>Land Area</i>	<i>Buildable Area</i>	<i>Share of City Growth</i>
Assembly Square	125 acres	100 acres	29% of growth
Inner Belt	115 acres	92 acres	26% of growth
Brickbottom	65 acres	52 acres	15% of growth
Boynton Yards	35 acres	28 acres	8% of growth
Union Square	25 acres	20 acres	6% of growth
<b>Total</b>	<b>365 acres</b>	<b>292 acres</b>	<b>85% of growth</b>



*Assembly Square, prior to construction of Assembly Row*



*Boynton Yards*



*Brickbottom*

# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Share of Job Growth

### Job Growth

*What's it all about?*

Successful cities have a balance between jobs and residents. Today Somerville has 45,000 workers, but only 20,000 jobs. The SomerVision Plan sets a goal of creating 30,000 new jobs to bring these numbers into better balance. Benefits of job growth include adding daytime customers for our great local small businesses, and reducing the tax burden on Somerville's homeowners. Growth will depend on economic factors, as well as needed infrastructure improvements in our Areas to Transform.

### How Much Space per Job?

On average, commercial buildings require about 350 square feet of space per job. Using this conservative estimate, we can calculate the space needed to meet the SomerVision target of 30,000 jobs (roughly 10.5 million square feet). Approximately 9 million square feet should be located in the Areas to Transform. For comparison, University Park in Cambridge currently has roughly 4,000 jobs (2 million commercial square feet) and 400 housing units on 25 acres of land.

	<i>Share of City Growth</i>	<i>New Jobs</i>	<i>New Commercial Square Feet</i>
Assembly Square	29%	8,500 jobs	3 million
Inner Belt	26%	8,000 jobs	2.8 million
Brickbottom	15%	4,500 jobs	1.6 million
Boynton Yards	8%	2,500 jobs	0.9 million
Union Square	6%	1,800 jobs	0.6 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>25,500 jobs</b>	<b>9 million</b>



# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Share of Housing Growth

### How Much Housing?

Housing growth will help us to continue to meet demand and preserve affordability. The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan lays out an expectation that Somerville needs more commercial development than residential development. But the plan also recognizes that our Areas to Transform need housing development to become true neighborhoods with an attractive mix of daytime and nighttime activity. The plan assumes an average of 1,100 square feet per unit. Based on this, approximately 38% of new development should be residential.

### Housing Development

*What's it all about?*

Our nation is experiencing an urban renaissance, and there is a tremendous demand for housing in places like Somerville. A recent study by the national research group Reconnecting America estimates that market demand for new housing close to rapid transit exceeds 600,000 housing units for metro Boston. That translates to roughly 2,000 new housing units for every existing and new station on the MBTA system. While Somerville cannot meet that demand, it can support new transit-oriented housing.

	<i>Share of City Growth</i>	<i>New Housing</i>	<i>New Residential Square Feet</i>
Assembly Square	29%	2,500 units	2.75 million
Inner Belt	26%	1,000 units	1.1 million
Brickbottom	15%	750 units	0.82 million
Boynton Yards	8%	500 units	0.55 million
Union Square	6%	350 units	0.38 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>5,100 units</b>	<b>5.6 million</b>

# Appendix 2

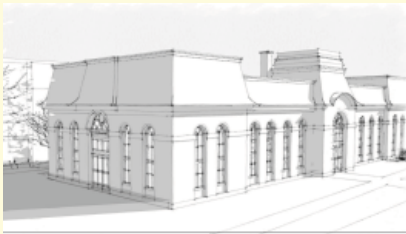
## The SomerVision Numbers: Affordable Housing Targets

### Purpose-Built Affordable Housing

*What's it all about?*



Phase 2 of the Somerville Community Corporation's St. Polycarp's Village, completed in 2011, includes 29 units of purpose-built affordable housing.



The Somerville Housing Authority is currently constructing 60 units of purpose-built affordable housing at the Mystic Valley Waterworks site in West Somerville. These two projects together will total roughly 90 units of purpose-built affordable housing.

### How Does Affordable Housing Get Built?

New affordable housing gets built in one of two ways. It can be created by developers of market-rate housing under the City's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, or by developers as "purpose-built" affordable housing. The SomerVision plan anticipates that 20% of new units will be affordable (1,200 units). Of this number, the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance will produce 700-750 units, depending on how it is adjusted, leaving roughly 20-25 units per year to be produced as purpose-built affordable housing.

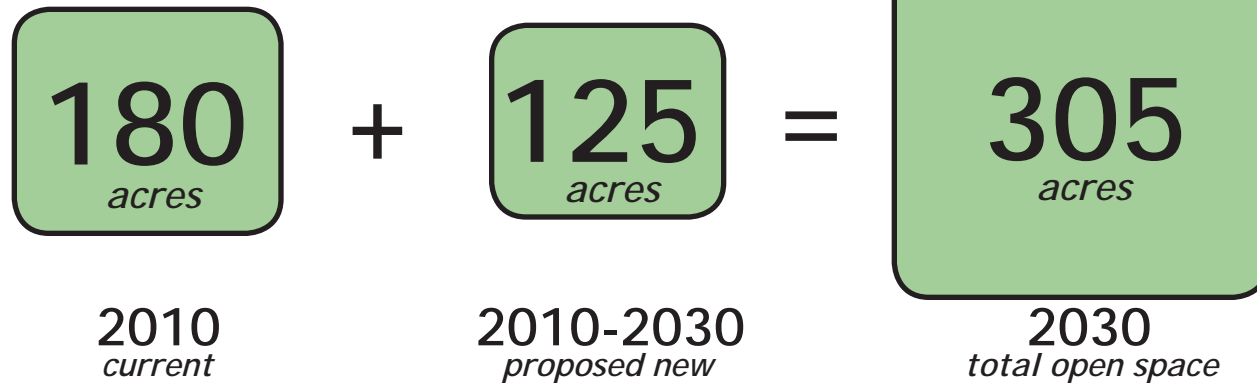
Inclusionary % Requirement	12.5% outside T.O.D.'s (status quo)	15% in Areas to Transform (if proposed under zoning)
All Units	6,000 units	6,000 units
Market Rate Units	4,800 units	4,800 units
Affordable Units	1,200 units	1,200 units
Inclusionary Units <i>based on 4,800 market-rate units</i>	701 units	767 units
Purpose Built Units	499 units	433 units
Purpose Built Units per year	25 units	20-21 units

# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Open Space Targets

### How Does Publicly-Accessible Open Space Get Built?

New open space can also get built in one of two ways. The City builds new parks, at a cost of roughly \$1 million per acre. The second option is for private developers to build publicly-accessible open space. Currently, zoning regulations in Assembly Square and parts of Union Square and Bonyton Yards require developers to reserve 12.5% of their land for publicly-accessible open space. The SomerVision Plan primarily uses a strategy of privately-funded open space creation, but as tax revenues increase from new commercial development, the City will be able to produce more publicly-funded open space as well.



# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Development Intensity

### Floor Area Ratio

*What's it all about?*

A common measure of development intensity is known as Floor Area Ratio (FAR). It measures the relationship between the total square footage of a building and the land on which the building is located. The SomerVision Numbers indicate that the Areas to Transform can meet their development goals without building skyscrapers.

### What will the Areas to Transform Look and Feel Like?

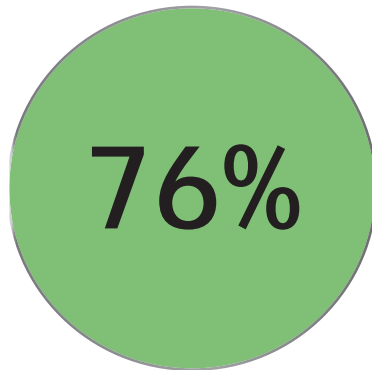
The SomerVision Numbers include ambitious targets for commercial, residential and open space growth, but they have been carefully tested to match our shared values, which emphasize well-designed buildings, pedestrian-friendly streets, and world-class publicly-accessible open space is fully integrated. The SomerVision Numbers indicate that our Areas to Transform can meet their development goals without building skyscrapers and surface parking on every developable lot. Below is a comparison of how much land would be needed to meet the targets with different average building heights in the Areas to Transform.

<i>Average Building Height</i>	<i>Assumed Floor Area Ratio</i>	<i>Assumed Open Space</i>	<i>Assumed Total New Square Feet</i>	<i>Building Area Needed</i>	<i>Buildable Land Remaining after 2030</i>
<b>4 stories</b>	2.5	25%	15 million	140 acres	225 acres
<b>5 stories</b>	3.0	25%	15 million	115 acres	250 acres
<b>6 stories</b>	3.5	25%	15 million	98 acres	267 acres
<b>7 stories</b>	4.0	25%	15 million	86 acres	279 acres
<b>8 stories</b>	4.5	25%	15 million	76 acres	289 acres

## Appendix 2

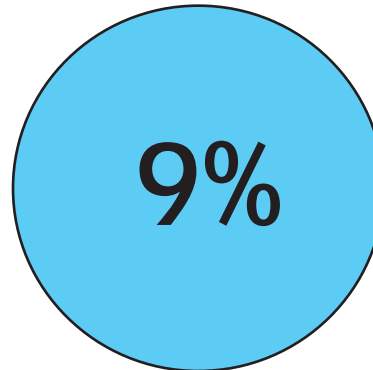
### The SomerVision Numbers: Areas to Conserve & Enhance

Areas to  
Conserve



*2,000 acres*

Areas to  
Enhance



*237 acres*

Areas to  
Conserve and  
Enhance

*What's it all about?*

Roughly 85% of Somerville's land area is located outside the Areas to Transform. The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan recommends a strategy of neighborhood conservation and limited infill in the Areas to Conserve (the roughly 2,000 acres of great residential neighborhoods that we know and love). and a balance of well-planned development in the Areas to Enhance (9% of the City).

# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Areas to Enhance



Somerville Avenue between Porter Square and Union Square features an updated streetscape, major recreation facilities, and attractive commercial redevelopment sites.



Union Square is Somerville's historic and future downtown, and its northern sections are designated as Areas to Enhance by the Comprehensive Plan.

### What are Areas to Enhance?

Somerville's funky squares and commercial corridors have always been centers of entrepreneurship and cultural activity. They serve the needs of nearby residents, and where transit, bus and bicycle connections exist, they draw regional customers to our diverse local businesses without undue traffic congestion.

### Areas to Enhance

#### Gateway Green Line Stations

Union Square	125 acres
Washington Street	115 acres

#### Neighborhood Green Line Stations

Gilman Square	15 acres
Lowell Street	10 acres
Ball Square	9 acres
Mystic Valley Parkway	6 acres

#### Existing Rapid Transit Centers

Davis Square	37 acres
Porter Square	4 acres

#### Existing Bus & Bicycle Corridors

Broadway	45 acres
Somerville Avenue	40 acres
Beacon Street	6 acres

**Total**

**237 acres**

# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Changing the Status Quo on Housing

### Why Does it Matter?

Between 2000 and 2010, Somerville grew by roughly 1,500 housing units. The vast majority of these were built in our Areas to Conserve, and controversial projects have pitted neighbor against neighbor. The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan proposes to change the status quo by channeling market forces away from Areas to Conserve, and toward Areas to Enhance and Areas to Transform. This strategy could slow the pace of development in areas where growth is not a priority of the plan.



*Status Quo*  
2000 - 2010  
(10-year period)

+ 1,250 units + 250 units +/- 0 units

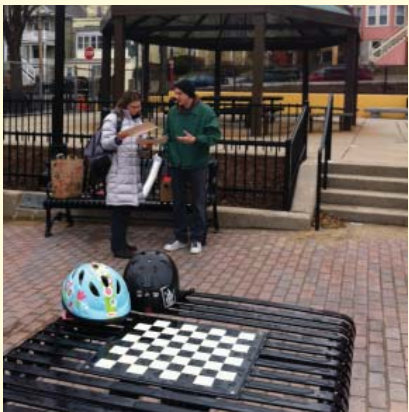
*SomerVision*  
2010 - 2030  
(20-year period)

← + 900 units → + 5,100 units



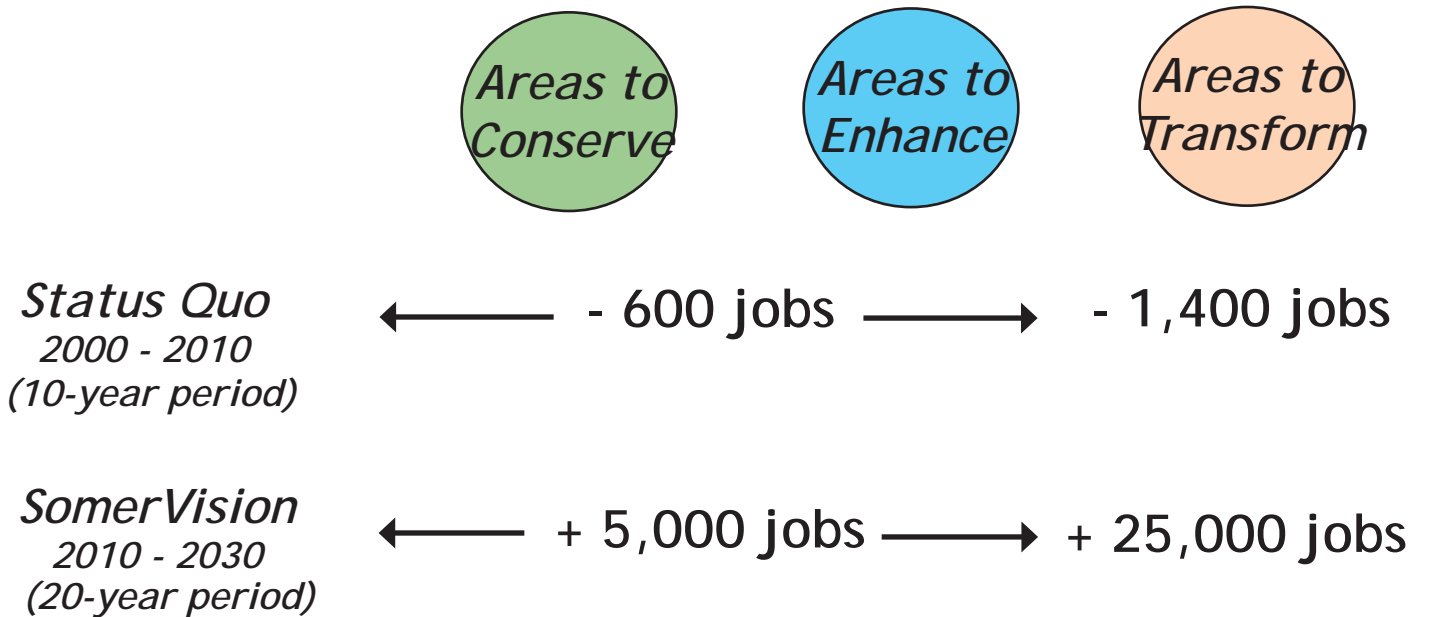
# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Changing the Status Quo on Jobs



### Why Does it Matter?

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, Somerville experienced a net decrease of roughly 2,000 jobs between 2000 and 2010. Market research shows that Somerville's location, quality of life, and skilled workforce are attractive to the next generation of employers, but our economic future depends on unlocking development in our Areas to Transform, including providing the necessary transportation upgrades and positioning Somerville in the regional and national economy.



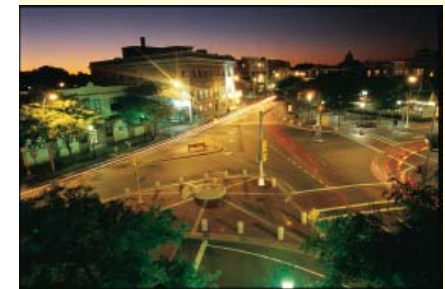
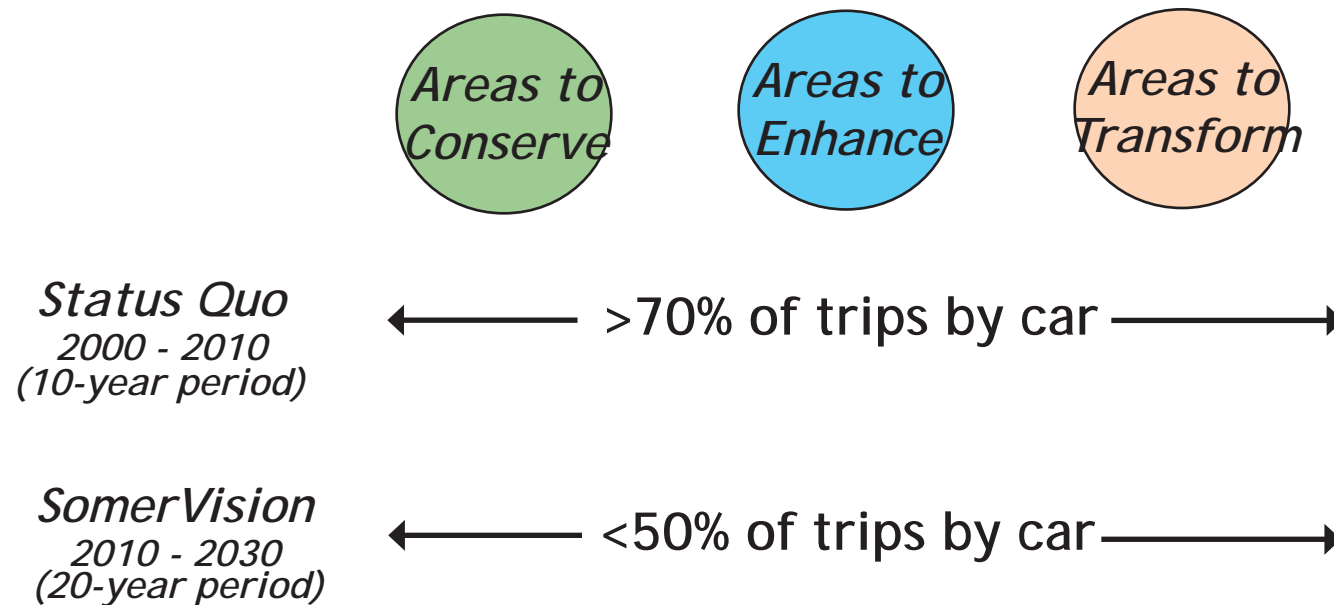


# Appendix 2

## The SomerVision Numbers: Why do They Matter?

### Why Does it Matter?

According to Census data, roughly 70% of all trips taken by Somerville residents are by car, rather than by transit, walking, or bicycling. New transit projects like the Orange Line station at Assembly Square and the Green Line Extension through the heart of Somerville will help reduce our dependence on the automobile. But the SomerVision strategy also depends on creating new jobs, housing and recreation opportunities within walking distance of our existing neighborhoods, and on designing our public realm so that Somerville remains a safe, convenient and pleasant to place get around without a car.



# Appendix 2

## The Numbers and the Maps: The SomerVision Numbers

### Aspirational Targets

*What's it all about?*

Comprehensive Plans allow communities to take into account all their priorities. Based on our shared values, and using the SomerVision Map, the SomerVision Numbers are our achievable but aspirational targets. SomerVision seeks to achieve the goals on this page by 2030.

### By 2030, Somerville will achieve:



*30,000 New Jobs* as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs.



*125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space* as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces.



*6,000 New Housing Units - 1,200 Permanently Affordable* as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville's best asset: its people.



*50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike, or Walking* as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City.

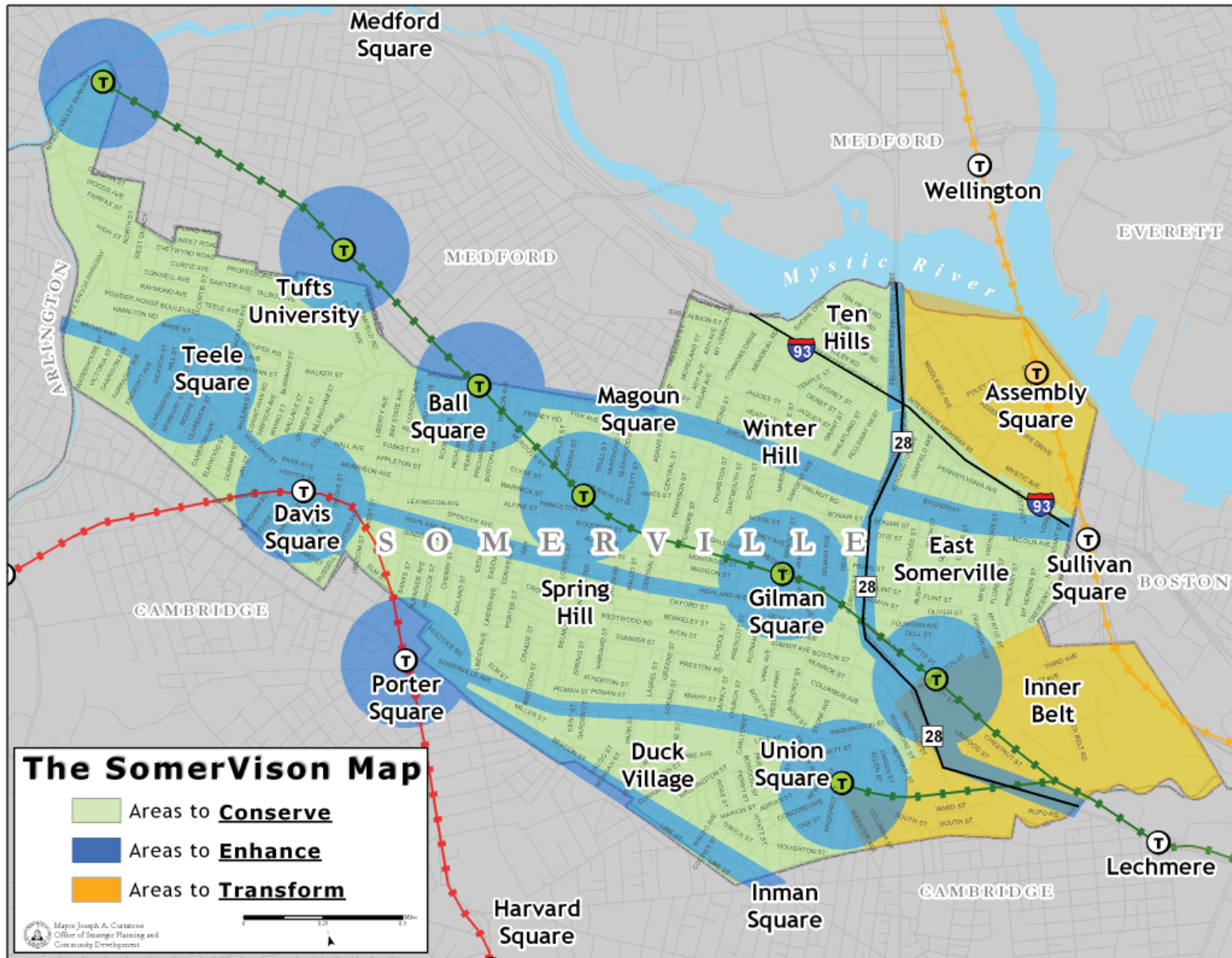


*85% of New Development in Transformative Areas* as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character.

*The SomerVision Numbers cannot be separated into parts and cannot be separated from the SomerVision Map in order to advocate for a specific action by the City. They must be viewed in the context of entire Comprehensive Plan including the backup information in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.*

# Appendix 2

## The Numbers and the Maps: The SomerVision Map

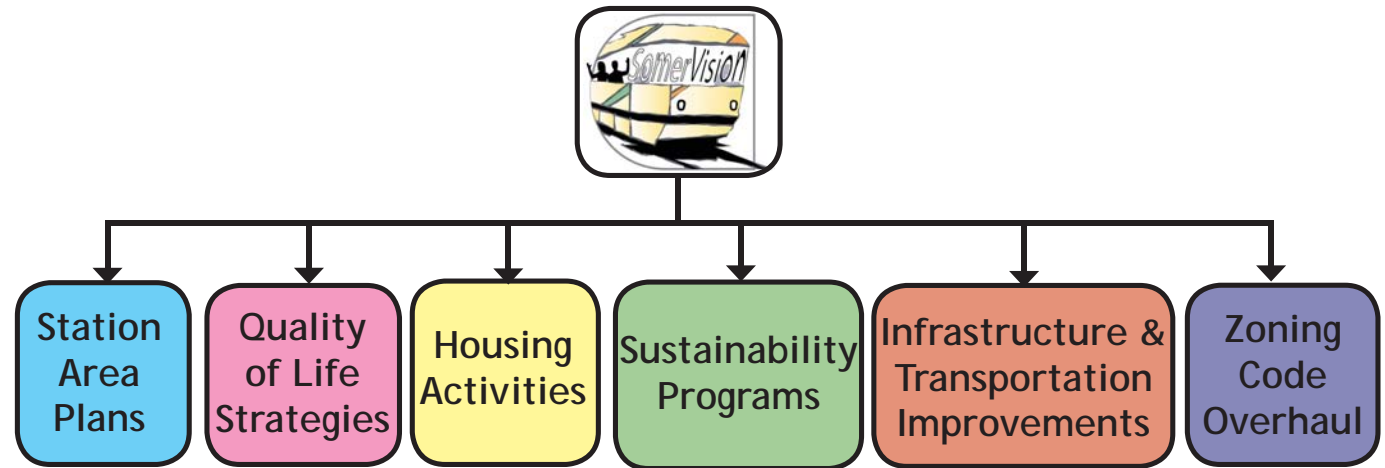




# 3. Implementation Plan

## Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range policy plan that sets the table for specific projects and programs to implement its goals. These six short-term and medium-term implementation priorities will allow us to address many of the most pressing goals, policies and actions recommended in the Somerville Plan.



*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

# Appendix 3

## Implementation Plan

### How to Use This Appendix

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan includes more than 500 Policies and Actions. To illustrate the relationship between the six Implementation Priorities and the Policies and Actions, a visual model has been developed as follows.

Each Implementation Priority has several sub-headings, which represent existing or proposed policies or programs. Underneath these subheadings, all relevant SomerVision Actions are listed. The SomerVision Actions use a coding scheme that references Appendix 2.



- "A" = Subcommittee section of Appendix 2
- "V" = Goal V
  - "C" = Policy C
    - "1" = Action 1

The values, vision, goals, policies and actions articulated in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan all reflect the best thinking of Somerville's residents, business community and elected officials. We must measure our progress, incorporate new statistics as they become available, and most importantly, continue to seek and respond to public opinion on the issues addressed by the plan.

*Each implementation priority addresses Actions from the five subject areas in Appendix 2. Individual actions are listed as follows:*



Neighborhoods



Commercial Corridors, Squares and Growth Districts



Resources



Transportation & Infrastructure



Housing

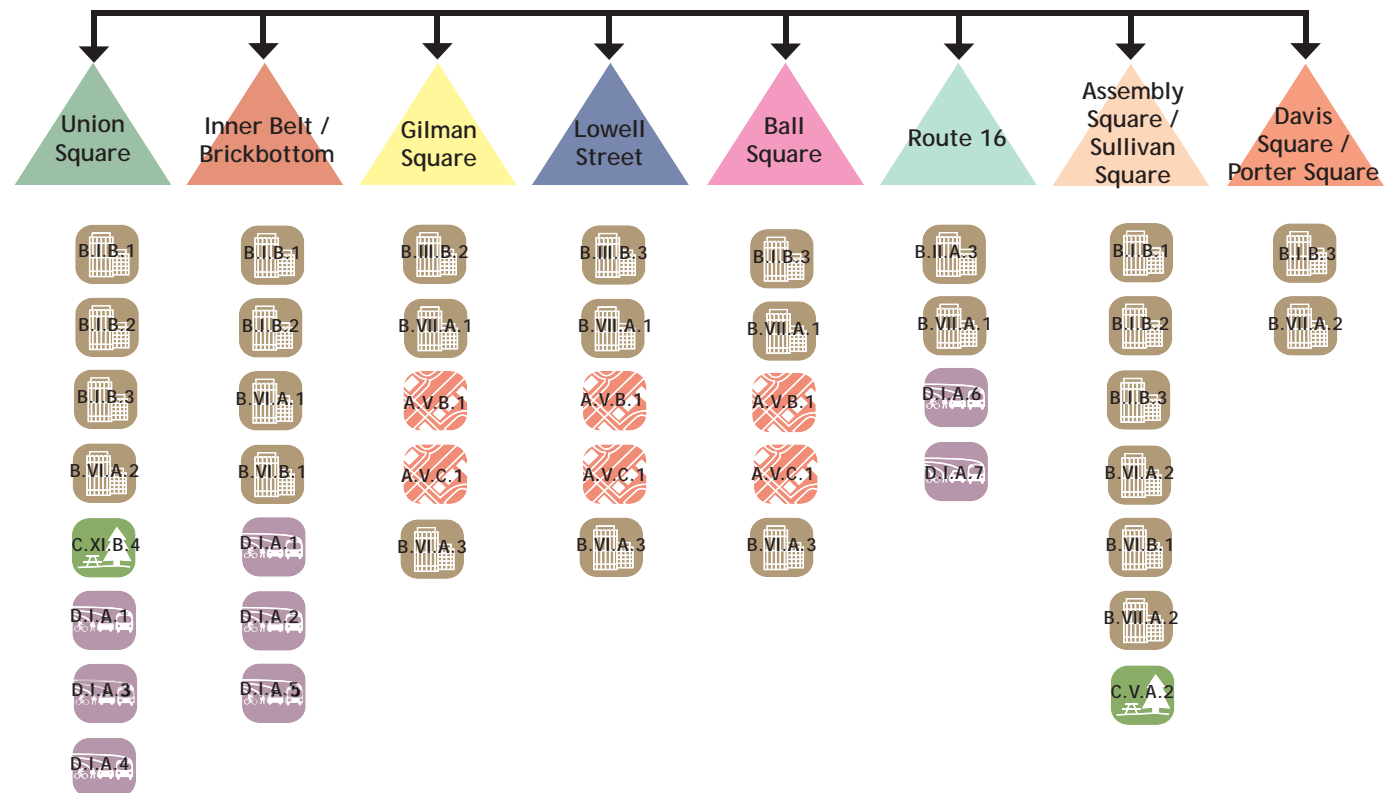
# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

## Station Area Plans

### Should Include:

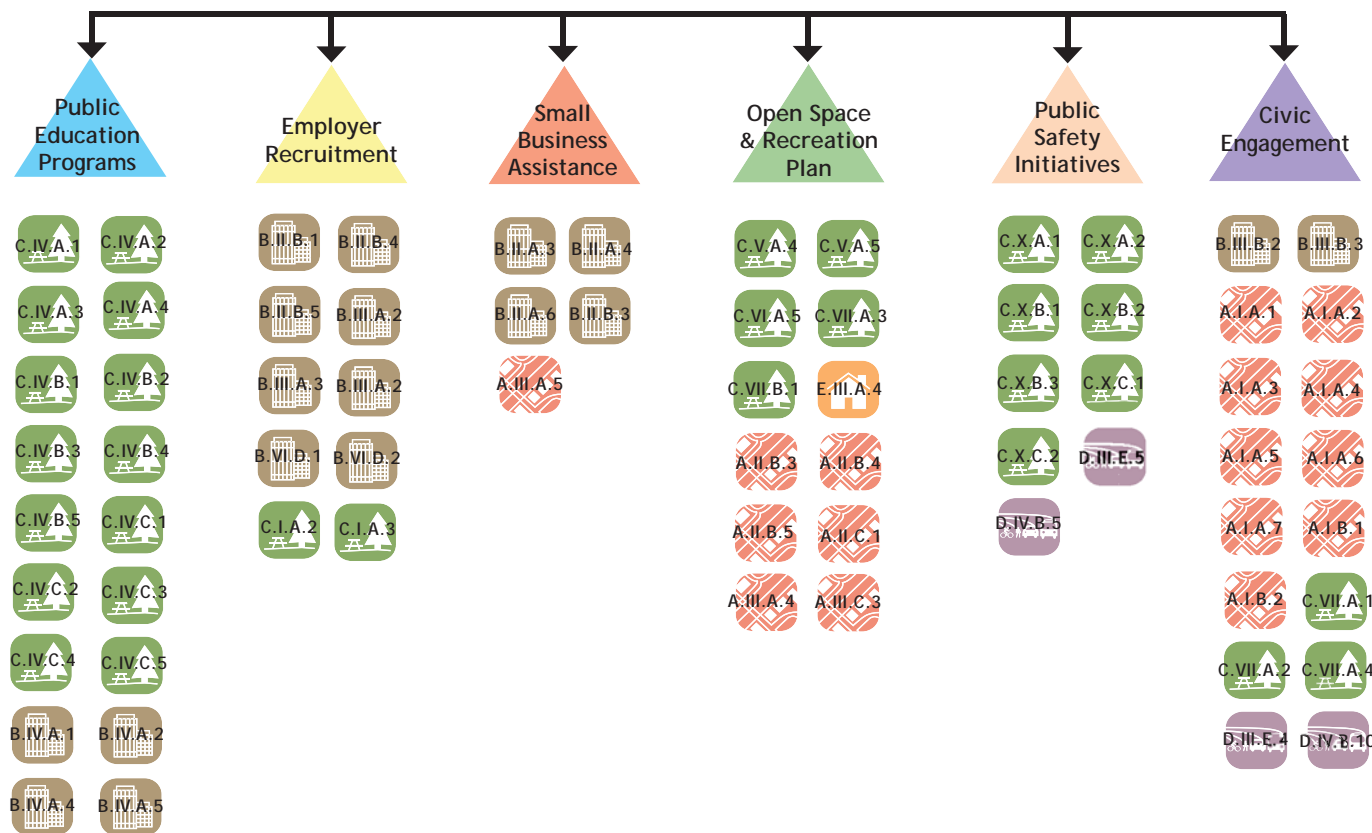
- a. Union Square / Boynton Yards
- b. Inner Belt / Brickbottom / McGrath Highway
- c. Gilman Square
- d. Lowell Street / Somerville Junction / Magoun Square
- e. Ball Square
- f. Route 16 / Mystic Valley Parkway
- g. Assembly Square / Sullivan Square
- f. Davis Square / Porter Square

A. **Station Area Planning:** All neighborhoods have a unique role in making Somerville a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. The City will continue its efforts to engage residents and business owners in planning for the future of their individual neighborhoods, with a focus on areas around existing and future transit stops. Area plans will focus on urban design, transportation and land use, with other topics to be determined by participants.



# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

B. **Quality-of-Life Strategies:** Somerville has been recognized as one of the most livable cities in the nation, and our efforts around public education, parks and recreation, cultural programming, public safety, open government, and the business environment and all play key roles. Each of these areas can best be addressed when they are coordinated and planned for in a strategic fashion.



## Quality of Life Strategies

### Should Include:

- a. Public Education programs, including SomerPromise
- b. Employer recruitment
- c. Small business assistance
- d. Open Space and Recreation Plan
- e. Public Safety initiatives, including Community Policing
- f. Civic engagement programs, including SomerStat and ResiStat

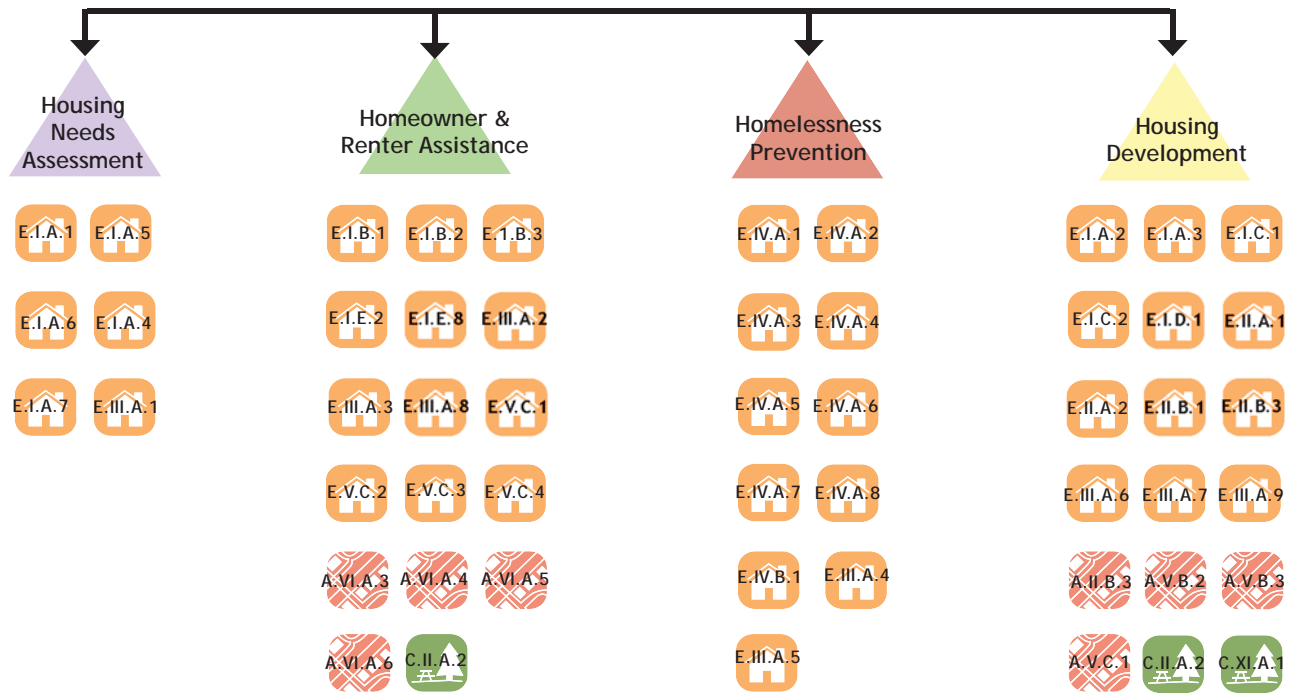
# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

## Housing Activities

### Should Include:

- a. Housing Needs Assessment
- b. Homeowner & renter assistance
- c. Homelessness prevention programs
- d. New housing development

C. **Housing Activities:** Somerville is the kind of place where people want to live, raise a family and retire. Our city must continue to offer a range of housing options in terms of price, space, location and services. Our strategies must be driven by the best local data, and we will continue to leverage existing partnerships with state and federal agencies, as well as private and nonprofit entities to ensure that we meet our housing goals.





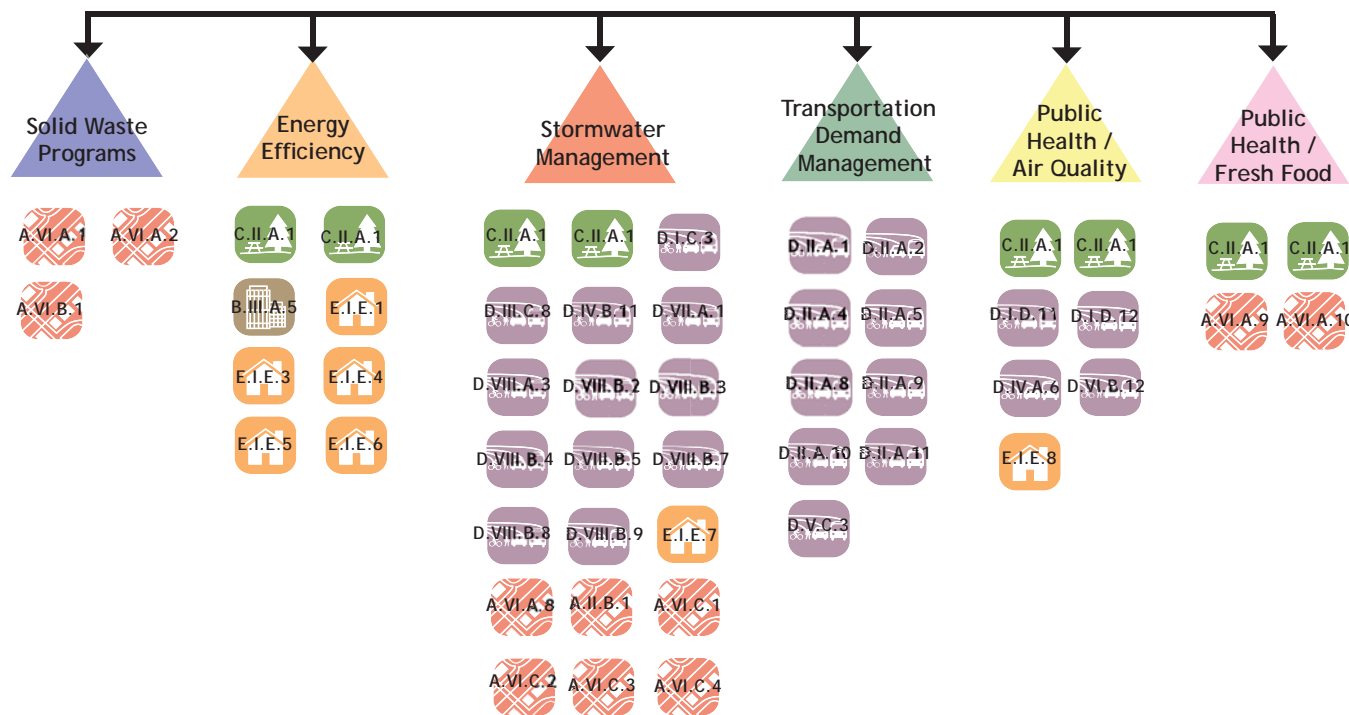
# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

D. **Sustainability Programs:** Somerville residents have spoken loud and clear: the City should take the lead in efforts to promote economic, environmental and social sustainability. We must continue to develop, test, and implement creative municipal programs such as single-stream recycling, home energy efficiency assistance and the nationally-recognized Shape Up Somerville public health partnership.

## Sustainability Programs

### Should Include:

- a. Solid waste programs
- b. Energy efficiency programs
- c. Stormwater management policies
- d. Transportation demand management
- e. Public health programs, including air quality and access to fresh foods



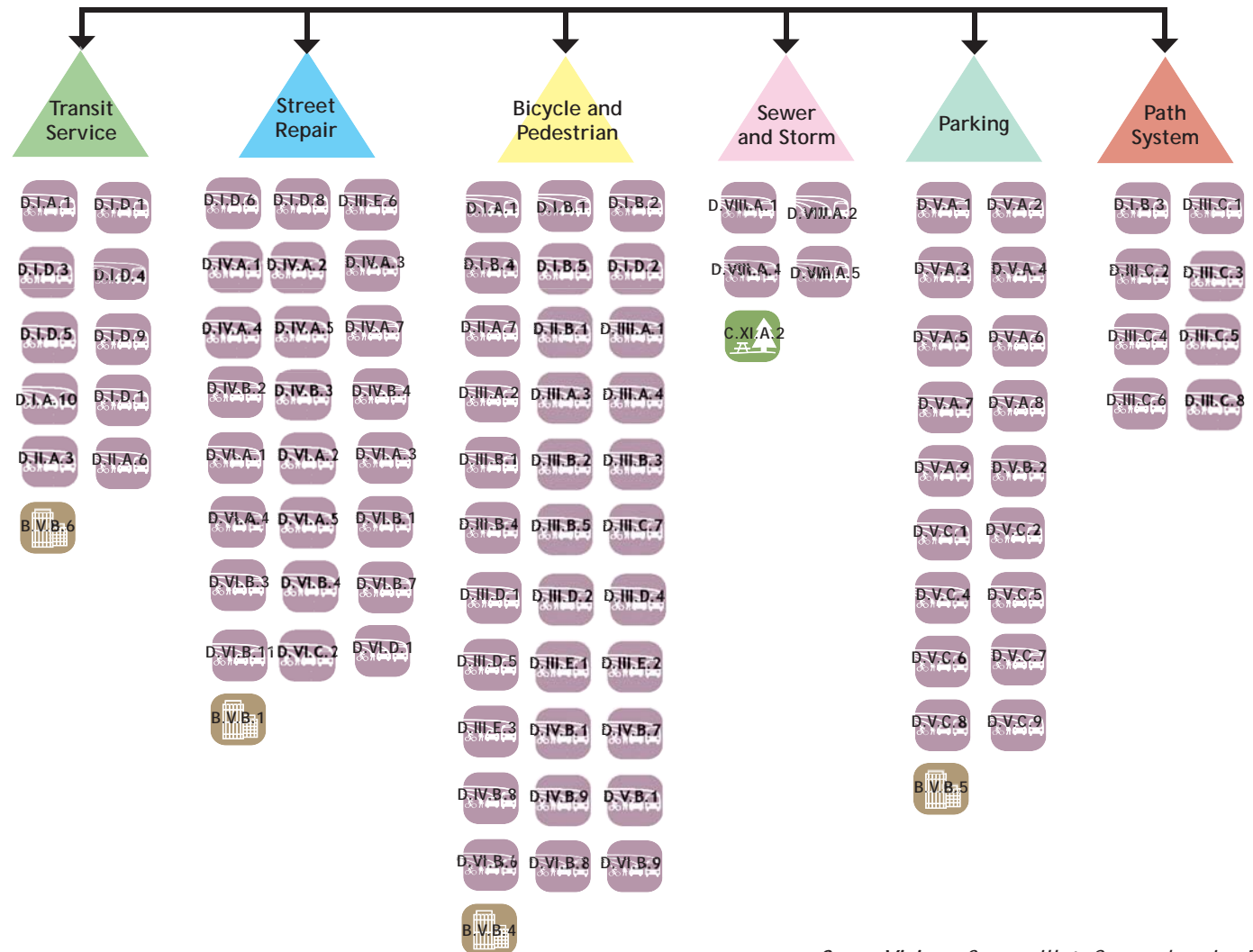
# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

## Infrastructure & Transportation Improvements

### Should Include:

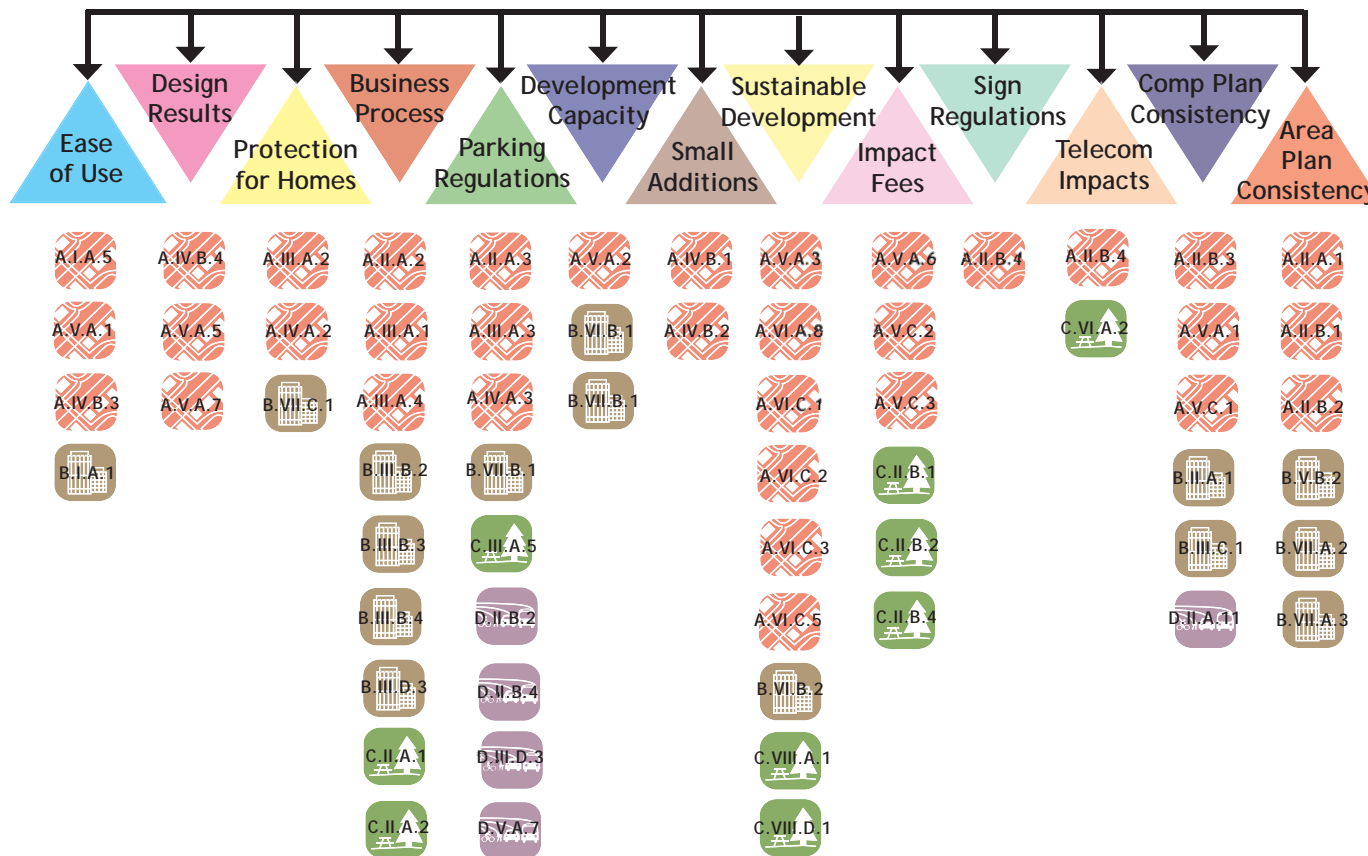
- a. Transit service improvements
- b. Street repair, repaving and painting
- c. Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility
- d. Sewer and storm drainage
- e. On-street, off-street and resident permit parking
- f. A city-wide multi-use path system

**E. Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements:** Somerville has made great progress in upgrading our transportation and utility infrastructure. Each project gives our residents and business owners the opportunity to make Somerville's neighborhoods safer, more accessible and more attractive.



# Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

F. **Zoning Code Overhaul:** Municipal zoning should reflect the values of a community, and implement the goals of its Comprehensive Plan. Review and overhaul of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance will help us conserve our great residential neighborhoods, enhance our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transform our opportunity areas. The last time Somerville looked at zoning in a comprehensive way was 1988-1990. Since that time, the zoning tools available to communities have evolved. A fresh look at the zoning ordinance will allow Somerville to apply the same level of innovation to land use review as we have done to so many other areas of municipal government.



## Zoning Code Overhaul

### Should Include:

- Review and overhaul of the code, to address ease of its use
- Predictable results for high-quality urban design, using innovative tools including form-based codes
- Protection of existing single and two family homes
- Simplification of the process for establishing and growing a small business
- Parking regulations that reflect Somerville's urban character
- Reflection of the capacity of properties to handle development
- Identification of appropriate/inappropriate small additions including dormers
- Sustainable development features and incentives
- Sliding scale impact fees to provide for off-site benefits
- Contextual sign regulations
- Strategies to address visual impacts of telecommunications infrastructure
- Consistency with the SomerVision goals, policies and actions
- Consistency with area plan goals, policies and actions

# Appendix 3

## Implementation Plan



*Banner: Meagan O'Brien*

### Metrics for Measurement

To be most effective, Comprehensive Plans should include performance management strategies. In Somerville, municipal performance management has been revolutionized by the SomerStat program, which helps elected officials, city staff and residents to measure progress using cutting-edge statistics.

The primary metric for measuring the Comprehensive Plan's success is the SomerVision Numbers. These aspirational targets for job and housing growth, access to open space, and management of transportation and land use have been carefully calculated to be ambitious, practical and complementary. They balance our city's diverse needs, and remind us that progress towards each target will be best achieved by thinking about all simultaneously.

The second set of metrics are the six SomerVision Implementation Priorities. These priorities also reflect a framework for decision-making that will ensure we continue to think about the big picture. They are also designed to help policymakers to build upon the progress we have already made as a community, and to implement the most creative solutions possible.

# Appendix 3

## Implementation Plan

### Five-Year Update Strategy

Comprehensive plans work best when they can respond to changing conditions in the community. Many states require cities and towns to update their comprehensive plans every five years. The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document that grows with the community, and to this end, the City of Somerville should update the plan every five years, beginning in 2017.

By 2017, Somerville will have experienced a number of significant changes that should be reflected in its Comprehensive Plan. These include:

- 2013: Update to Somerville's Five-Year Consolidated Plan, which sets priorities for the City's federal Community Development Block Grant funding administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- 2013: Update to Somerville's Five-Year Open Space and Recreation Plan, which sets priorities for federal, state and local spending on parks projects
- 2013: Completion of Station Area Plans for the six planned MBTA Green Line stations in Somerville
- 2014: Planned opening of the MBTA Orange Line station at Assembly Square
- 2014: Planned completion of the \$8 million streetscape improvements for Broadway in East Somerville
- 2016: Planned opening of the MBTA Green Line stations at Washington Street and Union Square

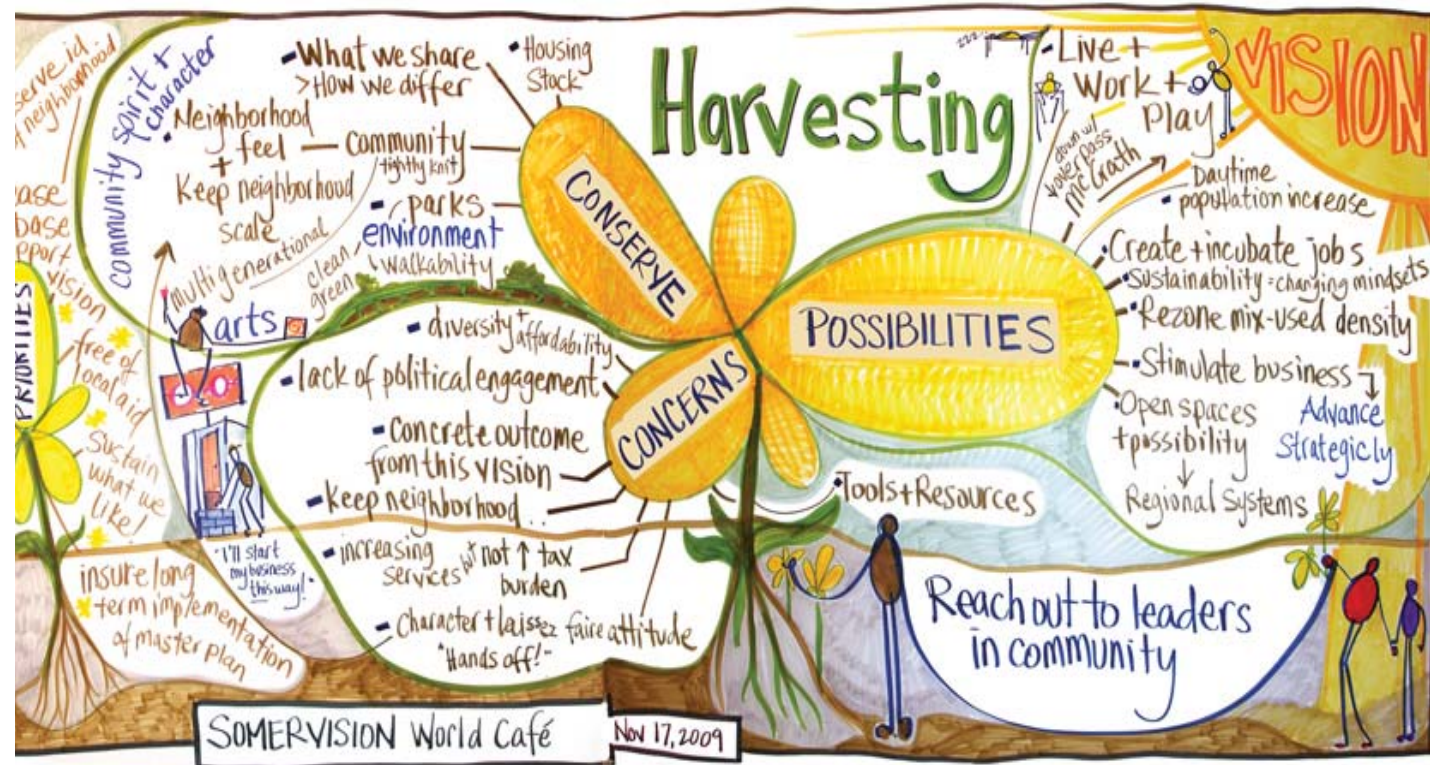
Therefore, an update to the SomerVision plan in 2017 is recommended.



Banner: Meagan O'Brien



# 4. The SomerVision Process



*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

# Appendix 4

## The SomerVision Process

### Process Overview

Somerville is always changing, and the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan is intended to help us leverage that change for the benefit of our community.

Somerville has never had a Comprehensive Plan. In 2007, City officials and community organizations began to build a strategy for preparing Somerville's first-ever Comprehensive Plan. Recognizing that any successful plan would need to be rooted in a shared understanding of Somerville, City staff worked with local nonprofit organizations to prepare a series of "Trends Reports" in 2008. By 2009, the Trends Reports were completed, and a six-month series of community meetings were held to discuss the results.

Based on public feedback, a broad-based Steering Committee was formed to guide the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. Stakeholder groups were asked to appoint representatives to the Steering Committee, and by the spring of 2009, a group of more than sixty volunteers had been assembled, representing more than thirty distinct constituent groups. To ensure the maximum level of public participation, all meetings of the Steering Committee were advertised to the public, held in accessible locations, and broadcast on community access television.



# Appendix 4

## The SomerVision Process



### Process Flow Chart

The three-year public process yielded an incredible amount of buy-in from the SomerVision Steering Committee, and from the hundreds of community members who gave their time planning for Somerville's future. More than sixty public meetings were conducted as part of the SomerVision process. Thousands of volunteer hours were recorded. The result is truly a Comprehensive Plan.





# Appendix 4

## The SomerVision Process

### Our Shared Values

To help community members articulate shared values, a series of innovative workshops were held in late 2009 and early 2010. These workshops featured exciting conversations between neighbors, which were recorded in artistic posters so that participants could actually see their own words become part of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Goals, Policies & Actions

In Phase 2, the SomerVision Steering Committee took the values statements generated by the community and began shaping them into a series of Goals, Policies and Actions. This challenging task took an entire year, and to make sure that the Steering Committee's work remained consistent with public opinion, public surveys were conducted and goals workshops were held to generate additional feedback.

#### Phase 1: Values

#### Phase 2: Goals, Policies & Actions

Public "World Cafe" Workshops

Steering Committee Drafting of Values Statement

Steering Committee Drafting of Goals, Policies & Actions

Public Survey of Goals, Policies & Actions

Public Workshops on Goal Statements



# Appendix 4

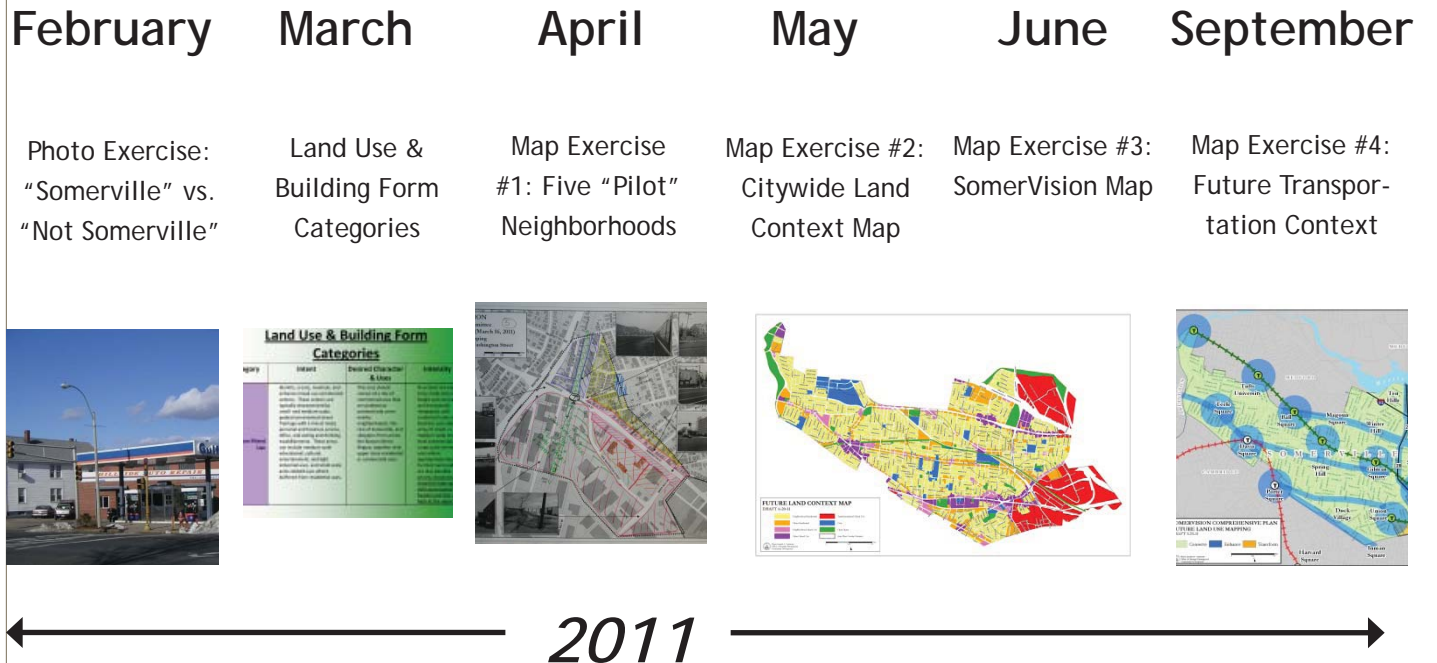
## The SomerVision Process



### The Maps

Having written, assembled, and reviewed a remarkable list of 36 Goals, and more than 500 Policies and Actions, the Steering Committee began the third phase of its work in 2011. Phase 3 focused on the patterns of land use, building forms and transportation networks that will be required to make sure that Somerville remains a great place to live, work, play and raise a family for the next generation.

Using a series of interactive exercises, the Steering Committee identified, described, and mapped the types of development and circulation patterns that were consistent with our shared values and the SomerVision Goals, Policies and Actions. The results were a series of three maps: the Future Land Context Map, the Future Transportation Context Map, and the SomerVision Map.



# Appendix 4

## The SomerVision Process

### Planning Board / Board of Aldermen Review

The SomerVision Steering Committee released the draft Comprehensive Plan to the Somerville Planning Board and Board of Aldermen on February 23rd, 2012. In an effort to introduce the plan to the general public, a promotional video featuring Steering Committee members was filmed and distributed, the Mayor wrote an op-ed column in a local newspaper, briefing presentations were provided to partner organizations and City staff appeared on community access television to answer questions about the Comprehensive Plan.

Under Massachusetts General Law, municipal planning boards are the regulatory body required to formally adopt a Comprehensive Plan (M.G.L. 41, Section 81d). In an effort to incorporate broad-based discussion about the goals of this plan, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and City staff sought to also secure endorsement by the Board of Aldermen.

After the draft plan was submitted in February, it was referred to the Board of Aldermen standing committees on Land Use and on Housing and Community Development for detailed review. Committee hearings open to the public were held in late March and early April. The Planning Board also discussed the draft plan in public meetings in March and April 2012. The Board of Aldermen endorsed the draft plan on April 12th, 2012, and the Planning Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan on April 19th, 2012.



January

Public Information  
Campaign begins

February

Draft Comprehensive  
Plan document  
formally submitted

March

Discussions with  
Planning Board,  
Board of Aldermen  
Committees

April

Formal endorsement by  
the Board of Aldermen  
and formal approval by  
the Planning Board



2012



## 5 • Glossary

### A

**Abut:** To be located directly next to.

**Active landscaping:** Landscaping that is designed not just to look nice, but also to absorb, accommodate, or direct stormwater.

**ADA compliance:** Designed to the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, which designates elements such as minimum clearances and maximum slopes for facilities to be safe for all users.

**Adaptability:** Refers to housing that is built with design features that can easily be adapted at a later date to meet the changing needs of the occupants, particularly those who are elderly or have physical disabilities.

**Adaptive Reuse:** Reusing a building or site for a use that is different than the originally intended use. For example, a church becomes condominiums. This practice can allow for the preservation of buildings and neighborhood character.

**Area Median Income Limits (AMI):** Regional Income Limits published annually by the U.S. Department of

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# Glossary

Housing and Urban Development to determine income eligibility for affordable housing and other federal programs.

**Area Plans:** A long-range plan for a specific geographic area within the City. Elements include, but are not limited to, land use, traffic and pedestrian circulation, building form and scale, urban and landscape design, open space, housing, economic development and environment.

**Arts Overlay District:** A district created to encourage the preservation and enhancement of arts-related uses, including studio space as well as living space for artists.

## B

**Bicycle boxes:** Painted, on-street, rectangles that indicate where it is safe for cyclists to wait in an intersection, particularly for left turns.

**Bike share:** A system of bikes and docking stations which makes bikes available for public use. An example in Boston is the Hubway bike share system. Other systems include the Tufts program that makes bikes available to members of the university community. Bike share systems provide affordable short-distance trips in an urban area as an alternative to buses or private vehicles.

**Brownfield:** Property on which environmental contamination has occurred, or is perceived to have occurred. Brownfield properties generally viewed as unattractive for redevelopment due to uncertainty regarding the time and money needed to test for and potentially clean contamination.

**Bump-out:** A streetscape configuration in which the sidewalk extends out into the intersection to make it more visible and allow a better vantage point from which a pedestrian may cross.

**Bus boxes:** An area on the street indicated by paint and signage reserved for a bus stop, where no parking is allowed.

**Bus priority signals:** Traffic signals designed to change when a bus is present, thus decreasing delays to the schedule.

**Business Improvement Districts:** A mechanism by which revitalization efforts are funded using voluntary payments from business owners in a specific district. Municipal governments are empowered to create Business Improvement Districts under Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 40.0)

# Glossary

**Business Welcome Kit:** A set of printed or electronic informational materials provided to new or prospective business owners; an introduction to regulatory requirements, frequently-asked questions, and resources for technical and financial assistance.

**By-right Development:** A development that is allowed as a property owner's right and can be constructed without requiring a special permit or variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals or Planning Board.

## C

**Catalyst Site:** Property on which improvements or redevelopment are expected to trigger redevelopment of multiple nearby properties.

**Catch-basin:** The structure under the street that holds storm water as it flows into the storm water system.

**Clean diesel:** Diesel-powered engines that use advanced technology to reduce emissions.

**Combined sewer overflow (CSO):** The site where sewer wastewater and stormwater directly empty into a body of water. This occurs during heavy rainfall where the combined sewer and drain system cannot normally process the high volume of water.

**Commercial Tax Base:** All properties which are assessed and taxed for commercial, industrial, or mixed use. In Massachusetts, municipalities are enabled to assess and tax property at different rates depending on use, and many communities including Somerville set commercial tax rates higher than residential tax rates.

**Community Preservation Act (CPA):** A Massachusetts state law that allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge on real estate tax and matched with state funds; municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum.

**Community Reinvestment Act (CRA):** Title VIII of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977, a United States federal law designed to encourage banks to help meet the needs of borrowers in all segments of their communities, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

**Community-based public art:** Artwork that is generated from artists in the community; examples could be a mural or public art that was created or produced in the community.

# Glossary

Concurrent traffic signals: Traffic signal configuration that allows pedestrians to cross when the parallel light is green.

Contra-flow bike lanes: A bike lane used in special situations where cyclists are intended to move against the flow of traffic. These types of lanes are often used one-way streets; an example is on Scott Street at the corner of Beacon Street and Park Street.

Conventional Zoning: Land use regulations based on the segregation of land uses and dimensional controls such as height limits, setbacks, floor area ratio, and parking requirements.

Cultural institutions: Organizations, agencies or facilities that serve or promote a specific element of our community's cultural heritage. Examples include churches and other places of worship, schools, museums, libraries, social clubs, performance venues or art studios.

Cycletrack: a street design element that provides space for cyclists on the sidewalk side of the curb, rather than in the street.

## D

Demand-pricing measures: A pricing structure that seeks to control demand by increasing or decreasing pricing; for example changing parking prices during specific times of day.

District Improvement Financing: A financing tool enabled under Massachusetts General Law that allows municipal governments to borrow for specific purposes, using new taxes from the resulting private development as collateral.

Dynamic signage / dynamic messages: Electronics that can display customized, time sensitive messages, rather than only scheduled arrival times or standard information.

## E

Electrification: Conversion into electric technologies, such as implementing electric commuter trains rather than diesel.

Environmental Justice: Efforts to ensure that the environment and human health are fairly protected for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, or income.

Environmental Sustainability: Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future

# Glossary

generations to meet their own needs.

Exclusive crossings signals: Traffic signal configuration that allows pedestrians to cross when all lights are red.

Expiring Use Housing: Privately-owned, publicly subsidized, affordable housing that can be converted to market rate housing upon pay-off of the mortgage or expiration of the subsidy contract.

## F

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): The ratio of the total floor area of all stories of a building on a parcel of land to the size of the land it sits on.

Form Based Code: A type of land use regulation that addresses the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on the micromanagement and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters such as Floor Area Ratio, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios and traffic level of service. Form based codes encourage predictable results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form as the organizing principle of the code.

Formula Businesses: Businesses characterized by ownership structures located outside of Somerville, and rigid requirements from the corporate owner for design and operations including but not limited to, signage, facades, parking, products and prices.

## G

Green Building: A building that takes into account energy-efficiency, environmentally-friendly practices and sustainability throughout the life of the structure.

Green Technologies: Technologies such as energy efficient heating and cooling systems, alternative fuels and sources of energy, and renewable materials, that reduce energy use and maintain the natural environment.

Grey water system: A water system that allows minimally used domestic water from, for example, laundry or showering, to be reused rather than put into the sewer.



# Glossary

## H

**Historic Interpretation Centers:** Cultural facilities that are designed to showcase historical and cultural sites and/or events, attracting visitors and providing multimedia education and interpretation opportunities.

**Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program:** Federal income-tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic properties. The goal is to encourage protection of landmarks through designating properties to the National Register of Historic Places and returning them to the tax rolls with a new profitable use.

**Housing Tenure:** Refers to the financial situation by which a person occupies a housing unit; the most common examples include rental, ownership, and cooperative housing.

## I

**Impervious surfaces:** Materials such as asphalt or concrete which do not allow water to be absorbed causing it to run off the site and become stormwater runoff.

**Inclusionary Housing:** Municipal zoning ordinances that require a share of housing construction be affordable to low and moderate income households.

**Incubator:** A commercial or industrial facility that is used as a temporary, low-risk space for entrepreneurs to locate start-up companies. Incubator spaces are sometimes owned or managed by nonprofit organizations, and generally seek to reduce startup costs for new businesses by providing below-market rent, shared equipment or materials, flexible hours, or technical assistance.

**Infill Development:** Real estate development or redevelopment that occurs at locations immediately adjacent to existing structures. Infill development can occur at a variety of scales and intensities, but must be contextual, meaning that the design of a new infill project must compliment the existing neighborhood fabric.

**Infrastructure:** The basic facilities, services and installations needed for a functional society, municipality, or any general modern lifestyle; this includes systems such as transit, roads, bridges, water, electricity, and other utilities.

**Intermodal:** Relating to more than one type of transportation; for example, a station that connects the subway with regional buses.

# Glossary

Invasive plants: A non-native plant that has the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside its natural range. Some of these plants can harm native species and disrupt the ecological balance of an area.

## K

Kiss-and-ride: A driveway designed for quick drop-offs on site; versus a simple drop-off that allows room to stop on-street.

## L

Leading (pre-emptive) pedestrian interval signals: Traffic signal configuration that allows pedestrians to enter the intersection before the parallel light turns green, allowing better visibility and safety.

Local Historic District: A designation program administered through a local Historic Preservation Commission that is intended to identify, preserve and promote historic and cultural assets. Designated properties can qualify for various tax incentive programs, and many changes on the designated property are subject to review by the local Commission.

## M

Mixed-Use: A pattern of land-use and development under which residential, commercial and/or institutional uses are located in close proximity to one another. Mixed use can occur within the same building, as occurs in numerous Somerville buildings with retail or restaurant space on the ground floor, and residential or office uses on upper stories. It is also a pattern that occurs at the district or neighborhood scale, providing residents with easy access to goods, services and amenities within a short walk of their homes.

Mode choice: The types of transportation available to a user. Common examples include automobile, bike, bus, commuter rail and subway.

Multi-use paths: Pathways designed for multiple different users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and joggers. Multi-use paths are typically separated from roadways. The Somerville Community Path is our best-known local example.

## N

# Glossary

**National Historic District:** A designation program administered through the National Park Service that is intended to identify, preserve and promote historic and cultural assets. Designations can be granted for individual properties, as well as for larger districts. Designated properties can qualify for various tax incentive programs, but National Register designation does not limit work that private owners can do to their buildings.

**New Economy Jobs:** Jobs in economic sectors that are forecasted to grow during the next decade, including but not limited to health care, education, information technology, precision manufacturing and green energy.

## P

**Payment in Lieu of Parking:** Regulatory mechanism by which developers are granted relief from the zoning code's requirements for off-street parking spaces by making cash payments to the City for the purpose of funding shared municipal parking lots and garages.

**Pedestrian-oriented:** A principle of urban design under which land uses, buildings and circulation networks are planned with a higher level of priority given to pedestrians than to vehicles.

**Per capita:** A measurement per person; for example, per capita demand is the amount of demand per person, rather than system-wide.

**Permeability:** A measure of the ability of a material to transmit fluids. Grass and soils are permeable, concrete and asphalt are not.

**Permit Ombudsman:** A public employee whose function is to guide applicants through various permitting processes required for new development or changes in property use.

**Permit Streamlining:** A policy framework by which the government reduces the complexity, cost and time of permitting processes related to new development or changes in property use. Streamlining efforts typically include a variety of elements designed to increase predictability and efficiency for both applicants and government regulators.

**Pervious pavement:** Paving materials designed to allow stormwater to flow through and be absorbed into the soil below them; examples include gravel, pelletized rubber, paver blocks and certain types of bricks.

## R

# Glossary

Radial transit: Public transportation lines designed to connect the existing “spokes” of the system.

Rain barrels: Containers that store water collected from downspouts on buildings. Collected water is often used for irrigation.

Real Estate Transfer Tax: A tax on the sale, granting, and transfer of real property or an interest in real property.

Redundancy: Providing back-up components to ensure a system will keep running even if one component malfunctions.

Redevelopment: Constructing a new building on land that currently has a dilapidated building on it or on land that is vacant but previously had a use or a building on it.

Rent-to-Own: Refers to a housing option in which a renter pays a set amount each month to live in the home , with a portion of the amount going towards a down-payment on the homes. At the end of a set period of time, the renter has the option to purchase the home.

Retrofit: To update or modernize a device or structure with new parts, often for a new use.

Ride share programs: A system of carpooling or communal car usage paid for on a per-hour basis.

## S

Shared Parking: A form of parking management that allows multiple users to share a parking space, reducing the number of spaces needed on a site.

Signalization: How traffic signals are designed and timed.

Single-occupancy commuting / single-occupancy vehicle: Refers to a person driving alone in a car; this is a low-efficiency mode of transportation that causes most roadway congestion.

Site Assemblage: A process by which multiple adjacent land parcels are brought under common ownership or control for the purposes of redevelopment as a single project.

# Glossary

**Somerville Condominium Conversion Ordinance:** Article IV, Section 7-61 through Section 7-90 of the Somerville Municipal Code of Ordinances. Passed in 1985, it guides how conversion of rental units into condominium ownership must be undertaken in the City of Somerville.

**Somerville Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance:** A City Zoning Ordinance passed in 1990, SZO Article 13. The goal is to create long-term affordable housing, to assure a community that represents all income levels. If a development has eight or more housing units, the Ordinance requires that 12.5% of the units be reserved as affordable. Units built through the Ordinance are offered for sale or rent to income-eligible households at below market rates and are kept affordable forever.

**Somerville Linkage Ordinance:** The Somerville Linkage Ordinance, SZO Article 15, was passed in 2000 to increase the supply of long-term affordable housing and mitigate the impact of large-scale commercial development on the supply and cost of housing in the City of Somerville. Triggered by commercial developments seeking a special permit for space over 30,000 square feet, the Ordinance requires that a fee of \$3.91 times the total number of square feet above 30,000. This fee is deposited into the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund for the creation of affordable housing.

**Special Permit:** A permit required by the Zoning Ordinance for certain uses or structures that need individual attention and require a public hearing. Special permits often include conditions to reduce the impact of the proposal and ensure that the proposal is not more detrimental than the existing situation. These permits are issued by the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals.

**Special Permit Granting Authority:** The Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals are the Special Permit Granting Authorities in Somerville. They hold public hearings and issue permits related to zoning approvals.

**Stormwater Runoff:** Precipitation that flows over land or impervious surfaces and does not percolate into the ground. Stormwater runoff can accumulate debris and pollutants that can affect the water quality if it is untreated. Flooding is another negative impact of stormwater runoff.

**Stewardship:** Efforts to take care of something, often by promoting responsible planning and management of resources.

**Streetscape:** Elements of the built environment relating to public streets and adjacent buildings. These elements typically include sidewalks, crosswalks, plazas, medians, trees, lighting, signage, parking meters, benches, bicycle racks, bus shelters, building facades and public art.

**Sustainability:** A management principle that emphasizes the importance of addressing a community's current environmental, economic and

# Glossary

social challenges without negatively impacting the next generation of community members.

**Sustainable energy:** An energy source that is not finite. For example, oil is not sustainable because there is only a set amount of it on earth. Wind and solar are examples of energy supplies that do not end and are, therefore, sustainable.

## T

**Ten Year Plan to Reduce Chronic Homelessness:** A City of Somerville policy document which guides activities related to ending homelessness.

**Traffic-calming:** Street design elements that help to slow traffic so that the street is safer for all users. Examples include narrower lanes, curb extensions and bumpouts, textured pavements, and signs.

**Transit oriented development (TOD):** Development that is designed to take advantage of proximity to mass transit.

**Transportation Management Association (TMA):** Typically, a non-profit, member-controlled organization that provides transportation services in a particular area, such as a commercial district, medical center or industrial park.

**Typologies:** Templates outlining the various preferred options, for street design, for example.

## U

**Universal Design Guidelines:** A broad term that refers to ensuring that the built environment is accessible to all people, both with and without disabilities.

## V

**Vehicle Sharing or Car Share System:** A model of car rental where people rent cars for short periods of time, often hourly. This is an affordable and environmentally-friendly alternative to owning a car, for those who only need one occasionally.

**Visitability:** Refers to housing that is designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people with disabilities.

# Glossary

## W

**Walk-Ride Days:** A program that encourages residents to walk, bike, or take public transit to work rather than driving, on particular Fridays throughout the year. The goal of Walk/Ride days is to make Somerville safer, quieter and friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists, and to minimize the use and impact of cars in Somerville.

**Watershed:** A land area that drains to a specific river or other body of water. Watershed boundaries are typically delineated by hilltops and ridgelines. Most of Somerville's land area is located in the Mystic River watershed.

**Wayfinding:** A communication strategy intended to guide visitors to, through and around a site or a district. Wayfinding efforts typically focus on signage, but can also include printed and electronic guides, lighting or construction materials.

**Workforce Development:** Policies and programs that are designed to enhance the education and skills of a community's labor force. Workforce development efforts commonly target language proficiency, computer skills and financial literacy, in addition to more specialized skills associated with specific industries or professional certifications.

## XYZ

**Zoning Regulations:** Regulations intended to promote the health, safety and welfare of a community by controlling the size and use of buildings on private property. Common elements of zoning regulations include allowable uses, building heights, setbacks from property lines, and requirements for parking. The best examples equitably balance regulation of private property with the interests of the community as a whole, providing predictability for all users by using clear language, an easy-to-understand layout, and high-quality graphics.