



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

December 11, 2014

The Honorable Board of Aldermen
City Hall
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, Massachusetts

Honorable Members of the Board of Aldermen,

I hereby submit for discussion and approval the new Somerville Zoning Ordinance, which seeks to make zoning more predictable and fair for both residents and developers. This ordinance reflects numerous laudable goals tirelessly supported by this Board, myself and, most importantly members of the community such as inclusionary (affordable) housing, preservation of neighborhood character, and preferences for small, independently owned businesses, as well as providing zoning that enacts more than 100 policies and goals called for by the community in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan so that growth in Somerville reflects the community's values and vision. Among other improvements to the existing zoning code, this ordinance:

- Makes Somerville a national leader on inclusionary housing and onsite mix of affordable housing with percentages that go up to one in every five units (20 percent) in neighborhoods near current and future transit, so that the benefits of development in Somerville may be shared by the entire community
- Allows owners of 1-, 2-, and 3-family homes in Somerville—the dominant residential property types—to grow and change to accommodate growing families with common forms of minor enhancements such as dormers, bay windows, open front porches, a deck or small additions without the need for extensive review processes
- Ensures that infill development in residential neighborhoods will fit into the neighborhood, being mainly in the form of the types of buildings that are there today (1-, 2-, and 3-family homes), and allows us to provide more family housing in those neighborhoods rather than putting in larger-scale apartment-style buildings in the middle of existing 1-, 2- and 3-family neighborhoods (larger-scale apartment buildings will thus be directed to areas designated for transformation in the SomerVision plan such as InnerBelt and Assembly Square)





- Calls for our squares to grow around our forthcoming transit and does so in smart and balanced way by implementing the community-developed neighborhood plans for the Lowell St. Station, Gilman Station and InnerBelt
- Makes it easier to start a small business (simplifying the Use List from 297 uses to less than 100, and by doing make it easier to open small businesses in business districts)
- Puts formula businesses (chains) and businesses over 10,000 square feet into a special permit criteria requiring special scrutiny to protect the character of our neighborhoods (in short the ordinance makes it easier for small, independent businesses to open and more difficult for chains and larger retail to open)
- Creates Fabrication Districts in designated areas to ensure that arts, creative industry, maker businesses, small-scale quiet manufacturing, fabricators, kitchen incubators, and similar businesses will continue to coexist and thrive in districts and spaces zoned only for these uses (these areas include the Ames complex and at Vernon Street Studios)
- Permits artist WORK/LIVE housing in the Fabrication district, which allows certified artists to live in their studio spaces
- Expands the functionality of the existing Artist Overlay District to the rest of the city by allowing for Creative Studios in residential districts and permitting arts & creative enterprise uses in mixed-use districts
- Provides incentives for the adaptive reuse of civic and institutional uses located in the neighborhood residential district for arts & creative enterprises uses
- Ensures that in transformation areas such as InnerBelt and Brickbottom that new housing is done in conjunction with new commercial development so that the commercial and residential mixes called for in SomerVision will be achieved and the commercial tax base will continue to grow
- Establishes public realm standards, which are standards for developer-built streets and parks in the transformation districts, which has not previously been regulated
- Includes more than 200 graphics that make this ordinance easier to read, understand, and, ultimately, more customer-friendly

This submittal marks the continuation of a series of steps that will be taken to ensure community input and feedback on the ordinance. In the coming weeks, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development will undertake the following:

- Incorporate the more than 200 graphics being created into the new code
- Launch a website that will provide robust opportunity for public input
- Hold a public question-and-answer meeting prior to the public hearing to allow the public to ask questions



- Participate in a public hearing
- Incorporate public feedback into a revised ordinance before the vote on approval by the Board

All dates will be announced shortly.

Again, we thank you for your past advocacy and your forthcoming careful review of this ordinance.

Sincerely

Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor