




CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

FROM: Monica R. Lamboy, Executive Director 

DATE: June 24, 2010

SUBJECT: Update on City-Wide Comprehensive Plan

As you know, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) is in the process of preparing a citywide Comprehensive Plan. In June 2009, OSPCD prepared a staff report identifying the Plan's work plan and Steering Committee and presented it to the Board of Aldermen. Since that time, we met with approximately 500 people as part of the community visioning and open house efforts, in addition to our monthly Steering Committee meetings. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Plan's creation, provide the Plan's draft vision and goals, and outline the Plan's process and schedule. OSPCD respectfully requests that you forward this report to the Board of Alderman for their review.

BACKGROUND

The Somerville Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030 will look at the places that make our city distinctive - its squares and hills, residential neighborhoods, schools and institutions, roads, transit, and open space. It is also about the people that make Somerville special - the people who live, work, and play here today, and who will call Somerville home in the future. It recognizes what the community wants to preserve, as well as areas for investment and transit-oriented development that will shape the City's development patterns in the future. The Green Line Extension and Orange Line station at Assembly Square represent tremendous opportunities for Somerville to capitalize on the transit investment.

The Comprehensive Plan includes an analysis of specific trends, such as population and housing, that affect the future of the city; an overall vision for the future; key principles that shape the vision; goals, policies and actions that provide a framework for not only planned



growth, but also neighborhood preservation; and guidance to elected officials, City staff, business, neighborhoods, and other constituents, in order to achieve the city's vision. At the same time it addresses the unique aspects of Somerville, the Plan is also "comprehensive," in that it will incorporate all of the cornerstone requirements established in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81D, the legal foundation for the authority, objectives, content and application of local master plans.

At the heart of the Plan is an extensive process of community involvement and decision-making that will, ultimately, put the Plan into action.

PLAN OVERVIEW

Plan Elements

A Comprehensive Plan is composed of a series of separate, but interrelated, core elements that address specific topics established in M.G.L. Chapter 41, Section 81D. The elements of a Plan are interrelated in that they share common assumptions about population and economic growth in the geographic area to which the plan applies and time frame, typically 10-20 years. Per Massachusetts law, the Somerville Comprehensive Plan includes the following elements:

1. Vision, Goals and Policies Statements
Today & Tomorrow
2. Neighborhoods
Land Use Plan
3. Housing
Preservation & Creation of Program & Services
4. Corridors, Commercial Squares & Growth Districts
Economic Development
5. Community Resources
Open Space, Parks & Recreational Resources
Historic & Cultural Resources
Energy Demands / Conservation
Watershed Resources
6. Services and Facilities
Town, School, & Cultural Facilities
Water & Sewer Services
Health & Public Safety
7. Transportation & Infrastructure
Transportation & Mobility
Multi-modal Transportation
8. Implementation
Action Plan

As data and information is further compiled and analyzed, additional elements may be specifically captured within the Plan.

Public Involvement Process

OSPCD and the Mayor's Office are engaging in extensive public involvement and outreach, which include the following mechanisms:

1. Community meetings and workshops
2. Open houses (April 25, 2009 & June 12, 2010)
3. Visioning Sessions (November 2009-February 2010)
4. Comprehensive Plan website
5. Blog discussion

In addition to the above outreach mechanisms, a Steering Committee composed of residents and businesspersons has been convened. The specific composition of the Steering Committee is made up of mayoral appointees, representatives from wards across the city and at-large, and residents/businesses representative of various organizations. The Committee has approximately 60 appointed representatives and is regularly meeting at least once per month. All meetings of the Steering Committee are open to the public, although public comment occurs during scheduled time periods on the meeting agenda.

Please see *Attachment I* for the membership of the Steering Committee.

Ongoing Timeline

Creating the Plan includes four phases:

- Compilation and analysis of background information (April 2009-October 2009);
- Community visioning process (November 2009-February 2010);
- Identification of goals, policies/actions, and implementation steps (March 2010-December 2010); and,
- Review and adoption by Planning Board and Board of Aldermen (optional) (early 2011).

The intent of the public involvement and outreach strategy is to produce a Plan that can be sent to the Board of Alderman and Planning Board for their consideration in early 2011 (please see *Attachment II* for the Process Map).

VISIONING & GOALS PROCESS (November 2009 – June 2010)

To kick-off the Plan's visioning process in late 2009, OSPCD held a series of "World Cafés:" small round-table conversations aimed at creating greater community connection and mapping out the best ideas from a broad range of community members. Participants said that they enjoyed meeting other people enthusiastic about the future of Somerville and walked away with new thoughts and ideas. But most importantly, participants were excited about the prospect of helping plan our future. Through the World Cafés and in working with the Plan's Steering Committee, a vision was created that captures the elements vitally important to community members - diversity, community spirit, economic growth, city-wide accessibility, sustainability, and innovation. Please see *Attachment III & IV* for the draft Vision Statement.

After the Steering Committee reached consensus on the draft Vision Statement, staff and Committee members began to identify the goals that best reflected the elements of the Vision Statement. “Goals,” for a comprehensive plan, tend to be very general and describe ideal future conditions for a particular topic, such as housing or transportation. In early June, the Steering Committee and OSPCD staff prepared a draft set of Goal Statements. The Goal Statements were organized around the themes of work that Committee members focus on – Neighborhoods, Housing, Corridors, Commercial Squares & Growth Districts, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Community Resources. Each theme contains between five and ten goal statements. Please see *Attachment V* for the draft Goal Statements.

On Saturday, June 12th, the City of Somerville, MassDOT and a variety of community partners held an open house to discuss the Plan’s draft Vision and Goal Statements and present information on the Green Line Extension stations and surrounding land uses. The approximately 200 attendees were able to review the City’s draft vision and goal statements and provide their thoughts and ideas, while also hearing from MassDOT and providing input into the Green Line Extension process.

NEXT STEPS

The Steering Committee will continue to meet at least monthly through the summer and into the fall. OSPCD staff are working with the Committee to prepare a set of policies and actions, based on the draft Goal Statements. Some time in the early fall the Committee will start working on a land use map that will geographically depict the vision, goals and policies.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Alderman accept this report and provide comments to OSPCD staff.

List of Attachments

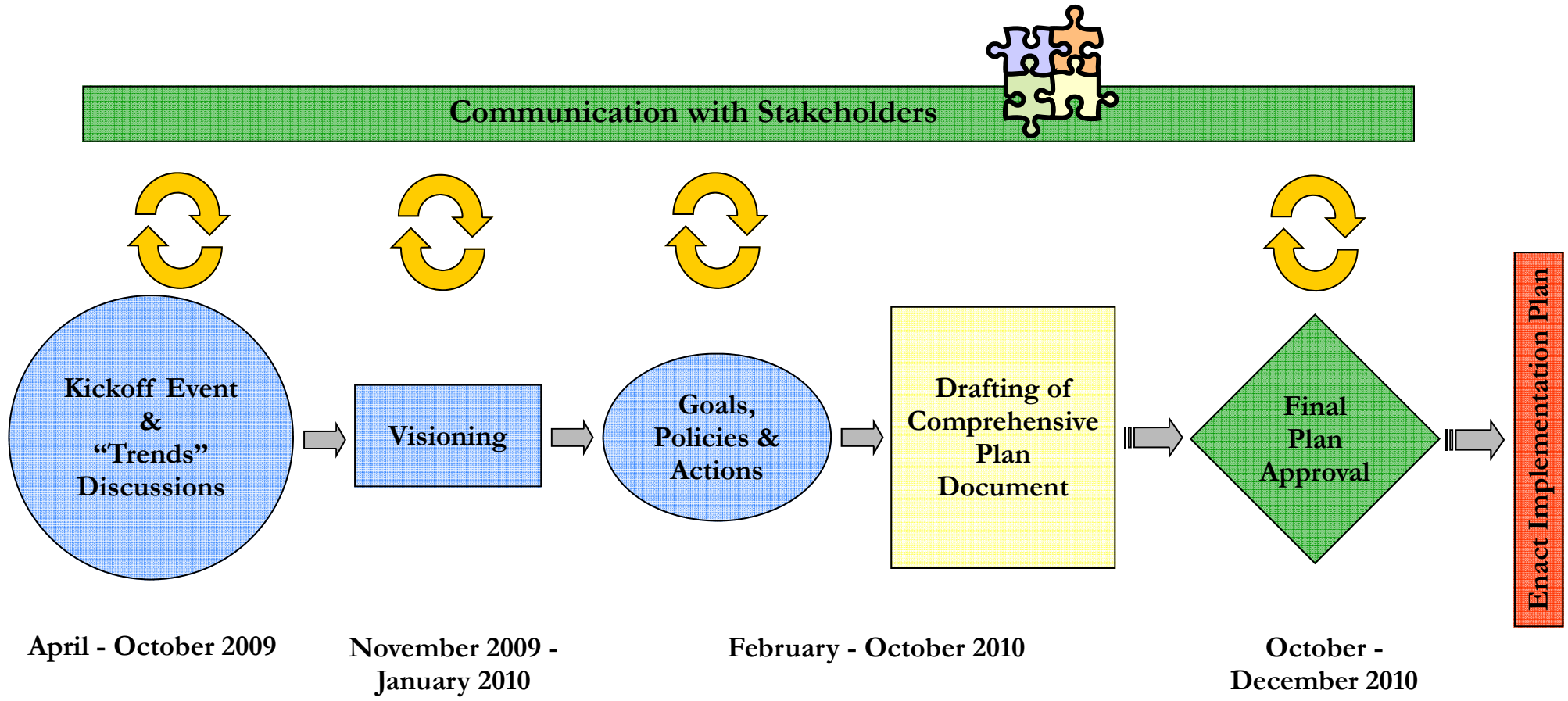
- I. Steering Committee – Membership
- II. Process Map/Schedule
- III. Community Visioning Sessions - Photos
- IV. Draft Vision
- V. Draft Goals



Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Mark	Alston-Follansbee	Jim	Monagle
Thomas	Bent	Alan	Moore
Paul	Bockelman	Elizabeth	Moroney
Ron	Bonney	Steve	Mulder
Brian	Brady	Charlie	Munitz
Brandy	Brooks	Ron	Newman
Jack	Connolly	Sean	O'Donovan
Helen	Corrigan	Scott	Pollack
David	Dahlbacka	Mary	Regan
Stuart	Dash	Ellin	Reisner
Ben	Echevarria	Paulette	Renault-Caragianes
Jo-Ann	Fontano	Alyssa	Rosen
Herb	Foster	Rick	Rossetti
Jim	Gallager	Barbara	Rubel
Richard	Graf	Rebecca	Schrumm
Mimi	Graney	Bill	Shea
Jim	Harvey	Jean	Sideris
Donna	Haynes	Naomi	Slagowski
Maryann	Heuston	Kimberly	Smith Cofield
Eliza	Johnston	Dan	Stachurski
Jerry	Laurentano	Adam	Sweeting
Jen	Lawrence	Erika	Tarlin
Dana	LeWinter	Anne	Tate
Mike	Libby	Peter	Tsourianis
Marty	Martinez	Heather	Van Aelst
Charlie	McKenzie	Linda	Vitiello
Debra	McLaughlin	Don	Warner
Lynn	McWhood	Wig	Zamore
		Ray	Zonghetti

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS MAP



Community Visioning Sessions



Somerville Vision Statement 2010-2030



In Somerville, We:

Value 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.

SomerVision Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030 - Draft Goal Statements

Neighborhoods Sub-Committee

Quality of Life

Foster vital, healthy, inclusive, and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, do business, learn, serve, and play.

Civic Engagement

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

Neighborhood Centers

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

Neighborhood Businesses

Protect and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses integrated into the neighborhood fabric.

Neighborhood Character

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.

Neighborhood Infill

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

Environment

Improve our shared neighborhood environmental quality.

Safety and Accessibility

Ensure that Somerville's streets and public spaces are safe and accessible.

Transportation & Infrastructure Sub-Committee

Mass Transit

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.

Alternative Transportation – Transportation and Lifestyle

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

Bikes and Pedestrians

Expand bike and pedestrian culture by transforming existing infrastructure to add accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.

Roads/Transportation Network

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 having a fiscally sound road maintenance program.

Parking

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

Highways, Bridges, Rail Right-of-Ways

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.

Water

Provide a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained and financially solvent, provides incentives to customers to use water judiciously, and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.

Sewer / Stormwater

Improve stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage, limit runoff from entering the wastewater system, eliminate combined sewer overflows, and provide for desired levels of future growth.

Green Infrastructure

Maximize environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.

Other Utilities

Ensure the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, of the best available technologies, has redundancy, and supports the desired level of future growth.

Commercial Corridors, Squares & Growth Districts Sub-Committee

Financial Self-Sufficiency

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

Job Development

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

Business Environment

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

Human Capital

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

Connectivity

Link our corridors, squares and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.

Transformative Development

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 compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.

Commercial Reuse & Infill

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.

Housing Sub-Committee

Housing Choice

Preserve and expand an integrated mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound housing options for households of all types and from diverse social and economic groups.

Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development

Promote mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development at strategic locations to provide new housing and employment options.

Resources and Capacity

Expand financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.

Homelessness

Create a diversity of programs and benefits that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless.

Displacement

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.

Community Resources Sub-Committee

Creative Community

Increase the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.

Creative Spaces

Ensure that Somerville has a mix of spaces for performance and exhibition and that arts are incorporated into the built environment.

Cultural Institutions

Help local arts and cultural institutions, such as theatres, museums and libraries succeed, network and grow.

Education

Strengthen existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.

Waterfront

Approach our waterfronts as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.

Public Spaces

Design and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm that fosters community connection.

Parks and Recreation

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.

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