



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
MAYOR JAKE WILSON

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LISA DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Date: May 20, 2026
To: Honorable City Council
From: Lisa Davidson, Director of Housing
RE: Condominium Review Board conveying the FY 2025 Annual Report, pursuant to Section 7-70 of the Code of Ordinances.

Dear Members of the City Council,

This is the conveyance of the FY 2025 Condominium Review Board Annual Report pursuant to Section 7-70 of the Code of Ordinances. Please excuse the lateness of this conveyance as there have been multiple staff turnover and transitions from Fall 2025 until now.

Please let the IGA team know if there are any further questions on any of the above information.

Thank you,

Lisa Davidson
Director of Housing





CONDOMINIUM REVIEW BOARD FY25 ANNUAL REPORT

As per Somerville Condominium Conversion Ordinance (SCCO) Section 7-70, this document serves as an annual report of the business of the Somerville Condominium Review Board (CRB) for Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025).

Board Membership and Organizational Information

Following the departure of Board Member Elizabeth Champion prior to the Board's meeting in January 2025, the Condominium Review Board consisted of four remaining members. Members included Board Chair Zachary Zasloff, Board Vice-Chair Kate Byrne, Board Member Alix Simeon and Alternate Board Member Jennifer Tsolas.

Board meetings remained on Zoom, with all hearings during this period held in accordance with Open Meeting Law and following the standard hearing schedule. Applications were primarily submitted via email and attendees joined hearings either virtually or by phone.

Condominium Conversion - Summary Information and Process Overview

In Fall of 2024, the Board voted to form a working group to formulate potential changes to the Ordinance, which had previously seen its last major update in December 2019. The Board's interest in pursuing these changes was predominantly due to a significant disparity between Somerville's rental housing vacancy rate and the vacancy rate of units for which condominium conversion applications were submitted. While the vacancy rate in Somerville is historically only about 2.5-4%¹, 80% of applications for rental conversion permits submitted to the Board in FY24 were for vacant units. The working group comprised of:

- City Councilor - J.T. Scott
- Board Vice-Chair - Kate Byrne
- Alternate Board Member - Jennifer Tsolas
- Legislative Policy Analyst - Brendan Salisbury
- Director of the Office of Housing Stability - Ellen Shachter
- Housing Counsel - Joseph Theall
- Staff Liaison - Morena Zelaya

The changes were first introduced to the City Council in June 2025, presented to the Legislative Matters Committee on July 1, 2025, and were ordained by the Council in FY26 on August 28, 2025 and signed by Mayor Ballantyne on September 3, 2025.

Changes to the ordinance were as follows:

- An update to the notice period for rental conversion permits for units that are vacant and formerly tenanted, from one year to two years; and

¹ *Bremis v. City of Somerville*, No. 1981CV02114B (Mass. Super. Ct. 2019)



- Updates to the relocation fee amounts due to current tenants that vacate prior to the end of their notice period. Base fee amounts were updated to \$14,000, or \$18,000 for tenants entitled to enhanced protections².

The working group also recommended several changes to the documentation required for a complete application for properties with currently tenanted or formerly tenanted units. Requirements that were added or updated are:

- Updates to an affidavit requiring the applicant to describe efforts to contact former tenants (who vacated within the previous 12 months) and/or find their contact information, to also include current tenants.
- Allowing email notification as an option to notify former tenants of the conversion application.
- Requiring copies and/or documentation of any correspondence that demonstrates an attempt to contact City/County/State agencies/departments to obtain name and contact information for prior tenants.
- If contact information is not otherwise available, proof of use of search engines and other on-line services to assist in identifying names and contact information of former tenants.

Other than these updates, which have applicants document their efforts to provide tenant information to the Board, the administrative process for applying for a conversion continues to be the same since the 2019 overhaul of the ordinance. After a completed application for conversion is submitted, the application is scheduled for a board meeting where the board, and public, has the opportunity to ask questions and have discussion on the conversion. Generally, the board then votes on the issuance of a preliminary permit. Properties receive a Preliminary Rental Conversion permit (PRCP) or a Preliminary Non-rental Conversion permit (PNRCP), depending on if the property was previously a rental or owner-occupied. The granting of a Final permit is usually contingent on the tenant receiving a first right of refusal, followed by the submission of a master deed, property condition report, and proof of payment of any applicable relocation fees to a tenant, and the elapsing of any applicable waiting period. A Final permit is issued once all requirements are met and the application goes before the Board for a second time. Occasionally applicants for Non-rental Conversion permits are well prepared and can be issued a Final permit after a single Board meeting.

Application Data Summary

The number of new conversion applications remained relatively consistent when compared to FY24, which may be a result of the continued high cost of capital and materials. In FY25, 68 applications, with 153 units, went before the Board. Fig. 1 below shows historical trends for the number of new applications submitted in the last four years.

² Enhanced protections are afforded by way of Somerville's Condominium Conversion Ordinance to tenants in units that are being converted and include at least one elderly, disabled or low-moderate income person (below 80% of the Area Median Income).



Fig. 1 Number of New Applications FY22-FY25

Most applications before the board continue to be for vacant properties. Thirty-five (35) of the 44 new applications the Board heard in FY25 were for properties vacant at the time of purchase by the converting owner. There were just five applications where tenants were entitled to receive permanent relocation payments. The economics of buying and selling properties continues to favor selling while the property is vacant.

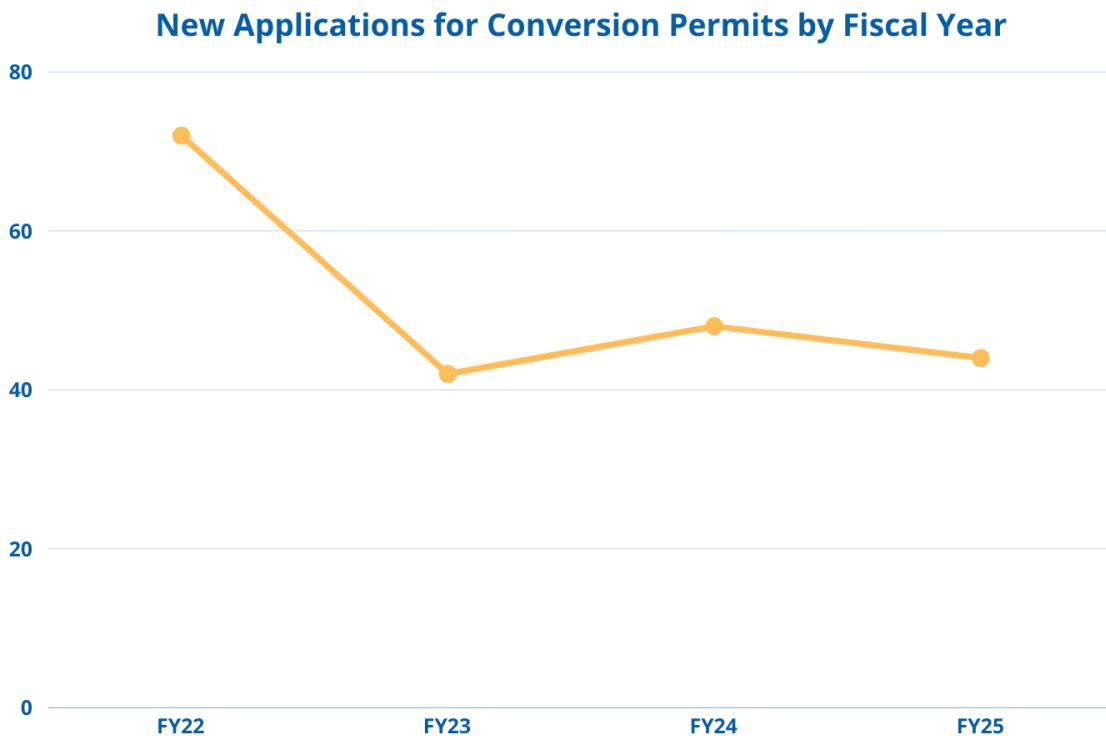




Fig. 2 Number of Permits Issued by Type FY25

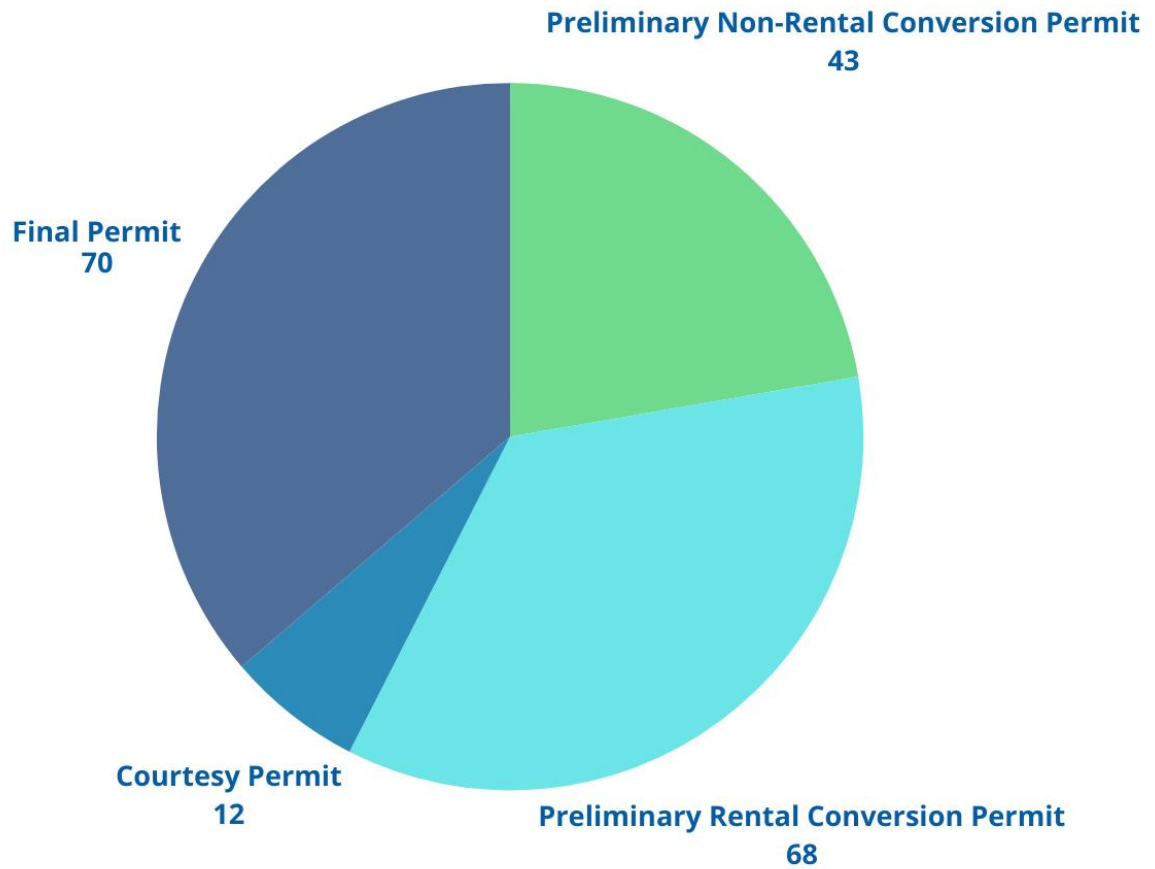


Fig. 2 above shows the number of permits the Board issued by type. 59 of the 70 Final Permits issued were carryovers from the prior FY.



Fig. 3 Number of Units per New Application

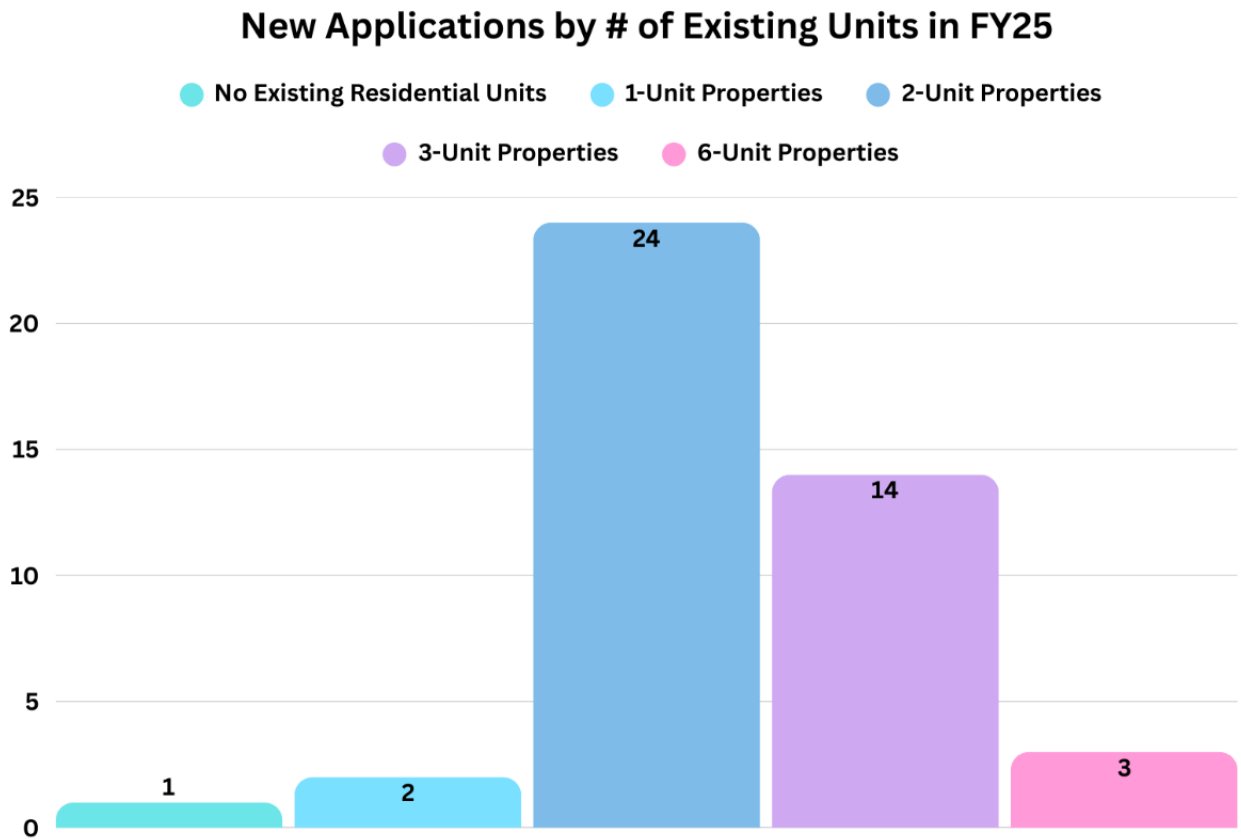
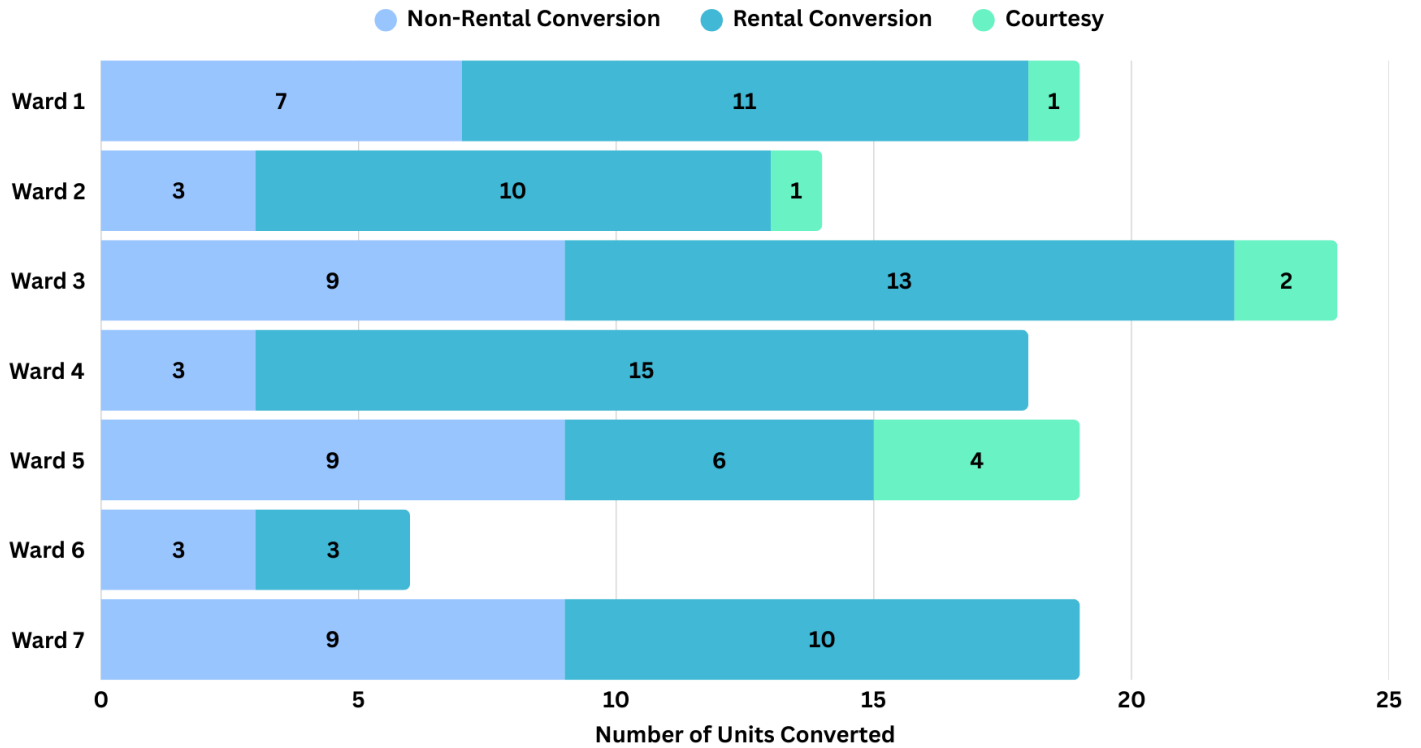




Fig. 4 Unit Permitting per Ward (New Applications in FY25)

Unit Conversions in FY25 (By Location)



The graph above details, by Ward, where in the city conversions occurred during FY25 and the use of the unit being converted at each application (Fig. 4). As shown by the graph, ward 3 saw the highest level of conversion activity, with a nearly equivalent number of units converted in wards 1, 4, 5 and 7. Notably, Ward 4 saw the highest number of rental units converted. Meanwhile, Ward 6 saw the lowest, with only 6 total units converted at 3 properties.