



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL

EMILY HARDT
WARD SEVEN CITY COUNCILOR

March 9, 2026

Mayor Jake Wilson
City of Somerville
93 Highland Ave.
Somerville, MA 02143

Re: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Priorities

Dear Honorable Mayor Wilson:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities for the city budget for the upcoming year. While recognizing the increasingly constrained fiscal environment – given federal funding cuts and a slowing economy – I respectfully request that the upcoming budget reflect a commitment to the following:

Housing Stability:

The housing affordability crisis displaces more and more of our neighbors each year. I would like the city budget to reflect the urgency and severity of this crisis by increasing funding for Flexible Rental Assistance, the Municipal Voucher Program, and the Older Adult Bridge Program. I urge the city to invest in collaborations to build more housing that will be deeply affordable for the long-term.

The significant changes in federal and state allocations mean that funding for “housing first” programs for our unhoused neighbors are increasingly limited. I urge the city to continue to invest in Permanent Supportive Housing programs with partner organizations and expand this, if possible, along with expanding shelter space and continuing the winter Warming Center.

Schools & Young People:

Somerville’s young people should be a top priority reflected in the budget allocations to our schools, programming for families and young children, after-school and summer programming and vocational-technical training. I support construction of the new school building at 115 Sycamore as swiftly as possible. At the same time, I would like to see creativity and new ideas for how to meet the needs of families and young people in the western part of the city, both with programming and a Youth and Community Center. I would also love to see the high school opened for use by the whole community during non-school hours.

Immigrant Legal Defense:

Supporting the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, including fully funding Immigrant Legal Services, is another urgent and essential need. I appreciate the city's advances toward language justice and urge you to continue investing in translation, interpretation and other means of eliminating language-based barriers.

Food access:

The relatively small investments the city has made in School Markets and Carrot Cards, as well as other food security initiatives, have had an outsized impact on families throughout Somerville. Food insecurity affects every other facet of life. I encourage the City to fund these programs at the level of need.

Infrastructure:

I would like to see the FY27 budget reflect our commitment to safe streets for everyone, by investing in improved crosswalks, sidewalks, curb cuts, bus stops and shelters. Street repaving also plays a key role in street safety for all users and I would like to see the city have funds to prioritize streets with heavy traffic that are in poor condition. There are several streets in Ward 7 where more crosswalks are needed, including Curtis and North Street, and of course Route 16 and pedestrian crossings remain dangerous.

Small Local Businesses:

I urge the Administration to budget for sufficient staff to enable a proactive approach to supporting our valuable small businesses – especially as they are getting started and when there are disruptions caused by construction and road work. I ask for particular attention to the small businesses in Teele Square and along West Broadway as they are not in an established business district that receives a lot of focused support. We also need to evaluate if CitizenServe is meeting the needs of small businesses or if adjustments need to be made.

Seniors:

The city should expand support to help seniors stay in their homes, with assistance in making homes more accessible or addressing safety and health concerns such as through the HIP program. Last year there was full Council support for making a \$100,000 transfer from the Community Benefits Stabilization Fund for the Senior Taxi program. I request that an amount is built into the FY27 budget to fully fund this service, including for the residents of the multiple senior buildings on Route 16 -- an area which is poorly served by the MBTA.

A Welcoming, Vibrant Davis Square:

The City's budget should include resources dedicated to maintaining a welcoming and vibrant Davis Square and Seven Hills Park, including daily trash clean-up, improved lighting, call boxes, and lockers for personal belongings. I request that there be staff dedicated to monitoring the cleanliness, safety and activity that violates community standards in the square, park and bike path, and liaising with Somerville Police Department, Somerville Homeless Coalition, city

outreach workers and DPW to address ongoing issues. I would like to see the investigation of a possible drug court diversion program reflected in the budget. As mentioned elsewhere, I support more resources for homelessness prevention, support services for our neighbors without homes, and prioritizing the creation of a non-police alternative response team.

Climate Resilience & Greenspace:

We know that Somerville will experience increasingly severe heatwaves and flooding and the FY2027 budget should invest in preparations for resilience, including stormwater management, cooling and shade structures, expanding access to air-conditioning, caring for existing trees and planting new ones, and citywide composting.

It is a top priority for many Ward 7 residents, me included, to do our part to end Combined Sewer Overflows into the Alewife Brook. I want to see this budget reflect the flexibility to work with state partners, specifically to end CSO's.

I would welcome funds to create a much-needed dog park in West Somerville, which not only benefits pet owners but adds green space and builds community connections.

Alternative Response

I would like this budget to reflect a plan for implementing an alternative response program. It is past time for a health-centered response to behavioral crises and other situations that can be more effectively handled through non-police emergency responders.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present these priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. I appreciate that we have many shared goals and I look forward to working collaboratively with you and your administration to move Somerville forward. Given the challenges we are facing ahead, I support the administration in thinking critically about all the revenue sources to which the city has access to help fill gaps that might arise. We should not hesitate to use Community Stabilization Funds to meet unexpected basic needs throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Emily Hardt

