



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMBERS

MICHAEL A. CAPUANO, ESQ., *CHAIR*
AMELIA ABOFF, *VICE CHAIR*
JAHAN HABIB, *CLERK*
MICHAEL MCNELEY
LYNN RICHARDS
LUC SCHUSTER, *ALTERNATE*

December 2, 2024

The Honorable City Council
City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Honorable City Council:

In keeping with its lawful responsibilities, the Somerville Planning Board submits to your Honorable Council its recommendations on the following proposed amendments to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. On October 17 2024, at 6:30 p.m. the Planning Board and Land Use Committee of the City Council held a duly advertised virtual joint public hearing. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit public comments on the proposed amendments to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and to evaluate the proposals in the context of testimony received and the findings and analysis of the Staff to the Planning Board. On November 21 2024, the Board convened their regularly scheduled meeting and discussed the following agenda items:

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 1.1.4, 2.1.1, 3.1.18, 3.2.17, 4.1.15, 4.2.15, 4.3.15, 4.4.16, 5.1.17, 6.1.13, 6.2.15, 6.3.13, 6.4.16, 7.2.9, 7.3.9, 8.2.4.c, 9.2.3, 9.2.6, 11.2.4, 11.2.5, 11.2.6, 11.3, 12.1.7, 15.2.1, and Table 9.1.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to address various parking requirements. (ID # [24-1197](#))

The Board deliberated and solicited input from staff and made the following specific recommendations. Following due consideration, Chair Michael Capuano made a motion to recommend that the proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance **be approved** by the City Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amelia Aboff, and unanimously passed by the Board, **6-0**, with the following point of discussion:

- The Board strongly recommended that the amendment's effective date be delayed until City staff have had time to refine submission requirements and administrative procedures



to ensure that the needs of elderly and other car-dependent residents are taken into consideration as projects are being permitted.

- The Board recommended that the amendment's parking maximums be reconsidered (rather than simply making the current minimums the new maximums), to acknowledge that we are putting the onus on developers to determine how much parking is needed.
- The Board recommended that the City undertake a more comprehensive review of existing parking regulations in order to manage the number of new units that could be built without on-site parking and the impacts of issuing unlimited street parking stickers for those units. The Board recommended the City consider a variety of strategies, including a potential sticker ban on any by-right new units citywide and limiting, generally, the number of stickers issued per unit or building where vehicles registered to those addresses are currently eligible.
- The Board emphasized that there are a wide variety of people with mobility impairments in the community, beyond those who may be eligible for an ADA plaque or parking waiver.

2. Charles DeCecca requesting a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning district of 501 Mystic Valley Parkway from Neighborhood Residence (NR) to Urban Residence (UR). (ID # [24-1367](#))

The Board deliberated and solicited input from staff and made the following specific recommendations. Following due consideration, Chair Michael Capuano made a motion to recommend that the proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance **be denied** by the City Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amelia Aboff, and passed by the Board, **4-2** (Richards and Schuster voting against), with the following points of discussion.

- The Board suggested the City engage in a comprehensive neighborhood planning process for this area.
- Some Board members emphasized the need for housing in Somerville and that an upzoning would facilitate building more housing units, particularly on a parcel so uniquely large.
- Other Board members emphasized that the public input provided during the 2019 zoning overhaul resulted in the current zoning of the parcel, and that opposition to this amendment has been voiced by the neighborhood.
- The Board noted that traffic congestion along Mystic Valley Parkway is severe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael A. Capuano".

Michael A. Capuano
Chair of the Planning Board