

John Long

From: Chris Dwan [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 9:23 AM
To: COS-Website-Planning; City Council; Mayor; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Reject Somervision 2040

To the planning board, the city council, and the mayor of Somerville,

The SomerVision 2040 document, as proposed, has significant problems.

* It is silent about how to balance among its laundry list of goals. Without this guidance, the plan amounts to a blanket justification for any and all of the things that it mentions. If we are to be effective as a city, our plans must be laser focused, not scattershot.

* It is silent about how who will shepherd the plan and how we will hold ourselves accountable to these goals. Without this specificity, it amounts to toothless good intentions and platitudes.

* It is silent about the specific and unique needs of the elderly, who are 1/8 of the population of Somerville.

* It significantly reduces our commitment to green and open space, using apologetic language to count inaccessible and environmentally dead spaces against a reduced target for acreage.

* Finally, and perhaps most concerning, while many names are listed and many meetings were held - this plan was conceived, drafted, revised, edited, and finally published by members of the administration. This document is a policy memo, not a civic consensus.

My preference would be for you to reject this document outright - or perhaps retain it as a policy memo. SomerVision 2040 has already consumed vast amounts of our overworked and understaffed planning department's time. If you choose to continue with it, please focus the additional effort on the hard work of defining relative priorities, incremental goals, and specific accountabilities.

Thank you for your attention, and for the hard work each of you does to serve our city.

-Chris Dwan
[REDACTED]

John Long

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 7:36 PM
To: COS-Website-Planning; City Council; Mayor; John Long
Subject: Somervision 2040

To: Somerville Planning Board
Cc: Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone, City Council

From: Elaine Koury [REDACTED]

January 21, 2020

Dear Planning Board Members:
Please reject the proposed SomerVision 2040 plan.

Many aspects of the plan are distressing, but some of the most salient issues follow.

1) Beacon Street continues to be designated in the proposed new plan as an "Enhancement Zone," even though many of us who live on Beacon Street have made it abundantly clear that we do not want to be "enhanced" in this way. Our views have been communicated many times in many ways, including in a petition signed by 265 of us stating exactly what we would like to see on Beacon Street from Durham St. to the Cambridge line. However, our voices have not been heard.

2) Although the SomerVision process continues to be touted, and lots of names appear on the plan, it was a very Planning Department centric process. It did not include important, genuine, widespread community concerns. (Note the lack of inclusion of the elderly.) Any truly comprehensive plan should be built from the community up, not the Planning Department down.

3) A major omission in the proposed plan is that it does not include the specific needs of the elderly. Since one in eight Somervillians is over the age of 65, this is a grievous error. No plan should go forward without a significant full-blown discussion with Somerville's elderly, creating a section of the plan addressing elderly concerns (just as there is a section for youth), and looking through the whole plan for how it can help elders age in place.

4) The proposed plan is called "comprehensive", but it is not specific. It speaks of "values" and "goals", but does not say how they would be implemented. This would allow the plan to be interpreted very broadly, and would give permission in advance for all sorts of things to be done "according to SomerVision", without stating in advance what those changes might be.

5) Although lip service is given to the environment, there seems to be little understanding that green space and earth are important to that environment. The proposed plan talks about "Open Space", not "Green Space." Open space can include anywhere that allows you to see the sky, such as an asphalt-covered parking lot. Green space has living, green things in it, like trees. We should be preserving and creating green space, not just open space. As if this were not bad enough, the goals

for "open" space have been decreased from 125 acres in the SomerVision 2030 plan to 105 acres in the proposed 2040 plan. This is a significant reduction and is moving in the wrong direction. It is completely unacceptable.

Somerville already has a plan through 2030. We can afford to address all the above issues and more before approving a new plan.

Sincerely,
Elaine Koury

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.