



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL

NAIMA SAIT
WARD 5 CITY COUNCILOR

March 25, 2025

RE: FY2026 Budget Priorities

Dear Mayor Ballantyne:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my budget priorities that I hope will be included in Somerville's FY2026 budget.

- **Continued funding for public education**

Given the uncertainty around receiving federal funding for essential school programs such as math, reading, tutoring, SCALE and free lunch, I urge the Mayor to work with the School Committee to secure funds for these vital programs and expand the out-of-school programming.

- **Continued funding for the Office of Immigrant affairs**

Funding to support staff and expand the important services offered by the Office of Immigrant Affairs: translation and interpretation services, legal services and know your rights campaigns.

- **Continued funding for flexible rental assistance, legal assistance and retaining necessary staffing hired under ARPA program.**

Providing affordable housing and anti-displacement services are very pressing priorities.

- **City-wide food waste collection**

This will help address environmental justice issues as everyone would be part of this program, not just the ones who can pay for this service. It will also reduce the rodent food source.

- **Funding for Department of Public Works to conduct an annual playground inspection**

Conducting an annual playground inspection and performing a complete routine maintenance will ensure safety in all playgrounds

- **Funding to establish an alternative emergency response program to respond to non-criminal calls**

This will ensure that first responders to mental health crises are trained and unarmed clinicians.

- **Continued funding for safe streets**

Funding to launch an automated traffic enforcement pilot program, expand the safety stick program and launch the Highland Ave community process.

- **Increase funding for the senior taxi to health program service**

Increasing the shuttle frequency will help our seniors access transportation to medical appointments and grocery stores.

- **Funding to conduct a study of Somerville School building decarbonization**

Conduct a study of all Somerville school buildings in order to create a ten year comprehensive plan for decarbonization of building systems and improvement of building envelope performance (e.g., upgrading roofs, fixing energy leaks, ensuring air infiltration systems are of the highest quality). This study must include estimations of current carbon emissions, energy use, and energy cost of operating school buildings.

- **Funding to develop a swing space plan for Somerville Public Schools**

- **Funding for staffing and programming to activate the high school as a youth center + a space for family engagement outside of school hours:**

The pandemic has had real negative consequences on our youth's social, emotional and academic development. Enhancing and expanding our youth programming is a great way to promote youth leadership and build a sense of belonging. Participating in intergenerational activities is the best way to build community.

The high school building can also be used as a space for our non-English speaking families to gather and learn about ways to advocate for themselves and their children.

- **Funding to repair the Armory roof**

As the owner of the Armory building, the City must repair the leaking roof.

Thank you for considering these budget priorities. I look forward to working with your administration and my colleagues on Somerville's FY2026 budget.