

Madalyn Letellier

From: Anne Elizabeth [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 9:30 AM
To: Madalyn Letellier
Subject: Re: pls vote yest on item number 25-0200 from concerned Somerville resident and owner

Ah, thanks so much!

My name is Anne Faber and I live at [REDACTED] Somerville, MA 02144. (believe thats ward 3, precinct 7!)

Thanks!
Anne

From: Anne Elizabeth [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2025 11:14 AM

To: Public Comments [REDACTED]

Subject: pls vote yest on item number 25-0200 from concerned Somerville resident and owner

Hi,

I own and live in an owner-occupied duplex in Somerville and very much support item number 25-0200. please vote yes to allow more flexibility on dormer additions.

Somerville is a great place to live, I adore my neighborhood, and agree that we should be less restrictive on dormers to allow more livable space in our homes + relieve the pressure on tenants looking to rent here.

thanks,
Anne

City of Somerville Public Records Notice

Please be advised that the Massachusetts Attorney General has determined that email is a public record unless the content of the email falls within one of the stated exemptions under the Massachusetts Public Records Laws.

Madalyn Letellier

From: Christopher Beland [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 4:41 PM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Comment on item 25-0200 - dormers

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Greetings,

This comment is on item 25-0200, concerning dormers, which was considered by the Land Use Committee and the Planning Board at their joint meeting on April 17.

I support the proposed changes. Dormers of any design and any amount of fenestration are compatible with the character of our residential neighborhoods. I have in the past been notified of neighbors seeking approval for a dormer variance, which seems like a poor use of city and resident time.

This modification aligns with several overarching changes that are needed: reduce the housing shortage, reduce approval risk for development, make rules easier to understand and comply with, reduce planning staff overload so they are not a bottleneck.

Thanks for reading,

Christopher Beland
[REDACTED] Somerville

Madalyn Letellier

From: John Brock [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 28, 2025 10:49 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Simplified Dormer and Building Height Amendment

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Good day,

My partner and I (John Brock and Kelly Epstein) live at [REDACTED]. Somerville 02144 MA. We're really lucky to have found a great apartment with a good landlord and we've been happily living here for 5 years. Recently, our landlord has needed to start exploring moving his parents into the house. He's explored different options but the architects didn't see a way to make it work with the regulations of the city.

This has thrust my partner and I back into the tight rental market. Everywhere we look there are units that are small, outdated, and yet still really expensive. There's just not enough housing for everyone who wants it.

Watching the presentation on dormers has been eye opening for us. Every new place we look I can't help but think how these simplified dormer rules would help lessen the housing crisis and make better spaces for people to live.

I hope that you pass the simplified dormer rules as proposed.

Sincerely, John and Kelly

Madalyn Letellier

From: Honi Sanders & Simona Dalin [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 9:58 PM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Support item number 25-0200

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello,

We are emailing to ask you to support the simplified dormer and building height rules presented in item number 25-0200.

In 2021, we began a renovation on our house. We own a 2-family 2.5 story home that previously had a gable roof. The upstairs apartment had 2 rooms in the attic, which were only accessible by an extremely steep staircase. There was no bathroom in the attic, and no room to expand the staircase and/or add a bathroom up there.

We wanted to have kids, but knew that the old configuration of the house would make life with young children very difficult - we would need to risk carrying infants and children up and down that deathtrap staircase and we would need to sleep on a different floor than the bathroom. Anyone who has ever needed to use the bathroom in the middle of the night can see why this would be onerous, especially with a frightening staircase!

The ideal solution for us would have been full-length dormers to expand the attic space, but maintain the overall aesthetic look of the house. However, that is not allowed by Somerville zoning and we did not have the time for an extended zoning appeal that might fail anyway. Instead we chose to replace the roof entirely with a mansard roof, which is allowed by zoning. This made the entire project much more expensive, took a great deal more time, and disrupted the aesthetic look of our house and our street - previously there was a row of multiple houses with the same echoing gable roofs. Now our house disrupts the pattern. additionally, all of the windows in the mansard roof are considered dormers and we had to go through many back and forth with the city and our architect to get them all complying to the million rules that dormers have to follow. It also extremely constrained the window placements.

Changing the zoning for dormers as proposed in number 24-0200 would make the process much more simple. It would reduce construction costs, enabling more families to stay in their homes. It would reduce construction time, thereby reducing neighbor's annoyance at living next door to construction zones for more than a year. And it would bring more existing homes into zoning compliance - which was one of the original purposes of the new zoning rules in the first place.

Thank you for considering our comment.
Honi Sanders and Simona Dalin

Madalyn Letellier

From: Tim Buntel [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 8:23 AM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Re: Support for dormer zoning amendments

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To clarify, this is the content presented in item number 25-0200.
Thank you

On Wed, Apr 23, 2025 at 8:22 AM Tim Buntel [REDACTED] wrote:

I'm a Somerville homeowner and I watched the discussion of the dormer amendments in the 4/17/2025 Land Use Committee meeting with great interest. I agree with the observations presented by the Somerville YIMBY team that restrictions in the current dormer zoning regulations are detrimental to our needs (housing) and goals (energy efficiency) as a city. I encourage you to support the simplified dormer and building height rules.

Thank you,

Tim Buntel

[REDACTED] Somerville

Madalyn Letellier

From: Kerri Hilton [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 8:32 AM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Item Number 25-0200 Dormer Amendment

Good morning,

I am a 9-year Somerville resident and am writing in favor of the proposed simplified dormer & building height rules presented in item number 25-0200.

The existing zoning rule is confusing and is not aligned with what is already in place around the city. Formalizing the proposed new zoning will provide clearer direction for maximizing livable space on current building footprints, as well as alleviating burden on the Zoning Board and encouraging more energy-efficient dormers.

Please implement this amendment!

Sincerely,

Kerri Hilton
[REDACTED]

Madalyn Letellier

From: Shannon Malloy [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 10:17 AM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support of simplified dormer and building height rules

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Somerville Planning Board,

I am writing to you today as a citizen of the city of Somerville **in favor** of the simplified dormer and building height rules presented in item number 25-0200 on 4/17/25. This is a creative proposal that permits homeowners more flexibility in expanding their homes, meets climate goals, and expands housing opportunities using existing infrastructure. I urge you to vote favorably to approve these amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Shannon Malloy
Constituent at [REDACTED] Somerville, MA 02145

Madalyn Letellier

From: Dawn Mackenzie [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 1:20 PM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Public comment in support of item number 25-0200

Hello, thank you for taking comments- I would love to ask you to support the simplified dormer and building height rules presented in item number 25-0200. Please let me know if there is any further information I can provide to support my request.

Very best to you all,

Dawn Mackenzie

Madalyn Letellier

From: Madalyn Corley <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 2:03 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Passing the Proposed Dormer Amendment

Regarding the Proposed Dormer Amendment,

Hello, my name is Madalyn, I am a Somerville resident, and I am writing to ask you to please support the simplified dormer and building height rules presented in item number 25-0200. Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

I have been a resident of Somerville since 2015, and my family has roots in Somerville dating back to the 1930s. My husband and I own a two-family in Ward 7 that we purchased in 2021.

On our particular street in Somerville [REDACTED] this change to the zoning code regarding dormers would directly benefit the style of homes that exist here.

Elmwood is an interesting street where there are many different styles of property: single families, large condo complexes, triple-deckers, and two-families. Our house is a two-family that was built in 1900. In my section of the street, the swath of similar two-families have third floors with steep roof-lines, leading to large amounts of unusable eaves-space.

As demand to live in Somerville increases, we should want to use our available buildings as efficiently as possible. The houses I've described would greatly benefit from adding the types of dormers proposed, and it would be easier to find contractors willing to do this type of work if these zoning codes were simplified, and made to be more in-line with the state's zoning codes.

We love living in Somerville, and making our housing more efficient for all and creating more available space for those who wish to live here makes sense.

Sincerely,
Madalyn Corley
[REDACTED]
Somerville, MA 02144
[REDACTED]

Madalyn Letellier

From: Devin Matté [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 3:14 PM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Comment in favor of support of 25-0200

Hello,

I am reaching out to express my support for the simplified dormer and building height rules presented in item number 25-0200. These rules are commonplace, reduce needless burdens to new housing, reduce livable space in our dense city, and pass costs on to both homeowners and renters.

Somerville should do everything to make building housing easier, even the small things such as this.

Please support and apply these changes to our zoning laws.

Thanks,
Devin Matte
[REDACTED], Somerville, MA 02145

Madalyn Letellier

From: Sam [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2025 10:44 PM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Simplified Dormer and Building Height Rules (25-0200)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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I'm writing in support of the zoning amendment (item 25-0200) presented to the Land Use Committee and Planning Board on Thursday, April 17. In particular, I value that the revised rules allow home-owners greater flexibility with regard to aesthetic tradeoffs and living-space configuration, promote energy efficiency, and are consistent with the city's environmental and economic goals. The proposal seems really well thought out and should be approved.

Sincerely,
Samuel Freilich
[REDACTED] Somerville

Madalyn Letellier

From: Elliot Borenstein <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 12:20 AM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment For Item #25-0200

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To the Somerville City Council and the Somerville Planning Board,

My name is Elliot Borenstein, and I live at [REDACTED] in Somerville.

I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of the proposed zoning amendment from Somerville YIMBY (item #25-0200). This amendment will drastically simplify the construction of dormers in residential districts, as well as bring all home types in the NR district into alignment by allowing three stories for all homes.

A dormer or third story is a great way to expand a house with minimal-to-no impact on neighbors. They allow more space for growing families, as well as more bedrooms that can be rented to people. They also allow flexibility for things like elevators, providing accessibility to homes. Unfortunately, right now, we only allow three stories on triple deckers, and the current dormer rules result in small, expensive, sub-optimal spaces.

Many homes in Somerville have existing layouts that just don't work well with the current dormer rules. For example, in my own home, the stairs are laid out in such a way that, with current setbacks, I could only get a space at the front of the house that was 5 feet wide (a small office space). If the setbacks weren't so onerous and arbitrary, it could be 8 feet - more than enough for a small bedroom or the like. I have watched ZBA meetings with similar issues related to existing layouts, as well as a desire from people to have larger dormers (as exist all throughout Somerville from before the current ordinance).

From speaking with city staff, the current rules were apparently an attempt to appease people who value 'neighborhood character' over letting people do what works for their homes and their families. But they are arbitrary restrictions, and don't even match what exists in those same neighborhoods. The common argument that we shouldn't allow something that looks like a third floor doesn't even make sense now that we allow triple deckers everywhere by right.

I also want to address a question that was raised during the initial hearing on this amendment. Councilor McLaughlin asked if the dormers in the presentation photos were built by-right, or required special permits. I can't speak to that conclusively, but I took many of the photos that were shown. In quite a few cases, the dormer in the photo was one of 3-6 dormers in a row on identical homes, so I would feel confident guessing that many were original to the houses (which were all older buildings).

Ultimately, the key facts are that this amendment will reduce costs, reduce workload for city staff, allow more accessibility, better meet climate goals, and help more people live and thrive in Somerville. Please, support this small but impactful amendment.

Thank you,
-Elliot Borenstein

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[Elliot Borenstein | He/Him]

Madalyn Letellier

From: Vered Brandman <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 7:30 AM
To: Public Comments; Planning Board
Subject: Subject: Public Comment For Item #25-0200

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To the Somerville City Council and the Somerville Planning Board,

My name is Vered Brandman and I live at [REDACTED] in Somerville. I'm writing in favor of the proposed zoning amendment from Somerville YIMBY (item #25-0200).

The proposed amendment simplifies the current onerous zoning rules for dormers. Where the current zoning rules for dormers focus on impractical aesthetic features that are not aligned with our city's energy efficiency goals - for example the minimum fenestration requirements - the proposed amendment trims and adapts the language.

Current restrictions on dormer construction also include a minimum setback from the front and back edge of the roof, as well as a cap on the size of any dormers both cumulatively and per-side. The changes in the proposed amendment allow homeowners to increase their living space without compromising on energy efficiency, size of dormers in terms of limiting what the new space can be used for, and more.

The proposed amendment also offers relief from current obstacles homeowners face that can draw the construction timeline to as many as five years from start to finish, not to mention the cost increase as estimates for materials and labor balloon between an initial plan and completion of construction.

As Somerville residents age, as Somerville households grow and change, homeowners need to add accessibility features like elevators, wider staircases, and so on in order to stay. There are a lot of benefits to the proposed amendment; I hope that, put together, the different testimonies from residents highlight all or most of those benefits.

I urge you to vote in favor of item #25-0200, Somerville YIMBY's proposed zoning amendment.

Thank you,
-Vered

Madalyn Letellier

From: Joshua Michel [REDACTED] >
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2025 8:40 AM
To: Planning Board; Public Comments
Subject: Dormer and NR building Heights

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Hello,

I am writing to support the proposal zoning change to dormers and NR building heights (item number 25-0200). I think it is important to allow gradual change to our housing stock that allows families to grow in place and creates opportunity for some incremental growth. These changes would allow by right types of structures that currently do exist in Somerville and were previously permitted.

Thanks,

Joshua Michel
[REDACTED]