TO: Somerville City Council, OSPCD Planning department

FROM: Staying Put

RE: SomerVision 2040

SomerVision 2040 has done an excellent job addressing many of the issues important to the members of Staying Put. [1] There is an effort across the state, however, as well as internationally, to ensure that seniors' needs about quality of life are integral to policy-making. Apparently, Somerville joined the AARP Age Friendly Network, but we find nothing in SomerVision 2040 that affirms that support.

We therefore submit comments relevant to various sections of the plan in the following ways:

- To pages 12/13, we have added an implementation priority
- To each chapter, we suggest adding or rewording specific bullet points

I. Implementation Priorities, p12:

We would like this section to promote longevity in Somerville: a city to live, work, and play, should also have a '**STAY IN**' or '**STAY PUT**' **in** component. Consider adding a sidebar similar to that on page 55 for VisionZero for the AARP age-friendly city initiative. I have attached the checklist referenced below to this email.

Add a new Implementation priority:

- "Commit to implementing the *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities*, as published by the World Health Organization."

II. Climate & Sustainability

Add a new bullet to p23-25:

- "Publicize and promote projects that support environmental contributions of the over 60 population, such as home weatherization, disposing of medications, and recycling clothes, furniture and plastic."

III. Commercial Development, Business, and the Arts:

The Housing section includes a discussion of "universal design". We suggest including that principle in this section also. For example, to change the text on p30 to:

- "Promote sustainability practices that use sustainable technology and universal design principles."

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[1] Staying Put is a grassroots effort in Somerville and Cambridge to support the interests and needs of those 55+ to 'Age in Community'. Staying Put members are actively involved to ensure our homes and neighborhoods are safe, supportive and accessible.

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IV.   Community & Governance

In the paragraph on pgs.34-5 that discusses demographic changes, add that the over 60 and especially the over 70 population "is more likely to be on a fixed income."

On p36, expand or replace the bullet that starts "Encourage cross-generational connections…" to be more specific, such as:

- "Devote efforts to creating cross-generational connections. Setting up a chore service, snow removal, and other task-oriented opportunities, could be facilitated by the COA/Dept of Social Services/ Parks and Recreation/Schools. These agencies could be potent catalysts in linking older residents with the school -aged population. Students' labor need not be valued at zero—many people would gladly pay for many services."

On p40-41, add to Potential Tasks:

- "Communicate messages and information compatibly with residents' capabilities—not everyone uses social media or Facebook and Twitter. The current generation of 60+ is transitional—some do use email but not Facebook or may not want the exposure and lack of privacy."

V.   Housing

A general comment on this chapter is that the existing housing stock is especially weak in enabling people to age in community. We were glad to see the many references to universal design.

VI.   Mobility

As a general comment, many seniors regard walking as essential to their health. Under "STRENGTHS" suggest adding a paragraph such as:

- "The density of residential neighborhoods and their closeness to Somerville's many squares contribute to Somerville's high "walkability" score. Walking improves health, connects residents to their neighborhoods and neighbors, and fosters a high level of community spirit."

On P57, suggest expanding the sentence that describes the Community Path Extension to say something such as:

- "The Community Path Extension is an opportunity to increase safety for students traveling to and from school, provide a safe walking path for the over-60 population to exercise, and encourage families to walk or bike."

On P60, expand bullet to include phrase about bus stop seating:

- "Improve bus stops by adding or improving lighting, installing bus shelters with seating, …"

On P60, add new bullet:

- • "Encourage walking by providing benches, improved sidewalk lighting, and access to a public bathroom in each square."

VII.   Public Space and the Natural Environment

On p66, add "sit" to the Equity Goal.

- • "**Empower residents.** The City designs and builds open spaces for the entire community. These are their spaces to play, relax, sit, and congregate."

On P67, Add fixed seating to the bullet text.

- • "Expand the use of fixed and movable furniture in parks"

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON SOMERVISION 2040

GOOD LUCK AND STAY SAFE

Rosemary Broome Bingham & Susann Wilkinson, for Staying Put