

# **2022 – 2025 End of Term Report for Mayor Katjana Ballantyne**

## **Letter from Mayor Ballantyne**

Dear Somerville Community,

My vision for Somerville is an inclusive, equitable city where we can all thrive together.

When I took office as Mayor in 2022, this vision guided every decision we made at City Hall. This report summarizes what we accomplished together over the past four years during a period of both challenge and tremendous progress.

I submit this report so that as the next and future administrations set their course, they have a quick reference for areas of success and challenge to build on and address. I also place this in the record in gratitude and recognition of all who believed in and helped create progress in this amazing place we call Somerville over the past four years.

### **Building an Inclusive City**

Inclusiveness means the people most affected by our policies have a seat at the table. Through new initiatives such as Participatory Budgeting, a multi-focused Anti-Displacement Task Force, and our expansive Public Safety For All efforts, we ensured community voices shaped our direction. We intensified outreach to meet residents where they are, building trust and creating opportunities for meaningful participation.

Whether the expansion of outreach staff across departments to grow citywide capacity or the focused intensive push to add literally hundreds of new engagement opportunities, we followed our commitment to keep our ear to the ground and honor that input with serious review and thoughtful follow-through.

### **Advancing Equity**

A number of residents and staff have told me I could have taken the easy way out with our American Rescue Plan Act funding. It would be easier to just fund large infrastructure projects in one fell swoop and ignore the complex social impacts of Covid. We didn't. Instead, we covered multiple needs with \$44 million invested in infrastructure and \$35 million delivering equity initiatives for our most vulnerable residents.

Spending on infrastructure has a generational impact on our debt, budget, constituents, and community, and it is critical to address these foundational needs. We helped our people recover from COVID's impacts through often ground-breaking programs that staff mobilized to stand up. The complexity of this cannot be understated. Municipal innovation requires navigating challenging law, procurement, and capacity issues all while doing our

regular daily work. From flexible rental assistance, guaranteed basic income, childcare support, and much more, we pushed for impact and delivered it.

### **Pay Equity and Investing in Our Workforce**

Our new wage compensation study, and the structural changes we implemented accordingly, were also steps to achieving lasting pay equity for City staff. Deep investments in our schools addressed the same for educators and school staff. The greatest impact here is we lifted people up from the bottom.

Nearly all full-time positions in SMEU, for example, now start at \$60,000 compared to many in the \$30,000s before. More than just delivering updates to the same old contracts with the same old inequities built in, this was my administration acknowledging the right thing to do.

With the same focus on attracting and retaining quality employees, we enhanced our Family Medical Leave Policy to be Paid Family Medical Leave. This new policy allows for 8 weeks paid leave for employees to care for themselves for a serious medical condition, birth/adoption of a child, and paid time off to care for immediate families with serious medical conditions, as well. My administration recognized the need to care for employees so they can care for our constituents.

### **Creating Opportunities to Thrive Together**

To deliver on our progressive values, we must diversify our revenue. That's why as a core focus of the last four years, and my entire time as an elected official, I pursued strategic commercial development, setting the City up to generate roughly \$255 million in community benefits from efforts and plans like tough tech zoning to Brickbottom to Assembly Square. With affordable housing linkage fees, job creation agreements, and the resources to invest in our schools, our streets, and our people, development in Somerville is the engine behind social progress.

With this approach my administration was able to increase and invest in the Somerville Public Schools budget by 34% over four years. We were able to accelerate making our streets safer for everyone. We were able to build or upgrade 13 parks. We were able to create the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan that won national recognition for leading the way for other municipalities to help prevent pollinator population collapse. We developed “tough tech” zoning that established a model framework to support development for clean energy and transformative technologies, while also enhancing arts zoning to ensure parity and protection within our industrial districts.

Especially in a time when federal funding and economic uncertainty threatens our coffers, the pursuit of economic resilience is and must remain a central focus so that Somerville's core services and progressive goals can be maintained and attained.

### **A Thriving Future**

This work reflects both my administration's efforts and our partnership with staff across all departments, and countless community members. When I first ran for Mayor, I promised open and inclusive government, affordability, jobs, good governance, climate change mitigation, and strong schools. This report shows how we delivered on those promises while charting the course for future progress.

The challenges of COVID-19 tested us, but we came through stronger. We've put plans and roadmaps in place to meet long-term challenges, guided by experts and community input. We've made measurable progress on residents' wellbeing and city operations.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this work—City staff, community partners, residents who showed up to meetings and surveys, and all who believe in Somerville's potential. Together, we've built a foundation and set the course for a city where everyone can truly thrive.

With gratitude and hope for our future,

Katjana Ballantyne  
Mayor, City of Somerville

## Introduction

“My vision for Somerville is an inclusive, equitable city where we can all thrive together.”  
– Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

From 2022 – 2025, Mayor Ballantyne’s work at City Hall has reflected her vision of governance. Through her capacity as an executive of City departments and services, as well as an advocate at the state and federal levels, Mayor Ballantyne has led a wide range of initiatives to make Somerville a place where everyone can thrive. Initiatives were designed for measurable impact on constituents’ wellbeing and on the quality of City’s operations. Plans and roadmaps were developed with deep community input and guidance from experts with a focus on delivering real progress not just for by driven by community members.

This report summarizes the City’s key efforts during Mayor Ballantyne’s term. While not intended to be an exhaustive list, it offers an overview of core priorities that the community and future administrations can build on.

**Section I. Inclusiveness:** Inclusive leadership means ensuring that community members have an opportunity to fully participate in the City’s governance. To achieve that, the City has focused on three key areas of work among other efforts: 1) Civic participation and responsive government; 2) accessibility of services and resources; and 3) a focus on uplifting vulnerable and historically underrepresented communities, including immigrants.

**Section II. Equity and Wellbeing:** An essential tenet of the last four years has been equitable access to opportunity, resources, and wellbeing and dignity for all constituents, particularly those with the greatest need or who have historically been underserved. This section describes six major areas of work, including 1) Urgent responses to the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) supporting youth and education; 3) supporting unhoused residents and promoting substance use harm reduction; 4) supporting seniors and veterans; 5) public safety and racial & social justice; and 6) safe and accessible transit for all.

Lastly, in making Somerville a place “where we can all thrive together,” Mayor Ballantyne’s administration has employed a multi-layered agenda that encompasses making life more affordable for all, creating economic opportunity, and enhancing sustainability in the city’s infrastructure and operations. The sections below detail these initiatives.

**Section III. Thriving – Affordability:** Creating an affordable city entails supporting community members through challenges in cost of living. The City’s three major areas of work include: 1) Supporting limited-income residents and families; 2) Housing stability and anti-displacement policies and measures; and 3) Improving people’s access to housing units, by facilitating unit creation and lowering barriers for renters and buyers.

**Section IV. Thriving – Economic Opportunity:** A vibrant local economy generates jobs, supports small and anchor businesses, maintains Somerville’s cultural diversity, is equitable for all, and supports education and skill building so that community members

are prepared to seize opportunities. Here, the City's major areas of work include: 1) Commercial development and bringing jobs to the city; 2) Improving jobs and investing in workplace development; and 3) Supporting small businesses and the arts.

**Section V: Thriving – Sustainability:** Somerville remains a leader in investing in infrastructure, people, and practices that ensure a well-functioning city into the future. The City's major areas of work include: 1) Climate action and our environment; 2) Updating our urban infrastructure; and 3) Enhancing the City's capacity to deliver services.

## Section I: Inclusiveness

### I.1: Civic participation and responsive government

City government should be accessible to and representative of all residents. Residents should be able to engage in governance and their community in ways that meet their needs. In the last 4 years under Mayor Ballantyne, the administration has increased civic participation by thousands and access to government in ways that reflect the local constituency as well as modern advances.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- **Commitment to community engagement:** Delivered targeted community engagement opportunities that built meaningful opportunities for community members to shape policies, priorities, and goals. From engagement in setting priorities for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, to deep work on Public Safety for All and Anti-Displacement, to the Cultural Arts Plan, a deep commitment to ensuring a public voice in public priorities was interwoven into our policy making and planning. A city-wide survey and robust community engagement process regarding critical choices in the future of the next PK-8 school garnered very high participation.
  - For example, in 2021, ARPA brought an unprecedented funding opportunity to Somerville. To ensure that residents' needs were met, the City conducted a community engagement process that included surveys with more than 1,500 responses, more than 20 focus groups, tabling events, and an Advisory Board consisting of residents, a School Committee member, and a City Councilor. You can draw a straight line from those outcomes to funding priorities pursued that had profound impacts on residents including flexible rental assistance, guaranteed basic income, and more.
- **Participatory budgeting:** The launch of the Participatory Budgeting program in 2022, which biannually funds \$1 million of community projects proposed by residents. Two cycles of Participatory Budgeting have occurred so far, with 11 impactful projects underway, ranging from composting to expanding access to after school programs to investing in the Bike Network Plan.
- **Civic access:** Expanded civic gatherings where residents can connect with City staff and elected officials directly. The "Slice of the City" meeting series, for example, creates informal gatherings in each ward's local parks, where community members can chat with City staff and their elected officials over dinner.

- **Civic Day:** Established the annual Civic Day event, which offers engaging ways to browse, learn about, and connect with city functions in all departments at one “science fair” like setting and also builds connection to City Hall via building tours.
- **Equity Support Team:** The creation of the Equity Support Team in the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs built up our capacity to reach adults and youth where they are and connect them to engagement opportunities citywide. This part-time team of 11 includes both adults and youth serving six languages who go into the community to inform and engage residents face to face in support of initiatives across all departments. From parks to festivals to parent or community groups, they meet our residents where they are, ensuring we reach more people who cannot or do not come to us and build their comfort, access, and leadership opportunities going forward.
- **Grew 311 Constituent Services:** 311 is a gateway to engagement. When handled right, constituents’ calls to City Hall can not only solve an immediate issue, but also pull them into civic life. Since 2022, the City increased 311 staffing and engaged in communitywide promotion, to both meet constituents’ requests and to build trust and connection with every service delivery.
- **Expanded Happiness/Wellbeing Survey:** SomerStat, the Mayor’s Office of Innovation and Analytics, provides timely analysis and reporting to help City staff and residents measure progress toward community goals and understand local challenges. SomerStat’s expansion and enhancement of the Happiness Survey, occurring every other year and providing community members with useful data on numerous quality of life metrics. SomerStat now also provides a public-facing interactive dashboard for constituents and staff alike to explore the data on their own.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Communications and Community Engagement Department, Constituent Services Division, the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Executive Office, ARPA Division, SomerStat Division, the Finance Department: Budget Division, and all of the departments and divisions funded by the Participatory Budgeting winning projects.

## **I.2: Improving accessibility for all**

The Ballantyne Administration strives to make services and resources accessible to all community members, and to reduce physical, linguistic, technological, and cultural barriers to access.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Language access initiatives spearheaded by Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA), which manages all translation, interpretation services, and multilingual communications for the city, develops and implements city-wide policies on accessible, equitable, and effective communications, and provides trainings for staff in on-demand telephonic interpretation, plain language, and language justice best practices, and plain language in partnership with the Communications team.. In 2025, SOIA launched the city-wide language interpretation line service, which provides immediate access to interpretation in 350+ languages so City staff can effectively serve the public and interact with constituents in their preferred language.
- Launching two initiatives to update the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, established a decade ago, to bring all City policies and procedures into compliance with the ADA. In February 2023, the City's Accessibility Services Division conducted a community survey to understand needs and priorities. In January 2025, the ADA Transition Task Force was formed with constituents and expert advisors, working towards recommendations for updating the current Plan and informing accessibility efforts more generally.
- Since 2023, the City secured its own braille embosser, allowing City documents to be embossed for residents in need. This includes weekly City Council agendas and accessible voting information for the 2025 election.
- Embedding the Accessibility Services Division in City programming more broadly, including review of communications, attending planning and public meetings, delivering trainings to internal and external partners, and directing stakeholder accessibility concerns to appropriate departments.
- The Digital Bridge Initiative started in 2023 and aims to address the digital divide in Somerville to ensure all can use the internet with ease. The initiative kicked off with a Digital Equity Plan to map out needs and possibilities, and continued on to both enhance existing digital inclusion programming and create new opportunities to fill gaps. As a result, the City of Somerville was nationally recognized as a 2023 Digital Inclusion Trailblazer.
- For more on safe and accessible transit throughout the City, see section II.6 below.



These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Racial and Social Justice, RSJ: Accessibility Services Division, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, OSPCD: Economic Development, Communications and Community Engagement Department, Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, and other implementing departments, offices, and partners.

### **I.3: Supporting Somerville's immigrants**

Somerville has long been a home for people from all places around the world, and has adopted a resolution of its status as a sanctuary city for immigrant since 1987. In the past four years, the Ballantyne Administration has reaffirmed its commitment to include immigrants in all parts of civic life through policies, programs, and advocacy.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Filing a federal lawsuit in February 2025, jointly between the Cities of Somerville and Chelsea, to challenge the Trump Administration's efforts to coerce them into participating in mass deportation efforts. Somerville and Chelsea have committed to being sanctuary / welcoming cities for decades. The lawsuit asserts that the federal government's attempts to strip localities of federal funding for not participating in mass deportation efforts are unconstitutional. Lawyers for Civil Rights, the organization representing Somerville and Chelsea, awarded Mayor Ballantyne with the Diversity Champion Award in June 2025.
- Conducting over 184 multilingual Know Your Rights trainings for City employees and community members. Hosted by the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA) with a wide variety of City and local organizational partners, these workshops help to ensure all residents have accurate and reliable information on their rights.
- Connecting 114+ constituents with full immigration legal representation provided by City-contracted legal organizations, as well as referrals to nonprofits and pro-bono attorneys in the community. Services include information clinics, consultation sessions, assistance in filing applications, emergency preparedness planning, and legal representation.
- Leading and supporting community workshops and trainings to promote immigrant leadership, such as the IMPACT Group for Spanish-speaking parents, the Haitian Coalition of Business Owners in Somerville, and financial literacy trainings for Portuguese-speaking community members.
- Continued expansion of the City's cultural celebrations, including the first Hong Kong Festival, the first Haitian Flag Festival, and the first raising of the Brazilian and Italian flags. Representing our constituents through celebration enhances community cohesion, respect, and joy.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Law Department, the Mayor's Office: Intergovernmental Affairs, Somerville Public Schools: Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, and numerous other community partners.

## Section II: Equity & Wellbeing

### II.1: Urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Mayor Ballantyne took office during the Omicron surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued the work of supporting residents during a global emergency. The Ballantyne Administration enacted rapid responses to address urgent and emergent needs in public health services, access to support resources, and infrastructure updates for health and safety.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- The rapid stand-up of new testing sites, weekly vaccination clinics, the purchase and distribution of 260,000 high-quality masks, and distribution of more than 50,000 test kits.
- A local eviction moratorium that was extended multiple times until June 30, 2022, the last remaining municipal eviction moratorium in Massachusetts.
- The launch of a flexible rental assistance program, initiated with \$4.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in 2022, to provide more flexible rental support than existing programs in a time of great need.
- \$2.5 million in one-time ARPA-funded grants and technical assistance to 90 small businesses, as well as a first-ever marketing support campaign, to help businesses weather the negative economic impacts of the pandemic.
- Nearly \$1.5 million of ARPA funds spent on operating support for 91 nonprofits serving Somerville residents, ensuring continuity of critical services. \$10 million of ARPA funds spent on grants to 38 nonprofits to help not just relieve but recover from the pandemic.
- Food support programs such as Carrot Cards (monthly reloadable debit cards for students and families) and Just Eats Boxes (grocery box deliveries for residents of need), funded by ARPA through the Office of Food Access and Healthy Communities and administered by local nonprofit Food For Free, to ensure accessibility, nutrition, and safety during the COVID-19 Omicron surge and beyond.
- Heightened support to City social service teams to ensure resident connection to resources during the continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Health and Human Services Department, HHS: Office of Food Access and Healthy Communities, the Office of

Strategic Planning and Community Development Department: Economic Development Division, the Communications and Community Engagement Department, and innumerable volunteers and community partners.

## II.2: Supporting youth and education

To support youth and education, the Ballantyne Administration has invested in a multi-partner strategy that connects, aligns, and mobilizes resources to ensure every child in Somerville can thrive, from cradle to career.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- A 34% increase to the Somerville Public Schools budget over 4 fiscal years, and a newly-ratified bargaining agreement with the Somerville Educators Union for FY26. These investments help protect against staff cuts seen in other districts, improve compensation, and expand student support services.
- Launching the K-8 Schools Master Plan in early 2022, which informs the City's approach to school building usage, renovations, and construction over the next generation. In FY26, these efforts included the construction of a new classroom space at the Argenziano School.
- Initiating the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process in April 2023, to obtain state funding to renovate and rebuild Winter Hill Community Innovation School, and potentially address the aging facility at the Brown School.
- Continued investment in the Somerville Hub, a one-stop resource center for families and children of all ages, making nearly 800 referrals per year to resources, benefits, and assistance.
- SomerBaby, a partnership between the City's SomerPromise office and the public schools' Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, made over 300 family visits, resource referrals, and "welcome package" deliveries to new parents per year.
- Establishing a Teen Center in 2022, which provides free afterschool programming, field trips, leadership workshops, and warm meals for over 200 teens per year during the school year. Supported by ARPA and transitioned to stable funding sources, the Teen Center operated in a central location at the Edgerly Education Center until Summer 2023, and following the relocation of the Winter Hill Community Innovation School, began to operate out of multiple locations at the Edgerly, Powderhouse Park, Tufts Administration Building, and others.
- Establishing the Youth Services Division and Director position in 2023, which conducted a Youth Needs Assessment engaging with both adult and youth representatives. Subsequently, the Division expanded the Mayor's Summer Jobs program for internships at City departments to around 200 youth per summer, and further expanded the program in 2025 for during the school year.

- Establishing more civic engagement and leadership opportunities for youth and teens, through the Department of Racial and Social Justice Youth League, the youth representative position on the Climate Action Commission, and more.
- Strengthening youth job training programs through Somerville Public Schools and partnerships with City departments and area businesses, including classroom visits, site tours, demos, internships, and work-study programs. For example, the “Let’s Get Workin’” partnership between DPW and SHS offers paid, hands-on job training in technical professions. Internships with life sciences companies were also established.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HHS: SomerPromise, HHS: Youth Services Division, Parks and Recreation Department, Somerville Public Schools, Infrastructure and Asset Management Department, School Building Committee, Department of Racial and Social Justice, and partnerships with community organizations.

## **II.3: Supporting unhoused residents and promoting harm reduction**

To support community members experiencing homelessness and substance use, the Ballantyne Administration invested in a multi-pronged approach that included direct intervention, prevention, harm reduction, and referral to treatment and wraparound services. Many of these approaches represent historic “firsts” for Somerville, and even for the nation.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Establishing Somerville’s first Winter Warming Center to provide overnight services to unhoused community members. Launched in 2022 on just a few of the coldest nights of the year, the Center expanded to a 5-month season in subsequent years, serving about 35 beds per night with room for overflow and nearly 4,000 visits per season. For FY26, infrastructure updates enabled further capacity growth and improved -ADA compliance, life safety and HVAC controls.
- Strategically used ARPA funds to support the Somerville Homeless Coalition in creating Somerville’s first daytime Engagement Center. The Engagement Center provides a wide range of wraparound services to unhoused community members outside of typical shelter hours, including access to physical facilities, healthcare, benefits application, career services, storage lockers, and more.
- Increased staffing capacity for social work and community health outreach, including overdose prevention and Narcan administration trainings for community members and city staff.
- Creating Somerville’s first Community Health Worker (CHW) Division of HHS in 2023. Somerville CHWs connect with community members where they are and offer system navigation, health education, and connection to services. Their services include street outreach in partnership with the Somerville Homeless Coalition, enrollment in SNAP and MassHealth, and more. In 2025, the Community Health Worker Division was named the CHW Program of the Year by the Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers.
- ARPA-funded partnership with Cambridge Health Alliance and Somerville Homeless Coalition to deliver street-level healthcare. 82 persons experiencing homelessness received medical care or care coordination from July 2023 through September 2024.
- Installing the nation’s first outdoor dual sharps disposal kiosk, as well as two public health vending machines that distribute reproductive care items, respiratory health products, overdose prevention tools, and more.

- The successful pilot of a Social Worker embedded in the Somerville Public Libraries. The Social Worker supports unhoused residents, but also many different patrons in accessing basic needs and services.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Health and Human Services, HHS: Office of Prevention Services, HHS: Community Health Worker Division, Office of Emergency Management, and partnerships with community organizations.



## **II.4: Supporting seniors, veterans, and LGBTQ+ community**

Under the Ballantyne Administration, the City's Council on Aging, Division for Veterans Services, and LGBTQ+ Services have worked to connect, support, and advocate for community members to create an environment where all may thrive in health, independence, and dignity.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Completing the “Aging in Somerville: a Community Needs Assessment” in April 2025, to examine the needs of Somerville’s older adults, where their needs are being met, and where there are gaps to fill. This was a partnership between the Council on Aging and UMass Boston’s Gerontology Institute.
- Launching the Older Adult Bridge Program in 2024, a pilot program providing financial and social services to keep low-income seniors in their homes while they transition to permanent subsidized housing. The pilot was in partnership with the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, and it contributes critical evidence for advocating for state-level policy.
- The Senior Taxi Program, which provided roughly 9,000 free taxi rides per year to limited-income senior residents to grocery stores, medical appointments, and other basic needs during 2022 – 2024.
- Supporting veterans, their dependents, and survivors to access benefits, including financial assistance and medical treatment.
- Re-establishing the Veterans Commission on Monuments, Memorials, and Dedications in 2023, to honor servicemembers past and present.
- Creating a full time LGBTQ+ Services Coordinator position to support and collaborate with LGBTQ communities within Somerville. The Coordinator has partnered closely with the Somerville Public Schools to support the leadership of youth, led public ceremonies and celebrations, and worked to eliminate discrimination in and outside of Somerville.
- Launching a Know Your Rights Pride series, geared at informing LGBTQ+ immigrants and their loved ones of their rights and the resources available to them. This was accomplished through a partnership between SOIA, the LGBTQ+ Services Coordinator, and a local non-profit.
- As part of their role, the LGBTQ+ Coordinator launched an internal Gender Identity Task Force in 2024, which organized City-wide training on Gender Identity and Expression for all City of Somerville staff.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Council on Aging, OSPCD: Office of Housing Stability, HHS: Veterans Services, HHS: LGBTQ+ Services, and Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs.

## II.5: Public safety and racial and social justice

In the last 4 years, the Ballantyne Administration led a community-driven agenda to create public safety policies and engagement that advance racial and social justice—across all economic classes, ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and identities.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Conducting the Public Safety For All (PSFA) Survey in 2022, which collected data from 1,300 respondents on comprehensive questions regarding safety and policing, in one of the most demographically diverse survey datasets in Somerville’s history.
- Publishing comprehensive police datasets to the City’s Open Data Portal, including data on crime reports, computer-aided dispatch, motor vehicle crashes, and traffic citations. A collaboration between Somerville Police Department (SPD), Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ), and SomerStat, these updates build on the administration’s goals to modernize policing and expand transparency.
- Convening two task forces and one working group in 2023 to guide policy considerations, culminating in public reports and recommendations in February 2025:
  - Public Safety For All Task Force: examining overall emergency response models and public safety infrastructure; /
  - Civilian Oversight Task Force: planning to establish Somerville’s first civilian oversight entity over emergency response;
  - Anti-Violence Working Group: recommendations on mitigating multiple types of violence in Somerville.
- Hiring a PSFA Project Manager in the Mayor’s Executive Office, to advance the path laid out in the Task Forces’ reports.
- Strengthening the Community Outreach, Help, and Recovery (COHR) Unit at SPD, a civilian unit staffed with clinicians and case management workers. COHR supports residents whose behavioral health and addiction challenges are intersecting, or at risk of intersecting, with the criminal justice system, by providing post-crisis follow up and aftercare. COHR held extensive trainings in recognizing signs and symptoms of behavioral health crises and understanding how these can impact calls for service, to better inform police response.
- Continuing formal Jail diversions, through COHR in partnership with SPD, which aims to divert individuals from the criminal justice system towards mental health and substance use recovery paths, both pre- and post-arraignment.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Racial and Social Justice, Somerville Police Department, SomerStat Division, and community members and partners.

## II.6: Safe and accessible transit

The Ballantyne Administration has committed to making Somerville's streets safer and more accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Many departments have worked together to plan and implement safer street designs, identify priority areas and neighborhoods, and build out programs to improve transit access.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Implementing the Somerville Vision Zero Action Plan, which aims to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries across the City. Vision Zero has guided re-engineering of dangerous intersections, the addition of more slow-speed safety zones, the reconstruction of 11 miles of roads and 10 miles of sidewalks, and the expansion of data-driven siting for interventions. In the past 4 years, the City has tripled its traffic calming production while transforming the community engagement process. As a result, Somerville has achieved zero traffic fatalities for a third year in a row to date, and continues to diligently work toward zero fatalities in the future.
- The MBTA Green Line Extension (GLX) into Somerville and Medford, a major regional transit project decades in planning and construction, was completed in 2022. The City and community groups have played active roles in advocating for and advising the project throughout its process.
- Planning, construction, and opening of the Community Path extension in 2023, a 2 mile off-street multi-use path connecting pedestrians and cyclists across east and west Somerville. The City continues to invest in public processes and engineering improvements to the path, such as lighting, crossings, and safety designs.
- Adopting the Bicycle Network Plan in 2023, a community-based vision for an 88-mile network of connected streets and paths for people of all ages and abilities to bike safely. As a result, 40 miles of high-priority improvements are planned to be installed or upgraded by 2030.
- The expansion of the Somerville Neighborways network, in collaboration with Neighborways Design and CultureHouse, to establish traffic-calmed and low-stress routes and areas to safely walk and bike.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through OSPCD: Mobility Division, IAM: Engineering Division, the Office of Sustainability and Environment, OSPCD: Public Space and Urban Forestry, OSPCD: Planning, Preservation & Zoning, DPW: Highways, Somerville Fire Department, and the Parking Department.

## Section III: Thriving – Affordability

### III.1: Supporting residents and families with low or limited-income

To support Somerville’s residents in affording rising cost of living, the Ballantyne Administration has invested in a range of programs and services to address immediate needs and enhance the social safety net.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- The Child Care Access and Affordability (CCAA) program, which provided childcare tuition assistance to 94 children in limited-income families, and free full-day summer programming for nearly 200 children, over 3 school years. Through nearly \$4 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the program provided high quality services through local providers of childcare and out-of-school-time programming, and strengthened the capacity of the SomerPromise Office, Parks and Recreation Department, and partners such as Elizabeth Peabody House to design, implement, and manage programs and services.
- Additionally, the City enhanced the service provision capacity of family support nonprofits through \$2.6 million of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, including accessibility updates to 59 Cross Street where childcare services and a large weekly food pantry are located.
- Taxi to Health, which provided over 1,000 limited-income residents with more than 33,000 free taxi rides to grocery stores, medical appointments, and other basic needs during 2022 – 2024. Along with the Senior Taxi program, this program was supported by an ARPA investment of just over \$880,000.
- A weekly multi-location Mobile Farmers Market providing low-cost, farm-fresh food for residents.
- During the holiday winter season every year, the City contributes \$18,000 towards grocery cards for families facing hardships.
- Free monthly transit passes for students, low-income residents, School and City employees, and East Somerville business employees.
- A \$975,000 investment from the Community Benefit Stabilization Fund toward food security and access initiatives in November 2025, in response to federal funding instability and suspension of SNAP benefits.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Department of Health and Human Services, HHS: SomerPromise Division, HHS: Office of Food Access and Healthy Communities, OSPCD: Mobility Division, and community partners.



## III.2: Housing stability and anti-displacement

Housing is a key driver of affordability challenges in Somerville. The Ballantyne Administration has expanded a range of direct services to support residents under urgent risk of displacement, as well as a comprehensive strategy for anti-displacement policy and programs.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Convening the Anti-Displacement Task Force in 2023, to develop programming and policy recommendations that aim to equitably reduce the displacement rate of people who live in, have businesses in, or create in the City of Somerville. The three committees (Residential, Small Enterprise, and Creative Displacement) evaluated City-wide data, needs, and resources to identify further measures for reducing displacement, reporting out in January 2025.
- Developing and submitting the Rent Stabilization Home Rule Petition in 2023, which seeks the Massachusetts legislature to authorize Somerville to establish rent stabilization measures.
- Launching a flexible rental assistance program, initiated with \$4.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in 2022 and maintained today by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). These programs cover a wide range of residents and expense types, including rent, mortgages, utilities, taxes, and non-rental costs to prevent eviction or assist with rehousing.
- Launching the Municipal Voucher Program (MVP), initiated with \$1.75 million in ARPA funds and maintained by the AHTF. The MVP functions similarly to federal Section 8 housing vouchers, but targets families historically underserved by other programs. 29 families have benefited as of June 2025.
- The Somerville Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot (2024-2025), which supported 198 participating households experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity at \$750 per month for 12 months, for a total of \$1.8 million distributed. GBI allowed participants to spend or save funds however and whenever they needed, allowing greater financial stability and a broad range of impact.
- Funding for free rental legal assistance and new multilingual rental advocate staff, to provide critical support to local tenants facing evictions, displacement, or lack of access to benefits and resources. These programs were initiated with \$1.02 million in ARPA funds.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, OSPCD: Housing Division, OSPCD: Office of Housing Stability, OSPCD: Economic Development Division, Somerville Arts Council, Somerville



City Council, Somerville Public Schools: Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, and community members and organizational partners.

### III.3: Improving access to housing units

To address Somerville's long-term housing needs, the Ballantyne Administration has invested in a multi-pronged approach that includes strategic urban planning to create affordable units, zoning and permitting changes, and renters and homebuyers support programs.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Establishing the Consolidated Rental Waitlist in 2025 across all affordable Inclusionary rental developments in the City, streamlining the application process for residents and improving the City's effectiveness at filling newly created rental units.
- Establishing the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (SAHTF) Strategic Plan in 2023, which guides the Trust Fund's 5-year strategies in creating new and preserving existing affordable homes and rental units, and to assist renters and homeowners.
- Expanding the affordable Housing Pipeline: 314 new affordable units were created in the past 4 years. As of December 2025, 786 units are currently under permitting or in the development pipeline.
- Establishing the Early Action Acquisition Fund in 2022, which enables affordable and/or mixed-income housing developers to purchase land or existing housing units with greater speed and flexibility of terms, so as to compete with non-affordable housing developers. The Fund was used to acquire three properties expected to create 156 affordable units.
- An increase in 2025 in the Community Preservation Act (CPA) surcharge on city-wide property taxes, from 1.5% to 3%, to fund affordable housing, open spaces, and historic preservation.
- Updating the Condominium Conversion Ordinance in 2025, providing strengthened protection for tenants (requiring a longer notification period and higher relocation assistance) when landlords wish to vacate units and convert them into condos.
- Developing and adopting the Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) Zone, Plan, and Form of Agreement in 2023 for the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan at 299 Broadway, enabling the financing and advancement of this long-planned affordable mix-use development project.
- Continuing the Home Rule Petition to the state legislature to allow the City to require large institutions (such as universities) to be subject to Institutional Master Planning review, in the City's revised Zoning Code.

- Supporting strong Community Benefit Agreements between developers and community representatives in major development projects city-wide, to ensure the availability of affordable residential units. See Section IV.1 for further examples.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD), OSPCD: Housing Division, Economic Development, and Planning, Preservation, and Zoning.

## Section IV: Thriving – Economic Opportunity

### IV.1: Commercial development and bringing jobs to the city

If affordability is one side of the coin of thriving and prosperity, economic opportunity is the other side. To create economic opportunity for all, the Ballantyne Administration has invested in a multitude of initiatives in the past 4 years, including commercial development and measures to bring jobs to the city.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Completing the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan (adopted 2025) and Brickbottom Neighborhood Plan (adopted 2024), two large-scale plans that guide the redevelopment of these areas for commercial and residential use.
- Continuing the development of Union Square, including the completion of a major life science lab and office building at 10 Prospect Street, and a 450-unit residential building (with 90 units designated affordable) at 20-50 Prospect Street, immediately adjacent to an MBTA station on the new Green Line Extension.
- Achieving new zoning amendments and a Community Benefit Agreement for Union Square’s SomerNova, including 1.5 million square feet of lab and office space for climate technology, 100,000 square feet of Arts & Creative Enterprise space, dedicated community center space, affordable residential units, Project Labor Agreements for jobs during construction, and 10-year commitments to job creation and training programs.
- Growing Somerville as a hub for new technological industries and the innovation economy. Successes include:
  - Recruiting life science and medical technology companies Ultragenyx, Forsyth, and TransMedics, and the green energy company Form Energy, into Somerville campuses since 2022;
  - Career training opportunities for Somerville High School students at companies such as Ultragenyx and Bristol Myers Squibb;
  - Providing an Innovation Fund grant support in 2024 towards climate technology incubator Greentown Labs;

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, OSPCD: Economic Development, OSPCD: Planning and Zoning, OSPCD: Housing Division, and many departmental and community partners.

## **IV.2: Improving jobs and investing in workforce development**

Access to employment with fair compensation and career growth opportunities is a key component to economic prosperity for all. In the past 4 years, the Ballantyne Administration has taken many measures to improve job conditions and wages and promote workforce development.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Conducting Somerville’s first-ever employee Wage and Compensation Study in 2023 - 2025, which identified historical inequities pay gaps across departments and enabled a new framework to classify and pay comparably for similar job functions.
- Signing 11 bargaining agreements with City employee unions in the past 4 years, including addressing wage bias (per the wage study) in a 2025 contract with Somerville Municipal Employees Union (SMEU) Unit B, and increased support for educators and students in a 2025 contract with Somerville Educators Union (SEU).
- Investing in job and career training grants for adult and youth residents, including for municipal jobs, life sciences, clean energy, and information technology sectors. Grants are implemented through the Somerville Public Schools’ Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE), or through community partners.
- Post-Secondary Success Program (2023 – 2025), a pilot funded with ARPA to expand career support for Somerville High School graduates by extending counseling and guidance services past the traditional high school term. Over 100 youth participated, resulting in higher college enrollment rates than peers with similar demographics statewide.
- Supporting the Job Creation and Retention Trust, managed by a Board of Trustees, which invests linkage fees from commercial developments into workforce development programs.
- Addressing the gender wage gap through five ARPA-funded career development grants totaling nearly \$500,000 to four local nonprofit partners, providing women participants with professional training, digital and financial literacy, and outreach support for women and girls’ STEM career development.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, OSPCD: Economic Development, Human Resources Department, Somerville Public Schools, and collaborating departments and community partners.

### **IV.3: Supporting small businesses and the arts**

An important component of equitable economic development is the promotion and preservation of cultural diversity among the businesses and services operating in our city. To support local small businesses and Somerville's unique arts community, the Ballantyne Administration has invested in a variety of measures in the past 4 years.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- The Somerville Anti-Displacement Task Force, including committees for Small Enterprise and Creative Displacement, evaluated needs and recommended policies and measures for reducing displacement in these sectors in a 2025 report.
- Publishing the Commercial Leasing Handbook in 2025, providing detailed guidelines for small businesses on how to navigate the rising costs of doing business and the risk of displacement in Somerville.
- Conducting a joint Disparity Study in 2023 with the Town of Brookline on the challenges faced by small, diverse, and disadvantaged businesses when doing business with municipal governments. As a result, the City led a Home Rule Petition in 2025 to expand 30B municipal procurement opportunities for such businesses.
- \$2.5 million in one-time ARPA-funded grants and technical assistance to 90 small businesses, as well as a first-ever marketing support campaign.
- \$1.5 million in one-time ARPA-funded grants to support nonprofit operations, and \$10 million in grants to 38 nonprofits to conduct projects and services, enabling organizations to test new ideas, better deliver services, or strategically plan for the future.
- Establishing the Cultural Capacity Plan in 2025, Somerville's first cultural plan for supporting arts and culture through coordinated measures in zoning for arts spaces, funding programs, connecting and growing artists and organizations, and engaging them in ongoing policymaking to sustain the arts. The process was lead by Cultural Ambassadors, representing different arts communities throughout Somerville.
- Establishing the Armory Master Plan in 2025, laying the roadmap for transforming the historic Armory building into a public community arts center.
- Releasing the Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment in 2022, providing recommendations for short term and long-term actions the City can take to mitigate the impacts of development pressure on working artists and the organizations serving them.

- Revising the Arts and Creative Enterprise use definitions in 2025, to better support arts and small business related to zoning in FAB and transformative districts.
- Supporting renovations to the Somerville Museum through ARPA and Community Preservation Act funding, which enabled building upgrades in accessibility, climate control, and flood management.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, OSPCD: Economic Development, Somerville Arts Council, and community partners.

## Section V: Thriving – Sustainability

### V.1: Climate action and urban environment

In the last 4 years, the City has continued its long-time commitment towards building resilience against climate change challenges and enhancing the urban ecosystem.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Climate Forward, Somerville’s plan to build climate resilience and reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuel reliance. The 2024 update established 5 key focus areas and 77 actions, including promoting car-free transit, waste reduction and recycling, and clean energy and efficiency programs. The Plan sets the city’s commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and carbon-negative status in the future.
- Major flood control and sewage infrastructure updates, discussed in detail in the next section.
- Increasing access to urban green spaces through the renovation of parks and green spaces, including 4 playgrounds and the Dilboy Athletic Auxiliary Natural Grass Fields, and the addition of new open spaces, including a pocket park and Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) such as Boynton Yards Park.
- Updating the Tree Preservation Ordinance in 2025, strengthening requirements for tree removal and establishing new protections for trees affected by construction. In addition, promoting urban forestry by planting approximately 2,500 trees and continuing proactive care programs for over 5,500 trees.
- Establishing the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan (SPAP), a community-driven initiative aimed at supporting pollinator species within the city’s urban environment. The SPAP was created through a collaborative process between City staff, consultant experts, and a community advisory committee. This groundbreaking plan has won multiple awards at the national level and serves as an example to other municipalities.
- Conducting two studies on the feasibility of networked geothermal and electrification in three areas, to examine possibilities of neighborhood-based approaches to upgrading residential energy use.
- Launching the food waste collection pilot in East Somerville in 2025, promoting waste reduction and paving way for a city-wide program.
- Customers of the Community Choice Electricity program generated 117,500 MWh of voluntary, regional, zero-carbon renewable energy and saved \$20 million on electric bills throughout the past term, despite historic global price increases.



- Unanimously passed the specialized energy code, the state's highest energy code, as well as a home rule petition, ordinance, and resolution in support of Somerville's application to the Fossil Fuel Free demonstration program.
- The City's Office of Sustainability and Environment awarded \$1.9 million in grants and technical assistance between 2023-2025 for resiliency and energy/emissions reduction projects.
- As a result of all efforts, Somerville was a member of the inaugural class of certified Climate Leader communities by the Department of Energy Resources in May 2025, and was recognized as an A-list global leader in climate action by CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project), for the City's ambitious efforts to address climate change.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Office of Sustainability and Environment, Infrastructure and Asset Management Department, OSPCD: Public Space and Urban Forestry Division, City Council, and other departments and community partners.

## V.2: Updating the urban infrastructure

From the highest point of the City Hall tower to the lowest point of the Poplar Street Pump Station, the Ballantyne Administration has made strong investments to update its urban infrastructure to enable a more livable, equitable, and sustainable environment.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- Beginning to implement the Building Master Plan, a phased strategy for updating City-owned buildings and allocating their use to different departments for better servicing constituents. These efforts included key building envelope improvements at City Hall, 1895 Building, and 90 Union Square.
- Opening the Assembly Square Fire Station in October 2025, the first new fire station built in Somerville in over a century. The station is designed with modern features and technology to support firefighters' work and enhance their safety. The City also developed its first-ever Fire Station Master Plan, providing strategic guidance for upgrades to the city's fire stations.
- Comprehensive efforts to update the City's stormwater management system, including:
  - Somerville Avenue Sewer Overhaul, which replaces aging pipes and installs new infrastructure to improve capacity and reliability;
  - Spring Hill Sewer Separation Project, which separates the combined sewer and stormwater system to reduce overflow during heavy rain;
  - Poplar Street Pump Station, a 4-million-gallon stormwater storage tank and pump near Union Square that reduces flooding, prevents sewage backup, and transforms water management in 60% of the City.
- Long term planning efforts to improve the quality of the City's drinking water system, including the completion of a multi-year program to remove hundreds of lead water service lines, as well as replacing or relining approximately five miles of water main, throughout the City.
- Advancing the Grounding McGrath project, a decade-long plan to replace the elevated overpass highway (Route 28) with a ground level road. The City collaborated with MassDOT to obtain over \$43 million in federal funding for the project in January 2025.
- Updating numerous emergency management plans and infrastructure, including establishing Somerville's Local Emergency Planning Committee, creating the Local Resource Recovery Center for fire survivors, and updating the city's Comprehensive

Emergency Management Plan since 2015 as well as the Emergency Management Center.

- Implementing innovative rodent control measures to improve the city's urban living environment, including installing "Big Belly" trash cans to reduce food availability, expanding the free residential rodent control assistance program, creating a dedicated staff role in the Board of Health, and employing non-toxic interventions such as SMART electrocution boxes and fertility control.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Infrastructure and Asset Management Department, IAM: Capital Projects Division, IAM: Engineering Division, Somerville Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management, Water and Sewer Department, OSPCD: Mobility Division, Board of Health, and other offices and partners.

### V.3: Enhancing the City's capacity to deliver services

A well-functioning government ensures efficient and effective delivery of services. The Ballantyne Administration has invested in its operations over the last four years in order to more effectively serve and impact the community.

Major initiatives to highlight include:

- **Improved bond rating:** In 2023, the City of Somerville was awarded the highest long-term debt rating of 'AAA' from S&P Global Ratings, a municipal bond credit rating agency. This upgraded status reaffirms the City's financial stability and creditworthiness, and offers lower borrowing rates for critical infrastructure investments.
- **Updated City Charter:** A new City charter was approved by voters in November 2025 after years of work by stakeholders across the community. Improvements to the charter include the update of various requirements to bring them in line with modern practices, adjustment of budget hearing and review timelines, and increased oversight by the City Council regarding appointments, auditing, and more.
- **Focus on hiring and retention:** This administration focused on hiring to fill critical vacancies, as well as retaining and supporting existing staff at the City. Efforts include the Work Better Task Force in 2023, aimed at improving staff's work environment and productivity, and the Wage and Compensation Study, which ensured comparable pay for similar roles across all departments and evaluated competitiveness with other municipalities.
- **Scaling the organization:** As City services grew in their scale, supportive departments such as Finance divisions and Procurement and Contracting Services were expanded to ensure efficiency. New ways of organizing teams were also implemented, such as hiring finance managers directly into major departments.
- **Data, monitoring, and evaluation:** In the last four years, SomerStat has coordinated with departments to create more standardized and effective public opinion surveys for civic feedback, and to analyze results comparably over time and across efforts. SomerStat's Open Data Portal also provides all residents with access to public data, with visualizations and data dictionaries to lower technical barriers for use. Looking ahead, SomerStat has been working on overarching upgrades such as systematizing evaluation protocols, and creating long-range performance management systems to track progress toward Somervision 2040 goals.

These initiatives were developed and implemented through the Finance Department, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Human Resources Department, the SomerStat Division, and many more who support the operations of the organization every day.