

# City of Somerville FY26



**Mayor Katjana Ballantyne**

**May 29, 2025**

## **Section 1:**

# **Achieving Progress Amid New Challenges**



# Stability amid headwinds

*While other communities cut services, Somerville is set up for continued progress*

- **Costs are rising.**
- **Development is slowing.** New growth remains enviable but at a slower projected rate for FY26.
- **Federal actions on tariffs, immigration, and local funding have harms and costs.** People, businesses, and governments are impacted.
- **Federal funding cuts threaten key economic sectors.** In Mass., research and higher ed are under threat.
- **We are focused on service delivery – and preparing.** A history of strong financial and resource management is girding us for this challenge.



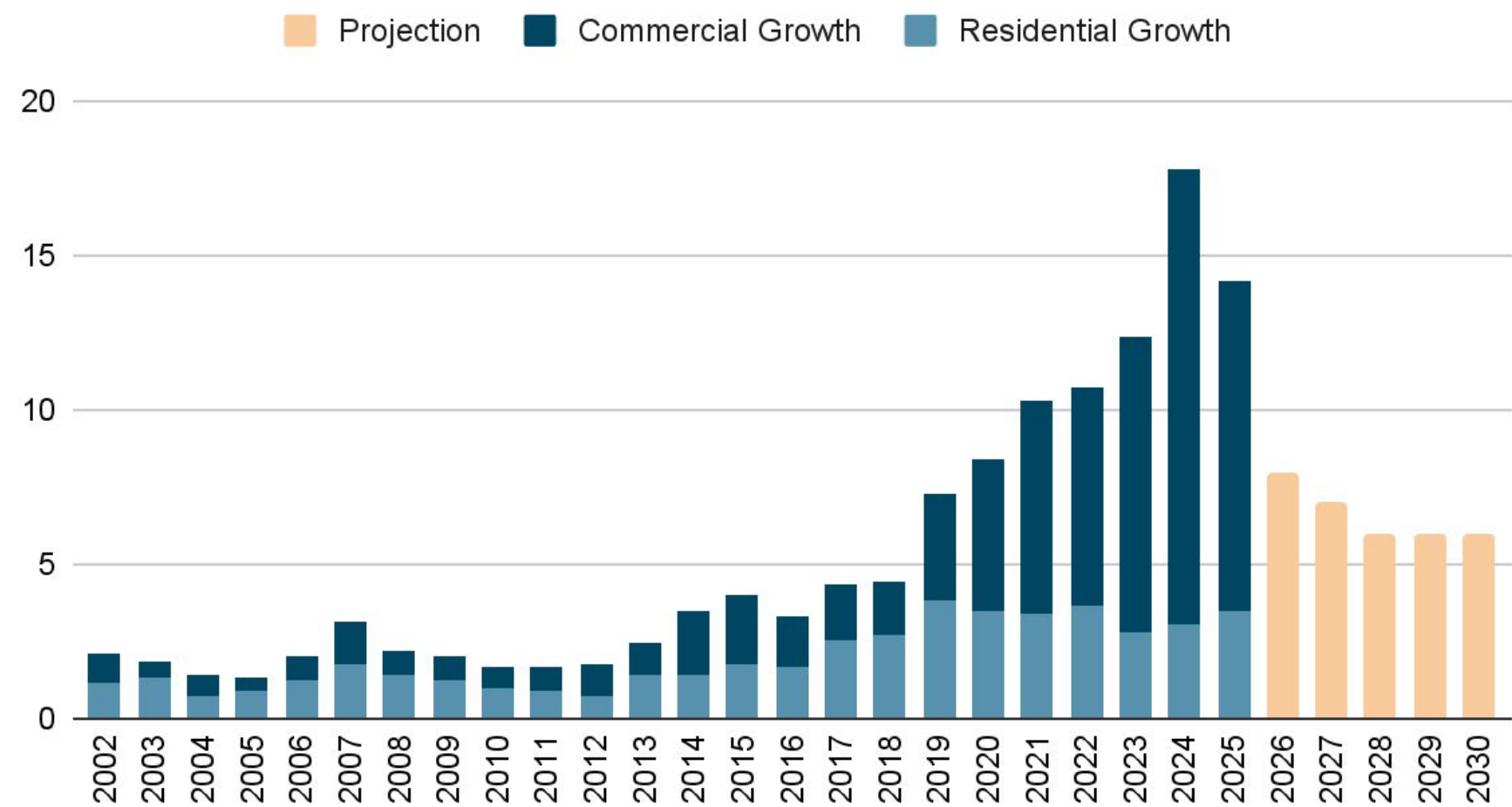
# New growth is slowing but remains important source of tax revenue

After a peak in FY24, the City has seen continued but slowing new growth the past two years.

Staff project \$8M in new growth for FY26, down from \$14.1M in FY25 and a record \$17.7M in FY24.

Growth is moderating but still an important revenue source.

Annual New Growth FY12-FY26 Estimate (In Millions)



**Building  
Stability &  
Opportunity  
with**

**Management  
Best Practices**

**and**

**Sound  
Financial  
Strategy**





# Necessary steps taken to balance FY26

## Reserve Draw

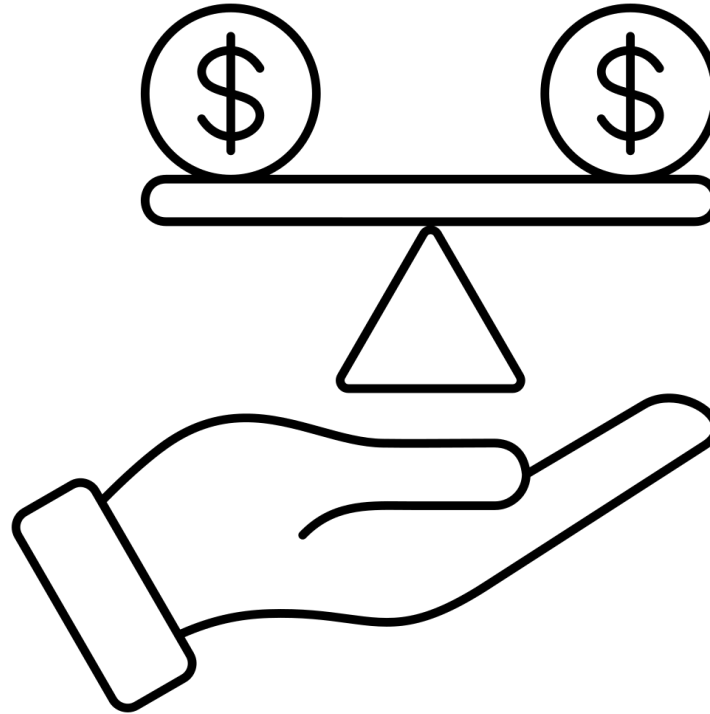
One-time reserve draw to pay for improved schools union contract

## Hiring Freeze

6-month City hiring freeze to be reassessed in fall

## Less Non-Union COLAs

Upper pay grades to forgo cost of living increases for now



## Reductions

3%-4% reduction from level service for most departments

## Alternative Funding

Stabilization funds, grants, and fees applied to offset costs

## Using What We Have

Using new approaches to achieve more with existing resources

## **Even with Reductions, A Level-Service budget preserves all functions: We will still deliver**

A “level-service” budget means you will still find your librarian at the desk, your street plowed, and your recreation program on the calendar even though health-care premiums, energy prices, and the costs of goods and services the City must purchase are all rising.

# Our **values** guide our budget

## **Our goal**

Create a thriving and equitable Somerville

## **A track record of progress**

Building on prior investments and maintaining essential services

## **Thinking long-term**

Setting the City up for success now as well as in the long term





**Section 2:**

**Building City  
& School  
Budgets  
Driven by  
Community  
Needs &  
Aspirations**



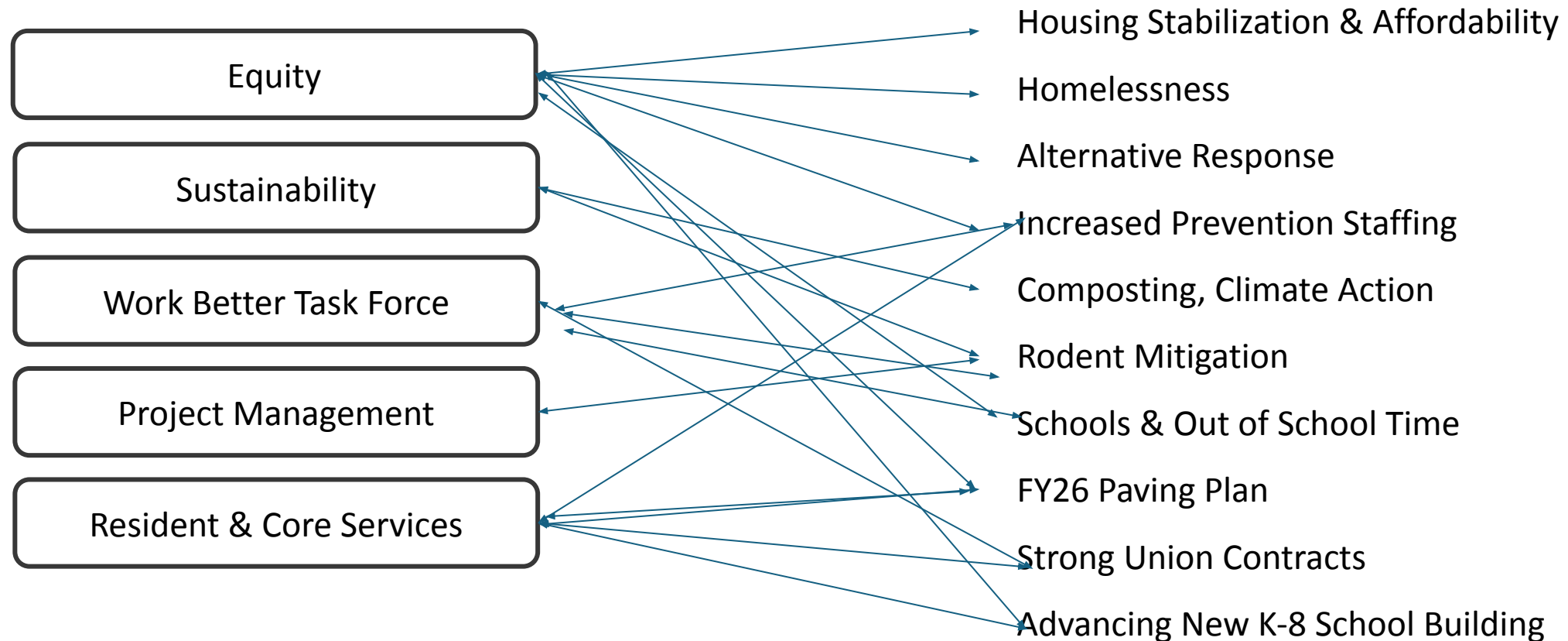
# We're listening to your priorities year-round



# Delivering on community priorities

*Inclusive leadership helps build an equitable municipal budget with effective allocation of resources.*

## Example Council Budget Priorities



# \$380.1M

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## FY26 City of Somerville Operating Budget

\$18M increase over FY25

The Fiscal Year 2026 extends from  
July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026



# \$112.3M

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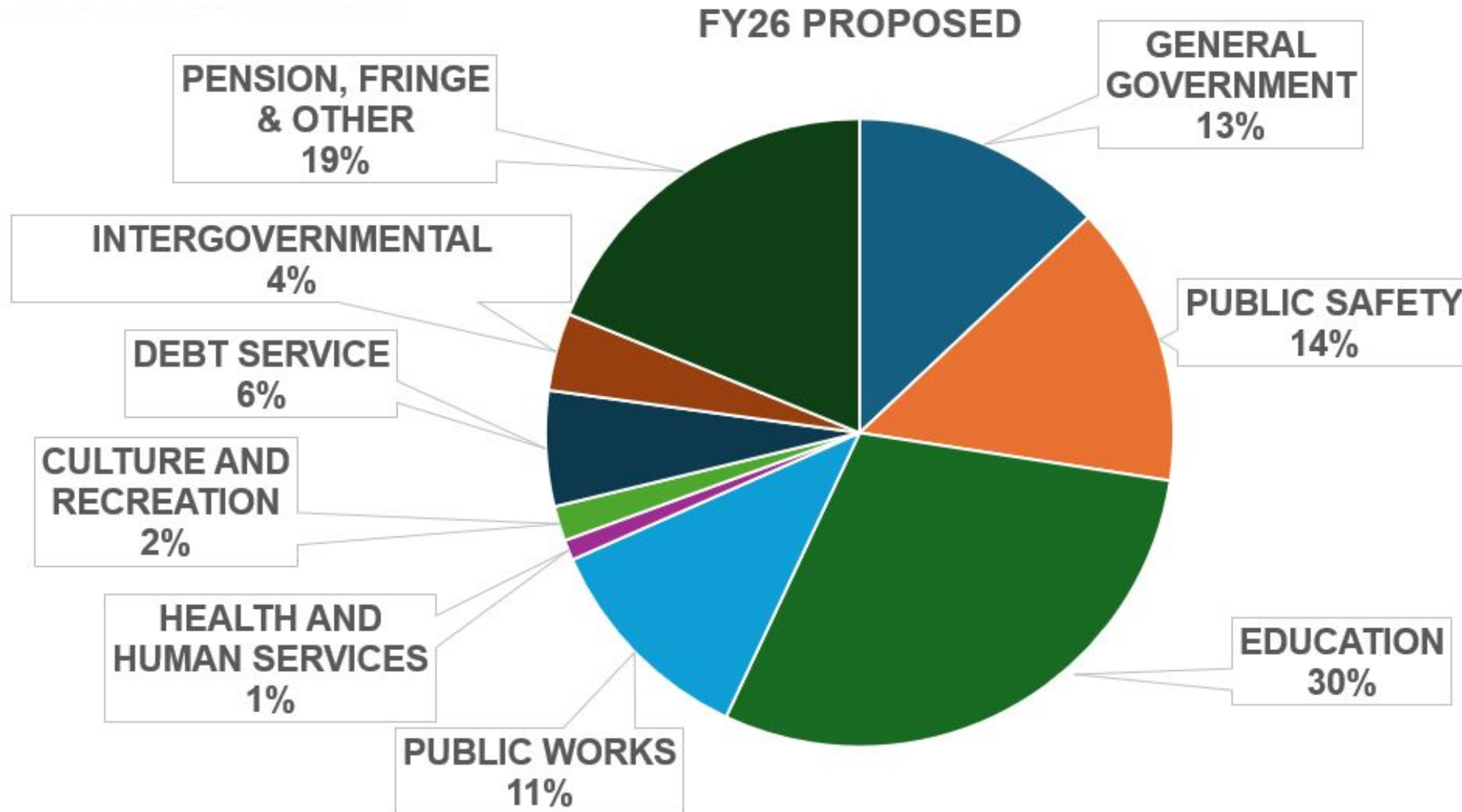
## FY26 Somerville Public Schools Budget

\$5.6M increase over FY25

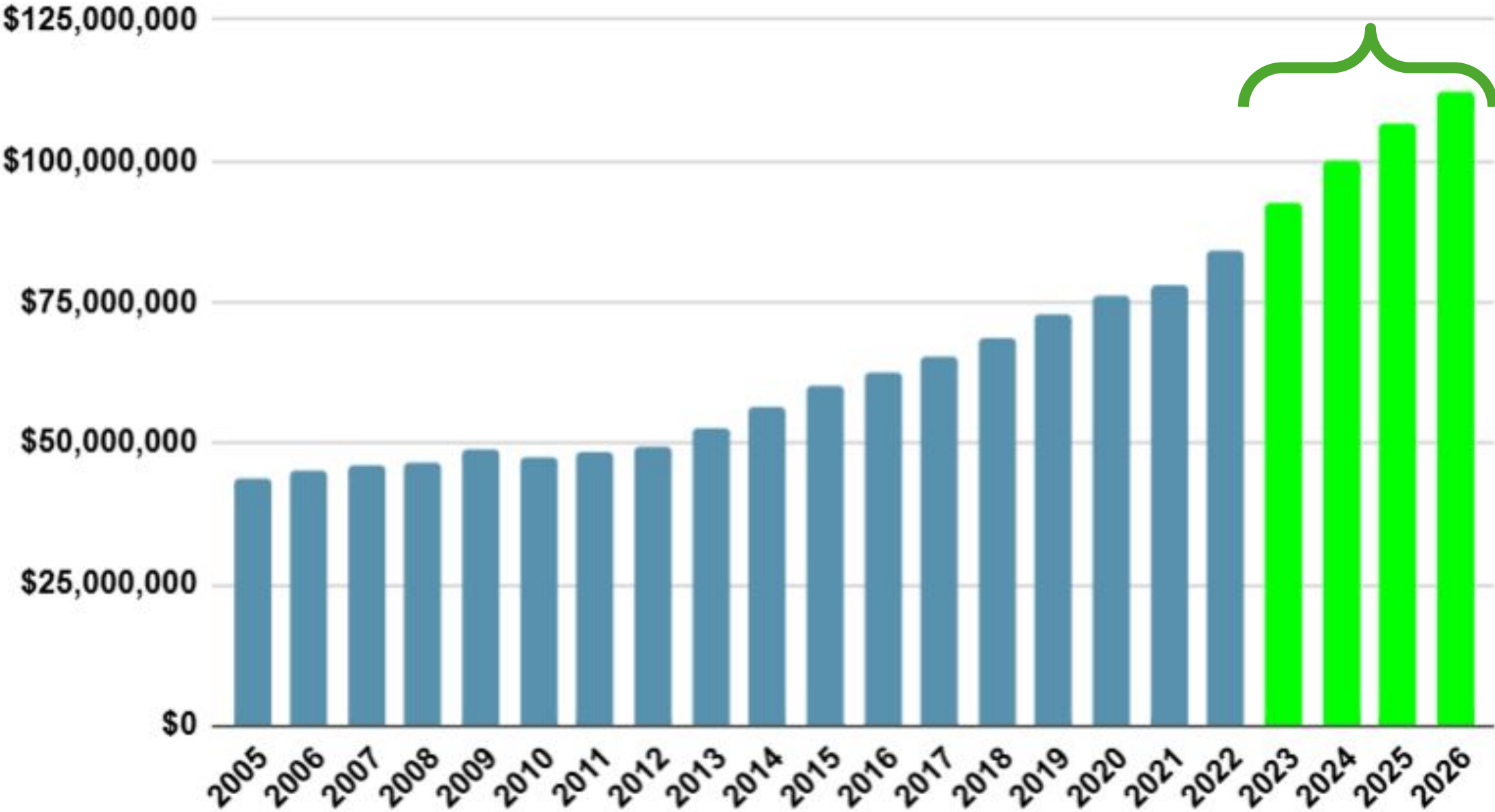
The Fiscal Year 2026 extends from  
July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

# FY26 Budget Composition

*Schools remain the largest component of our combined municipal spending at 30% of all proposed expenditures.*



# Somerville Public Schools Budget FY05-26



# Prioritizing youth and schools in both budgets

- Our school budget defies regional trends of school cutbacks or layoffs.
- Additional support for children, youth, families, and school facilities are also built into City budget.
- Focus on building and maintaining comprehensive support for Somerville students from cradle to career.
- Long-term financial planning for SPS is top priority.
- Additional salary contingency for SPS aims to bring compensation in line with City's wage equity goals.





The FY26  
budget builds  
on  
investments  
we've made  
together  
—and we are  
maintaining  
that growth

## **Foundational**

- IT staff has grown by 33% since FY22
- 12 new positions in Health & Human Services since FY22

## **Core + More**

- Multiple Housing and Housing Stability staff added
- Anti-Displacement and Digital Bridge staff added for first time
- Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs budget has tripled since FY22
- Office of Sustainability & Environment has doubled since FY22

## **Generational Investments**

- New Somerville High School
- Poplar Street Pump Station
- Somerville Ave. Utility & Streetscape Improvements
- New parks & open space
- Planning advancing School Building project for Winter Hill and possibly Brown

**Section 3:**

**Mobilizing  
Across  
Departments  
to Advance  
Exciting New  
Initiatives**





**Sharing  
ideas &  
resources  
to  
advance  
our goals**





# Focus Area Goals: Progress on your priorities through collaboration

1

Climate and Sustainability (CS)

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2

Commercial Development, Business, and Arts (CDBA)

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3

Community and Governance (CG)

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4

Education (E)

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5

Foundational City Services (FCS)

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6

Housing (H)

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# Focus Area Goals: Progress on your priorities through collaboration

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Infrastructure (I)

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8

Mobility (M)

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9

Modern, Efficient, & Transparent Government (METG)

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10

Public Health (PH)

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11

Public Safety (PS)

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12

Public Space & the Natural Environment (PSNE)

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# Focus Area Housing: Permanent Supportive Housing

## → Permanent Supportive Housing Working Group

- ◆ Supportive housing pairs vital services and supports with housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness to help residents live more stable, productive lives
- ◆ Housing, Housing Stability, Health & Human Services, and Mayor's Office to launch efforts to explore how to fill this housing gap



# Focus Area Public Safety: Faster Emergency Response

- **Next-generation Emergency Vehicle Pre-Emption traffic signal system**
  - ◆ Seconds matter when saving lives. Upgrading our ability to turn streetlights green for fire trucks, ambulances, and police benefits every resident.
  - ◆ Fire, Engineering, Mobility, IT, DPW & others are teaming up to deliver this new improved technology.





# Focus Area Public Space & Environment: All-Ages Recreation Hub

## → Recreation Hub at Founders Rink

- ◆ We need recreation space now, and the transformation of Founders Ice Rink into a multi-purpose recreation hub serving all ages puts existing resources to great use at low cost and fast.
- ◆ Recreation, DPW, Council on Aging, SomerPromise, Youth Services, Libraries, and the Schools are joining together to offer quality programming.





# Focus Area Climate and Sustainability: Decarbonization & Geothermal Pilots

- **Citywide mobilization to advance Climate Forward**
  - ◆ Geothermal is a key solution to meeting our climate goals and citywide teams are working to speed geothermal and decarbonization pilots – as well as 77 Climate Forward goals.
  - ◆ We are all hands on deck from OSPCD, Parking, and Engineering to Comms, Procurement, Libraries, and ADA.



# Collaborating on Focus Areas to Achieve More

- More user-friendly business permitting system
- Advance Public Safety for All implementation
- Build on momentum of Out-of-School-Time Task Force
- Expand efforts on teen job readiness and civic leadership
- Automate tracking of every new housing unit, affordable and market-rate, to support housing production
- Improve customer service with Internal Systems Integration plan and intranet for sharing Standard Operating Procedures





**Section 4:**

**Delivering  
Quality Core  
Services**

**&**

**Advancing  
Progress for  
All**





# FY26 goals and initiatives



## Housing & Homelessness

Continue to advance 976 affordable units in our housing pipeline

Relaunch **Warming Center** with operational improvements

Introduce **public health** vending machines

Hire Homelessness Contract Manager



## Facilities & Infrastructure

Upgrade **water distribution** system

Reduce **flooding** and **sewer backups**

Continue intersection engineering improvements

Advance K-8 **school building** project



## Resident Services

Fund **Council internship** program

Expand **translation and interpretation** services

**Website ADA upgrade**

Publish updated **Community Food Assessment** to support food security



## Sustainability

Launch Composting Pilot for ~ 1k households

Launch **Sustainable Schools** initiative

Pursue zoning to address **Gap in the Grid**

Advance **Networked Geothermal** pilot

Expand SHS **Student Climate Clubs**



# FY26 goals and initiatives



## Youth

Sustain **key youth support positions** via Marijauna Stabilization Fund, including:

- Out of School Time Coordinator
- Youth Workplace Learning Coordinator
- Full-time SPS Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist



## Public Space

Complete renovation and reopen **Dilboy and Somerville Junction parks**

Open **new** Ken Kelly Park

Plant **350+** trees

Explore new opportunities for **POPS** (privately owned public space)



## Civic Outreach

Host first **Municipal Civics Academy** for residents

**Increase Census return rate and voter turnout**

Establish the **Armory Advisory Board**

Expand **Bridge Builders** community engagement program

## RSJ

Racial & Social Justice

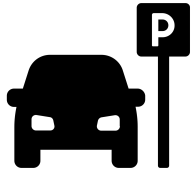
**Hire Public Safety for All Project Manager**

**Advance Goals of PSFA Task Force**

**Advance Goals of Civilian Oversight Task Force**

**Advance goals of Anti-Violence Working Group**

# FY26 projects and initiatives



## Parking & Roads

Expand **automated** traffic enforcement

Launch Complete Streets Projects on W. Broadway & Tufts St.

Support **Clear Corners** implementation

Install **accessible** push button signals



## Public Safety

Open **new fire station** at Assembly Row

Expand **continuity of care** for COHR clients

Install **new fire station dispatch system** across all stations

Establish **Community Policing** Command



## Emergency Resources

Issue **3-Year Integrated Preparedness Plan**

Launch **Neighborhood Preparedness & Resiliency** Program

Hold **Emergency Messaging Drills**

Develop **Comfort Dog** Program



## Veterans Services

Host drop-in **coffee hours** and **monthly breakfasts**

Enhance **wrap-around** service approach

Deliver **meaningful observances** for Memorial & Veterans Day

# FY26 projects and initiatives



## Arts & Culture

Create Full Capacity of Tenants at **the Armory**

Advance **Cultural Capacity Plan** steps

Work with MAPC to explore **Cultural Trust**

Build on success of **SomArt art space**



## Public Works

Develop a **City-wide building punch list** of maintenance deficiencies

**Cross-train staff in Grounds and Fields** Division

Reduce trash tonnage by offering **new recycling options** including book and textile drop-off location



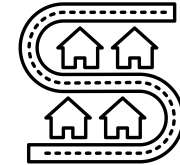
## Business & Economy

Deepen **engagement with climatetech**

**Implement First Phase of Disparity Study** Recommendations

Identify areas of difficulty for opening/operating a business

Advance sale of **90 Washington St.**



## Planning

Begin **long range planning for the McGrath Boulevard area** & Eastern portions of Union Square.

Successfully support passage for zoning for **Arts & Innovation District**

Launch outreach for **Pearl St. redesign project**

Begin **cultural heritage planning**

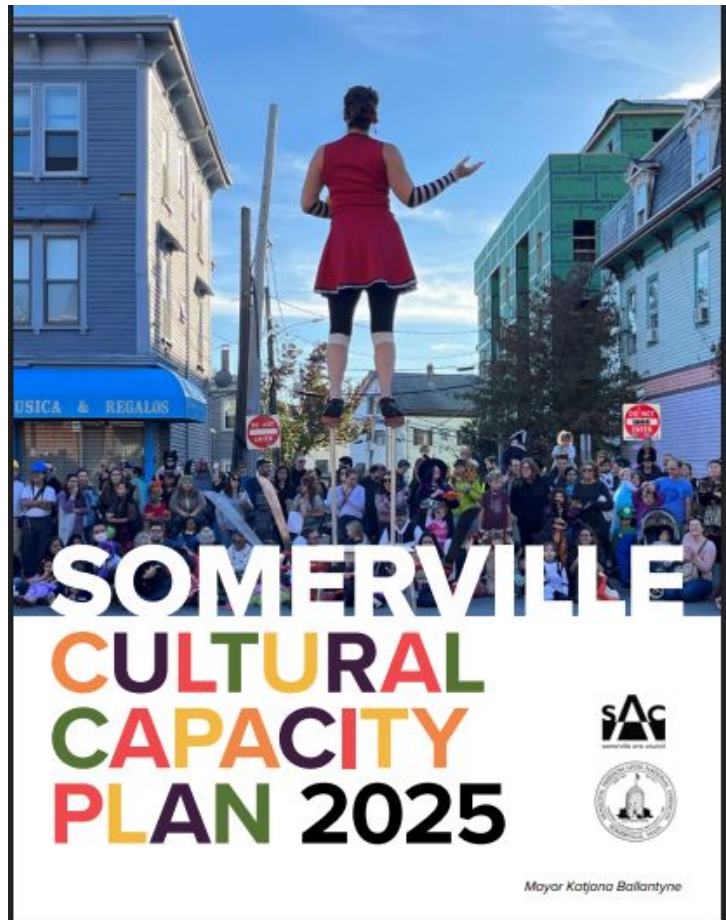
# We delivered on our goals in FY25

- Facilitated 976 units of affordable housing in construction or in the pipeline
- Advanced two-year paving project for 14 streets, all to be completed by December 2025
- Filled 1,019 potholes
- Met every MSBA milestone to date for next K-8 elementary school building project on schedule
- Launched Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) Pilot
- Published recommendations from Public Safety for All Task Force, Civilian Oversight Task Force, and Anti-Violence Working Group
- Expanded seasonal warming center hosting 35 guests per night
- Rolled out on-demand interpretation across 39 City departments across 52 training sessions
- AAA bond rating for third consecutive year





# We delivered on our goals in FY25



- Supported nearly 700 families per month with “carrot card” food benefits and school pop-up markets.
- Partnered with City Council on City Charter
- Celebrated first Disability Pride Flag Raising
- Conducted dozens of interviews and focus groups on rental registry and energy disclosure
- Launched 8-week paid family medical leave policy
- Built multilingual and visual emergency messaging template library for multiple hazards notifications
- Started work on Cultural Trust with MAPC
- Booked 3,500 hours of use at SomArts art space in 9 months
- Launched findings of...
  - Cultural Capacity Plan
  - Youth Services Needs Assessment
  - Senior Needs Assessment
  - Armory Master Plan
  - Pollinator Action Plan

# We delivered on our goals in FY25



- Successful CPA ballot initiative
- Launched ADA Transition Plan Task Force
- Delivered more than 130 Know Your Rights Trainings and distributed 5,000+ red cards
- Began work toward a cultural trust
- Obligated all federal ARPA funds
- Signed groundbreaking union contract with SMEU Unit B
- Developed individual school building punch lists of maintenance deficiencies
- Implemented a standardized safety training program for DPW
- Installed Safety Technology in City Vehicles
- Settled contracts with Firefighter's union (Local 76) and SPEA
- Conducted and implemented non-union compensation study



# We delivered on our goals in FY25

- Re-opened Henry Hansen Park
- Approved a home rule petition that would authorize the City of Somerville to use automated enforcement for certain traffic violations
- Older Adults Housing Bridge Program is actively reducing senior homelessness.
- Worked with statewide advocacy coalitions and state leadership to successfully pass legislation sealing eviction records.
- Held 2nd round of Participatory Budgeting
- Partnered with the City Council to eliminate minimum parking requirements.







**Thank You**

**For more information, visit:**

**[somer villema.gov/budget](https://somer villema.gov/budget)**