



Somerville Vision

City of Somerville, Massachusetts
Comprehensive Plan | 2010-2030



*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to
Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*

Acknowledgements



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Note: Plan Appendices will be published under separate cover, to be publicly available February 24, 2012 at www.somervillema.gov





Foreword: Our Shared Values

Somerville Vision

It's all about values.

In 2009, a series of public workshops gave Somerville residents the opportunity to articulate what is most important to them. Even though our neighborhoods and backgrounds are unique, there is a remarkable consensus as to what matters most in our community.



In Somerville, We:

Celebrate the **diversity** of our people, cultures, housing and economy.

Foster the unique character of our residents, neighborhoods, hills and squares, and the strength of our **community** spirit as expressed in our history, our cultural and social life, and our deep sense of civic engagement.

Invest in the growth of a resilient **economic base** that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.

Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces dependence on the automobile, and is **accessible**, inviting and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

Build a **sustainable** future through strong environmental leadership, balanced transportation modes, engaging recreational and community spaces, exceptional schools and educational opportunities, improved community health, varied and affordable housing options, and effective stewardship of our natural resources.

Commit to continued **innovation** and affirm our responsibility to current and future generations in all of our endeavors: business, technology, education, arts and government.

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Foreword: Our Shared Values



SomerVision

It's all about identity.

During the SomerVision workshops, participants asked the City to bring their words to life using creative graphic design. The SomerVision Word Cloud puts a unique stamp on the community's statement of values. The largest words are the ones that were most frequently used by residents during the workshops.

In 2011, local artist Meagan O'Brien created a series of banners based on our identified shared values.





1. Overview

SomerVision

It's all about people.

Somerville's greatest strength is its people: a diverse, creative and optimistic population who care deeply about Somerville's future. Plans document ideas, but people generate them. The big idea that brings us together around the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan is to make Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.



A. Background

Somerville is America's original revolutionary community. On January 1, 1776, George Washington's Union Army raised the first true American flag on top of Prospect Hill. A few generations later, in 1842, Somerville's residents again stood up to assert their independence, and the Massachusetts Legislature responded by declaring Somerville to be a new municipality distinct from Charlestown or any other community.

People who know Somerville today won't be surprised to learn that our independent and entrepreneurial identity has roots that run deep. From day one, we've been a gateway for immigrants, a haven for creative thinkers, and a place that families of all means can establish their homes. Somerville's people turn the notion of the anonymous urban environment on its head, building and expanding connections between neighbors, business owners and civic leaders that are the envy of communities everywhere.

Somerville's unique nature is especially important to conversations about the community's future. When industrial growth in the 1880's and 1890's became unsustainable, Somerville's residents worked together to create a network of parklands that would be preserved for the future. After watching elevated highways cut neighbors off from one another in the 1950's and 1960's, we united to oppose the Inner Belt Expressway proposal of the 1970's. And when metropolitan Boston finally returned to its roots of street-car, trolley and subway mass transit, Somerville residents spoke with one voice to bring the MBTA Red

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Overview

Line to Davis Square, the Orange Line to Assembly Square, and the Green Line through the very heart of the City all the way to Route 16. We are resilient and forward-looking - it's in the very chromosomes of our community.

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan continues our revolutionary tradition of public participation in civic affairs. Somerville has never prepared a long-range, participatory plan for the future. We know that our city is always changing, and that we can harness the energy of this change for the good of our people: better public schools, more choices in housing and transportation, more local jobs and services. The Comprehensive Plan was produced by the Somerville community, for the Somerville community to use as a blueprint for a more sustainable, more equitable, and more exciting future.

B. Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive planning helps communities shape their destinies. All around the world, businesses, non-profit organizations and institutions plan to assure that they can meet today's challenges without sacrificing tomorrow's opportunities. When cities and towns in Massachusetts do the same thing, the result is called a Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive planning is challenging for a city government. Governments frequently work in the present, responding to existing demands for city services and regulations (often with severely limited resources). Since critical functions are handled by specialized departments, attempts to think long-term are often limited to one specific subject: education; sewer service; public safety; business recruitment. Comprehensive planning is all about balance. It helps residents and public officials to think about transportation, housing, public services, open space and economic development simultaneously, while assuring that public policy is sensitive to all needs and opportunities, both today and tomorrow.

This is why it is so essential to get regular residents and businesspersons involved: they live and work in the community. They walk Somerville's streets every day, they work and shop in our many commercial squares, they play in our parks and volunteer at our nonprofit agencies. They worry about their children's ability to get into college, to find a job or to buy a home in Somerville. Our residents remember what has worked well in the past and what needs to be considered in the future.

SomerVision

It's all about community.

"We are breathing new life into an old city, and convincing the world that we are regenerating ourselves".

Mayor S. Lester Ralph in his 1970 inaugural address



Overview

SomerVision

It's all about balance.

"There are no simple ways to balance progress with stability, but we have to try... As usual, Somerville will take care of its own."

Mayor Michael E. Capuano in his 1990 inaugural address



If any community is a perfect candidate for comprehensive planning, it is Somerville. We have pioneered approaches to municipal government that earn national and international recognition. Our 311 Constituent Services call line was the first of its kind in the United States. The SomerStat program puts performance management data in the hands of average residents. The Shape Up Somerville program was used as a model for the First Lady's national "Let's Move" campaign to combat childhood obesity. Our creative approach to economic development has yielded the first new rail transit station on the MBTA system in twenty-five years. Comprehensive planning is the latest in a long line of best practices that Somerville can utilize to benefit its residents and business owners.

C. What is SomerVision?

SomerVision is our vision to make Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family. It is a foundation on which to build. It documents three years of shared learning between residents, the business community, nonprofit groups and public officials. The process began with a series of research reports prepared by the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development. These "Trends Reports" assembled the best information available on demographics, economics, housing, transportation and land use, and presented that information in way that was intended to help the Somerville community at large to understand the Comprehensive Planning process. Residents asked for the facts, and after the Trends Reports were completed, a series of ten open community workshops were held to discuss the statistics and their implications for our city's future.

The Comprehensive Plan is an easy-to-use guide for future growth and development in the City. Any resident, any visitor or investor or public official can pick up this document and quickly understand our community's priorities for the future. It provides a policy framework for other planning efforts including neighborhood plans and capital plans. SomerVision captures our best thinking on diversity, community, economy, accessibility, sustainability and innovation and wraps it into one set of goals, policies and action steps that will guide decisions between now and 2030.

The benefit of the SomerVision plan is that it confronts big issues in a big-picture way. Until now, we have never had a conversation about Somerville's future that is participatory, long-range and inter-disciplinary. SomerVision puts us in control of our destiny.

Overview

D. Plan Development Process

The 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan was produced by the community, and for the community to use as a stepping stone to a more sustainable, equitable and exciting future. Thousands of hours of volunteer time resulted in its values, vision and policy recommendations.

In 2009, a Steering Committee of sixty Somerville residents, businesspersons, advocates and elected officials came together with one common goal: to lead a three-year public process that would chart the course of our community's future for the next generation. Seats on this Steering Committee were reserved for each of Somerville's unique neighborhoods, each of our remarkable nonprofit organizations, all of our diverse business interests, and all of our committed elected officials. Monthly meetings of the Steering Committee began in April 2009, and were advertised to the public, held in accessible locations and broadcast on public access television. A project calendar was established with key milestones for special public workshops and progress reports: June 2009, December 2009, June 2010, March 2011, September 2011.

The work of the Steering Committee was informed by a series of interactive public meetings, as well as other, more targeted opportunities to discuss the plan. Each of these discussions generated critical public feedback to ensure that the work of the Steering Committee was reflective of our shared community values. These included:

- **Community Values Workshop Series:** In late 2009 and early 2010, the City hosted four meetings where the future vision of Somerville's residents was discussed in detail. The workshops were designed using innovative approaches to public participation, such as small group breakouts, multilingual translation and real-time graphic recording of ideas. The creative workshop format was well-suited to a community dialogue around what Somerville should conserve going forward, what concerns residents have about the future, and what big ideas we should be advocating for as a community.
- **SomerVision Goals Showcase Series:** In the spring of 2011, a series of four showcase events were held to review the draft goals of the Comprehensive Plan. These interactive events offered

SomerVision

It's all about opportunity.

"I see Somerville's challenges not as obstacles, but as opportunities. We can seize these opportunities and shape them into solid achievements only if we utilize our greatest resource: our people".

Mayor Eugene C. Brune in his 1980 inaugural address



Overview



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

multilingual translation services, and were conducted in four different neighborhoods of the City to maximize public involvement. Hundreds of regular Somerville residents attended and provided valuable feedback to help the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee revise the draft SomerVision goal statements.

- **Public Survey on SomerVision Goals:** To cast an even wider net for public review of the draft SomerVision Goals, an online and print survey was distributed to the general public. Participants were asked to evaluate each draft goal statement and indicate whether it was consistent with their individual vision for improving Somerville. Hundreds of responses were received, again providing valuable information that the SomerVision Steering Committee used to update the draft goal statements.
- **Presentations at ResiStat and other Public Meetings:** The City's ResiStat program keeps Somerville residents engaged in public policy development, using an email distribution list of over 6,000 people and semi-annual meetings in each of Somerville's seven wards. Status updates on the Comprehensive Plan were presented at ResiStat meetings in 2009, 2010 and 2011, as well as at other neighborhood meetings during that time. Finally, members of the SomerVision Steering Committee gave presentations on the Comprehensive Plan to their individual sponsors and community organizations.
- **Presentations at Planning Board and Board of Aldermen Meetings:** Status updates were provided to the Planning Board and the Board of Aldermen at regular meetings in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Somerville has a rich tradition of public participation in civic affairs, and the SomerVision process has leveraged the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise of our diverse residents and stakeholder groups. The 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan is the product of unprecedented efforts by community volunteers, Steering Committee members, and City staff.

The plan must now be submitted for review by the Planning Board and the Board of Aldermen. This formal review will allow another important opportunity for public comment, and for deliberation and endorsement by the Planning Board and the Board of Aldermen.

Overview

E. How This Plan is Used

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan identifies the City's shared values, our collective vision for the next twenty years, and a series of goals and implementation priorities to meet that vision. It provides a framework for decision making. It does not change responsibility for decision-making. The Mayor, the Board of Aldermen, the Planning Board and other municipal boards, commissions and officials retain all existing authority under the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is simply a one-stop reference point that they can consider to inform their decision-making.

Appendix A of the plan includes more than five hundred recommended action steps. Each was developed by the SomerVision Steering Committee, and vetted through a robust public process.

The action steps in the plan reflect the aspirations of a community committed to a more sustainable, equitable, beautiful and dynamic future. The actions are not meant to be rigid, and the Comprehensive Plan does not dictate how and when the specific actions are to be undertaken.

Many issues and recommendations require further study and more public input to move forward. Many will require further review by the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen, state and federal agencies and our local nonprofit partners and business community. The Comprehensive Plan simply provides the framework to make informed and coordinated decisions on the important issues our community members care about.

Like many cities, Somerville may not have the necessary resources to accomplish all of the actions in Appendix A. However, with the Comprehensive Plan in place, a proactive mindset and community consensus on necessary actions, the City can begin to realize progress towards the future in an orderly fashion.

Appendix B includes maps developed by the SomerVision Steering Committee to illustrate the future context of land use and transportation in Somerville. These maps will provide guidance for decisions about capital projects, transportation investments, future development and zoning. Similar to the action steps, these maps provide a framework for decision-making. They are designed to serve as a reference point, while encouraging further discussion to implement a regulatory and capital planning strategy that will achieve the identified outcomes.



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Overview



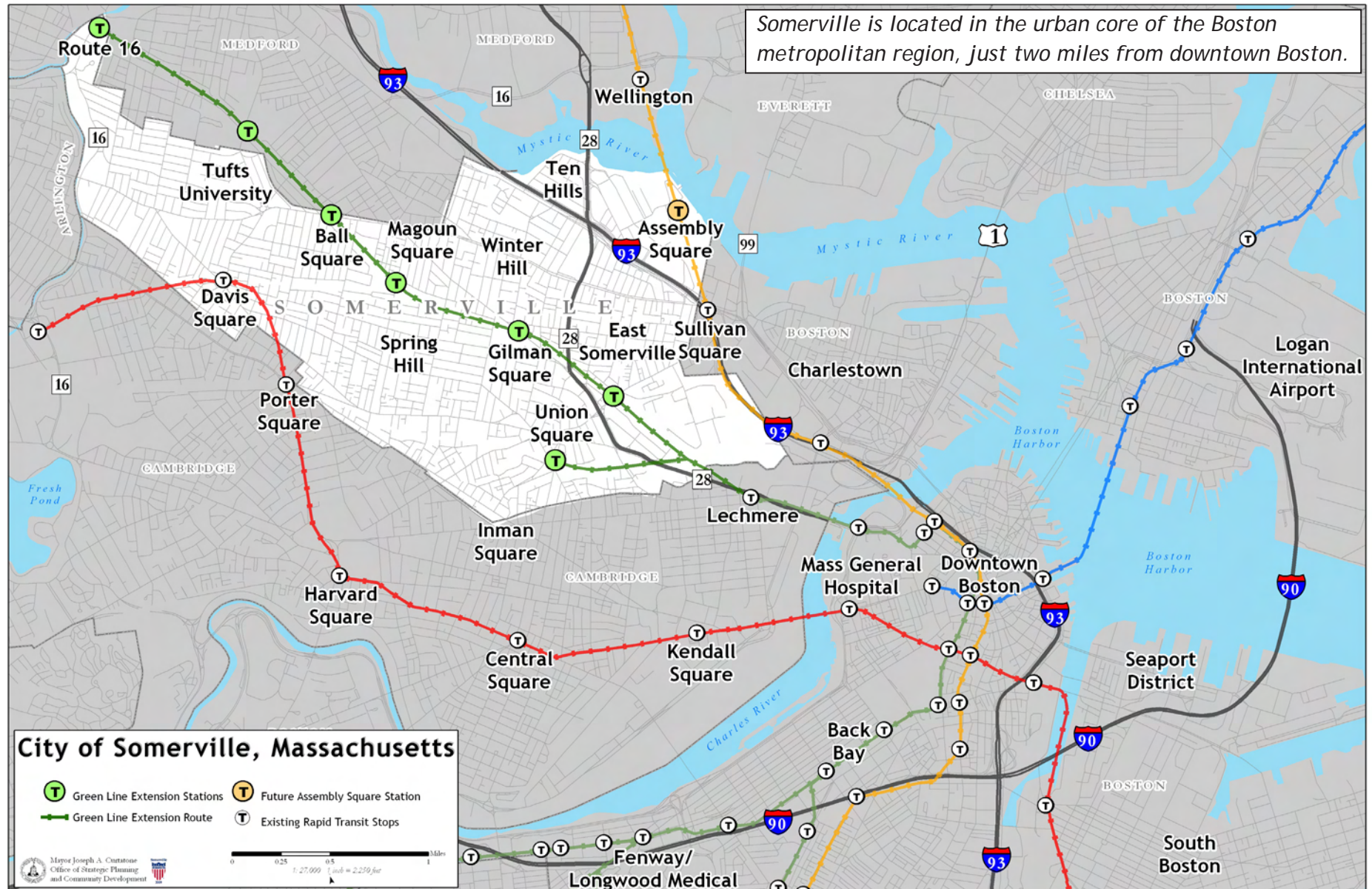
Appendix C provides an 'implementation plan' designed to show the major initiatives that can be used to implement various action steps of the plan. The implementation plan groups the recommendations in Appendix A and Appendix B into categories that can help decision-makers to identify opportunities to implement multiple action steps. The key strategies of the implementation plan are also summarized in Chapter 6.

As times change, there must be an opportunity to review and update this plan to capture the values, goals and proposed actions to move Somerville forward. Therefore, the plan recommends an update beginning in 2015. While the vision and values of a community typically do not change in a short time, the goals and required actions may need to be adjusted. Because a comprehensive plan captures a future vision based upon the understanding of a community at a present point in time, it will inevitably miss some activities that will impact the community and may change the priorities of the community going forward. For this reason five-year updates are recommended.

Appendix D documents SomerVision's extensive three-year public participation process.

Appendix E provides a glossary of terminology to ensure that readers understand the goals, policies and actions articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has worked hard to use language that is accessible to the entire Somerville community. Even so, a policy plan will always include technical terms that are not commonly used.

Overview





2. Somerville Today

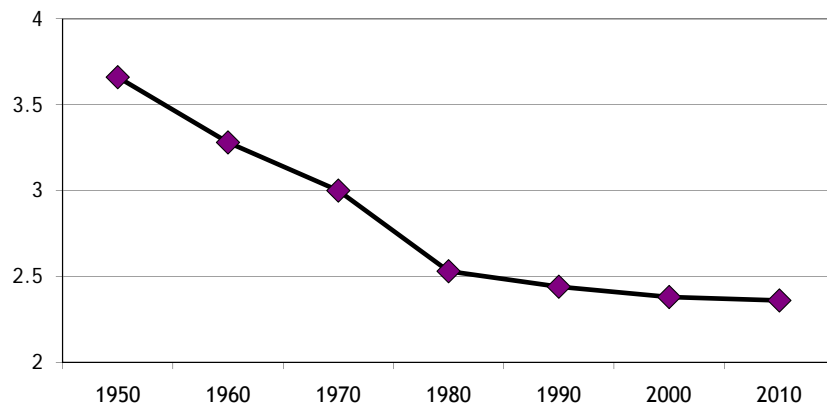
Somerville's story is the story of urban America, with our own local flavor. As our city works together to envision a brighter future, we have found it helpful to take a clear-eyed look at who we are today, and how we got here as a community.

In the summer of 2008, City staff began working with academic and nonprofit partners to produce what became known as the SomerVision "Trends Reports". This five-part series of hundred-page research reports addressed demographics, housing, economics, transportation and land use. Between May and October 2009, a series of eight public workshops were held around the city to discuss the findings, and to make sure that residents had access to the best information about Somerville.

The SomerVision Trends Reports, and the public dialogue around them have served as a common foundation for the 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan. They can be viewed at <http://www.somervillema.gov/spotlights/comp-plan/trends-meetings-and-reports>

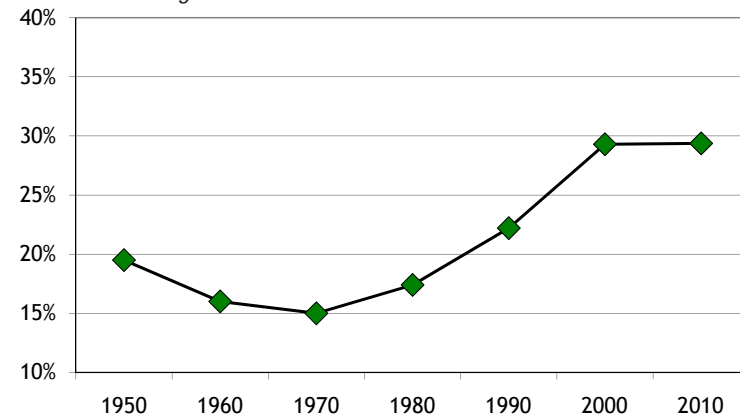
Average Household Size

Consistent with national trends, Somerville's average household and family size has decreased in recent decades.



Residents Born Outside the United States

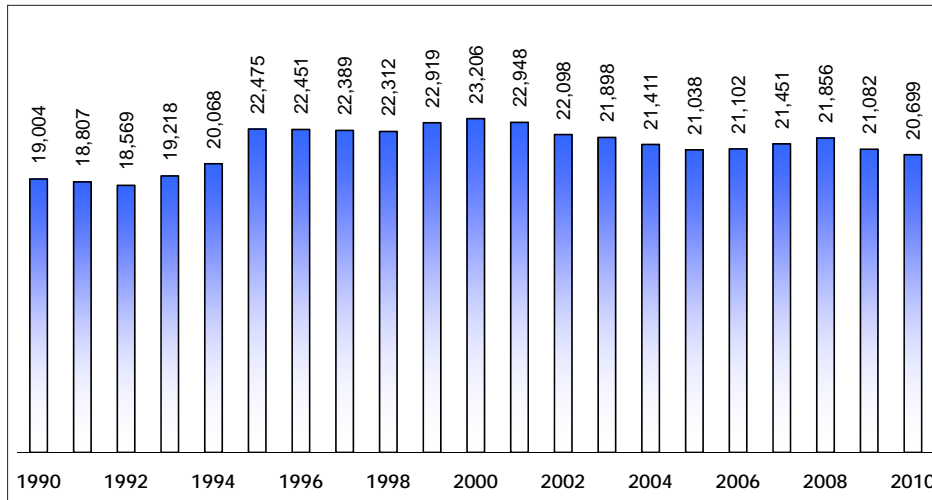
Somerville has always been a community of immigrants, inviting and embracing new residents from all over the world.



Somerville Today

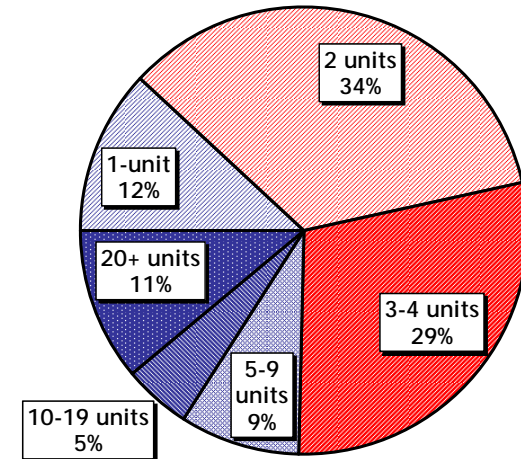
Total Number of Jobs

Job creation in Somerville has been essentially static for twenty years.



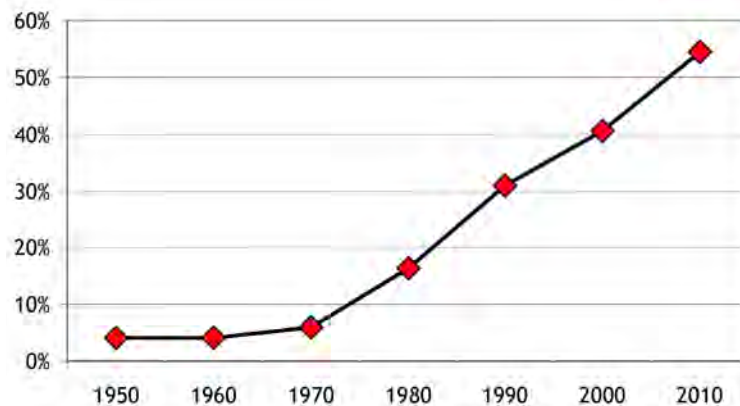
Housing Stock

Small multifamily buildings are our primary building type.



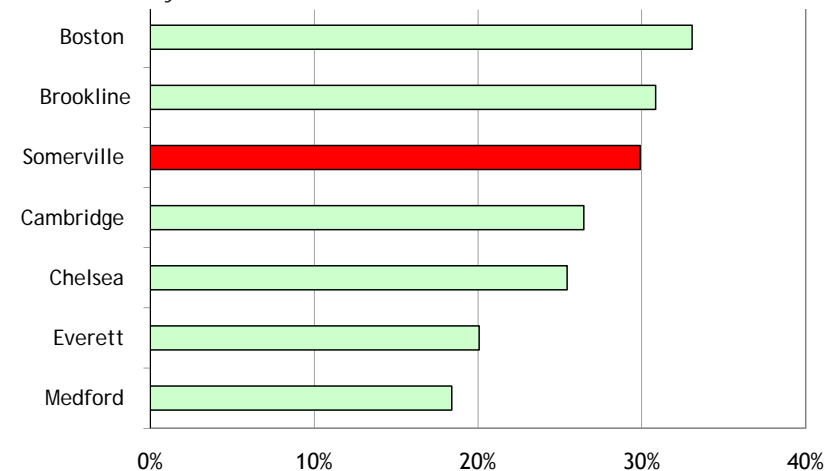
Residents with a College Education

Somerville's workforce is highly skilled and educated.



Commuters Using Public Transit

Nearly one in three Somerville commuters uses mass transit.





3. Our Vision: The SomerVision Numbers

SomerVision

It's all about aspiration.

Successful communities set goals that are both ambitious and achievable. The SomerVision Steering Committee worked to translate shared values into the SomerVision Numbers: a series of aspirational targets for economic development, open space improvement, housing growth, transportation and land use. The SomerVision Numbers were carefully tested to make sure that they are consistent with the community's shared values: balance, sustainability, affordability, vitality.



30,000 New Jobs as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs



125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space as part of a realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces



6,000 New Housing Units / **1,200** Permanently Affordable as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville's best asset: its people!



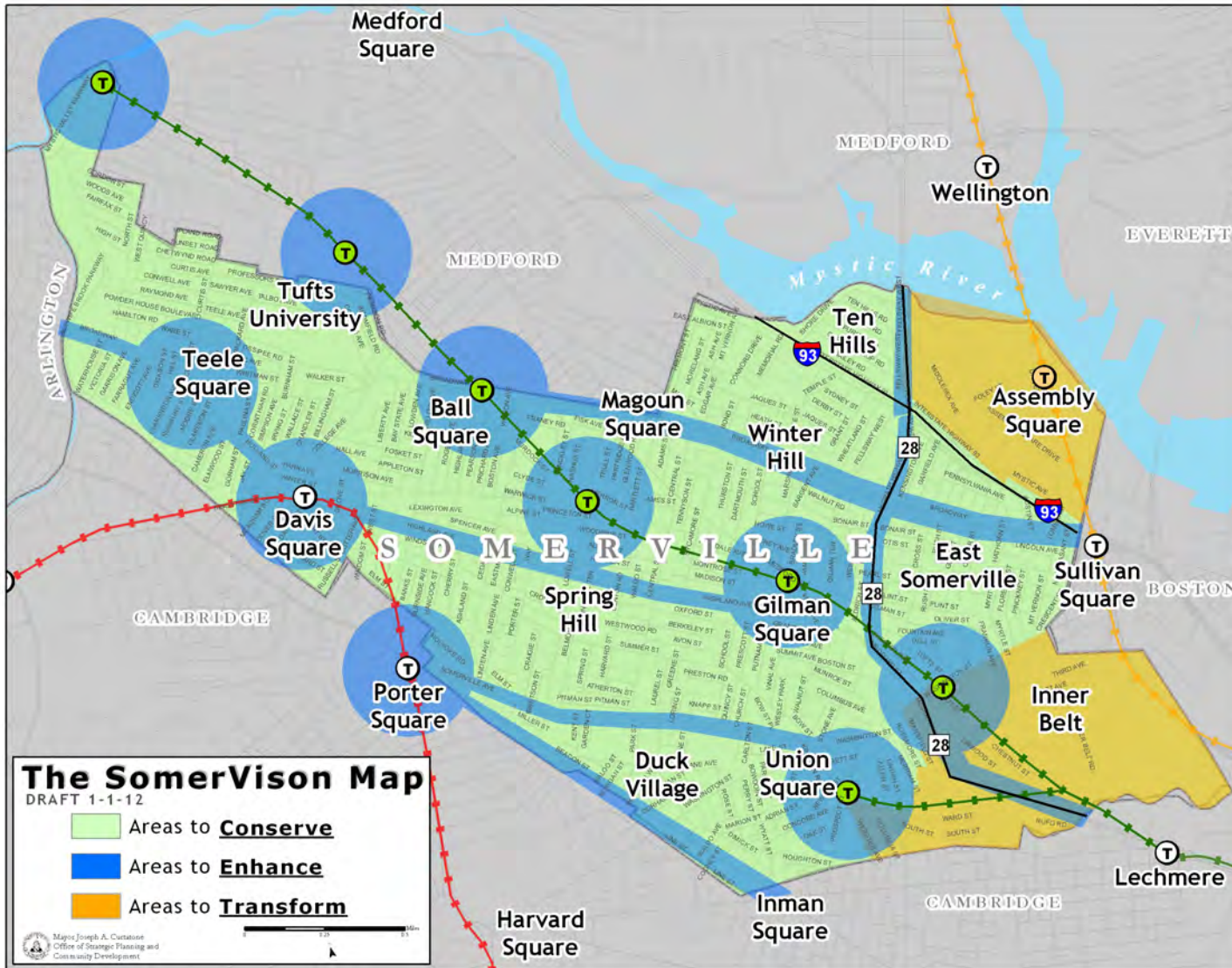
50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike or Walking as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City



85% of New Development in Transformative Areas, as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character

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Our Vision: The SomerVision Map



The SomerVision Map illustrates our Vision for the community to:

Conserve

our great residential neighborhoods

Enhance

our funky squares and commercial corridors

Transform

opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville.



Photo: Juliette Melton



4 . SomerVision Goals



The SomerVision Goal Statements were written by the sixty Somerville residents serving on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. They were presented to the public during a series of workshops in 2011, as well as through an online survey. They are intended to guide the Comprehensive Plan's recommended Policies and Actions. For a complete list of Policies and Actions, see Appendix A.

A. Neighborhoods

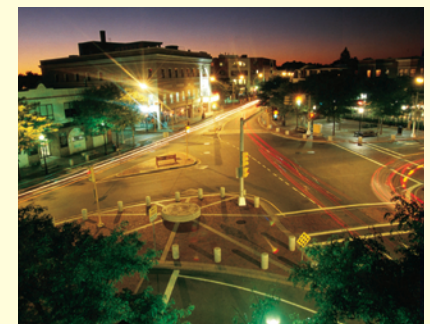
1. **Engage** community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.
2. **Strengthen** and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.
3. **Protect** and promote a diverse, interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.
4. **Preserve** and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy.
5. **Facilitate** transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.
6. **Improve** our shared neighborhood environmental quality.
7. **Foster** vital, healthy, inclusive and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, play, do business, learn and serve.

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SomerVision Goals

B. Commercial Corridors, Squares, and Growth Districts

1. **Promote** municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.
2. **Make** Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
3. **Support** a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.
4. **Invest** in the talents, skills and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.
5. **Link** our corridors, squares and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.
6. **Transform** key opportunity areas, such as Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards and the southeastern portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines to compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.
7. **Facilitate** thoughtfully-designed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and reuse opportunities in commercial corridors, squares and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.



SomerVision Goals



C. Resources

1. **Increase** the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.
2. **Ensure** that Somerville has a mix of spaces for creative production, performance and exhibition, and that art is incorporated into the built environment.
3. **Help** local arts and cultural institutions, such as theatres, film and art festivals, museums and libraries to succeed, network and grow.
4. **Strengthen** existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.
5. **Approach** our waterfront as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.
6. **Design** and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm (e.g., streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces) that fosters community connection.
7. **Create** and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.
8. **Ensure** that the Somerville municipal government, residents and business communities are well prepared and equipped to address emergency situations.
9. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.



Photo: Chris Devers

SomerVision Goals

D. Transportation & Infrastructure

1. **Create** a mass transit network accessible to all in all parts of the city, with improvements that allow for easy use and seamless intermodal connections.
2. **Increase** active and alternative transportation options, reduce congestion and promote workplace-based policies and incentives for mode choice, work hours, and employment location.
3. **Expand** bike and pedestrian use by transforming existing infrastructure with accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.
4. **Use** technology and infrastructure improvements to balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, private vehicles, and mass transit, reduce congestion and pollution, decrease road space dedicated to automobiles, and unlock economic development potential, while having a fiscally sound road maintenance program.
5. **Manage** parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner, to balance transportation, economic development and residential goals.
6. **Connect** the city: retrofit, redesign, and build roads, bridges, paths and rights-of-way to improve transportation networks and link neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond.
7. **Provide** a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained and financially solvent and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.
8. **Improve** stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage and support desired levels of future growth.
9. **Maximize** environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.
10. **Move** toward energy self-sufficiency by increasing supply of locally generated power and reducing per capita overall energy demand.
11. **Ensure** the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, uses the best available technologies, has redundancy, and supports the desired level of future growth.



Photo: Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership



SomerVision Goals



E. Housing

1. **Preserve** and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups.
2. **Promote** mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development to provide new housing and employment options.
3. **Mitigate** displacement of low and moderate income residents by retaining the existing affordable housing stock and by creating policies that allow residents to remain in their homes in the face of a changing city.
4. **Create** a diversity of programs that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.
5. **Expand** financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.





5. Implementation Priorities



The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range policy plan. It sets the table for specific projects and programs to implement its goals. These five short-term and medium-term implementation priorities will allow us to address many of the most pressing goals, policies and actions recommended in the Somerville Plan. For the complete Implementation Plan, please see Appendix C.

A. **Station Area Planning:** The Comprehensive Plan can't do it all. Area plans must be prepared by residents of individual neighborhoods, since all neighborhoods have a unique role in making Somerville a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. The plans for each area will focus on land use, urban design and transportation, with other topics to be determined by participants. Federal funding awarded to the City will help to launch area plans around the six Green Line stations in 2012.

Station Area Planning Should Include:

- a. Union Square / Boynton Yards
- b. Inner Belt / Brickbottom / McGrath Highway
- c. Gilman Square
- d. Lowell Street / Somerville Junction / Magoun Square
- e. Ball Square
- f. Route 16 / Mystic Valley Parkway
- g. Assembly Square
- f. Davis Square

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Implementation Priorities



Poster: Meagan O'Brien

- B. **Quality-of-Life Strategies:** At the end of the day, most municipal functions can be viewed as quality-of-life strategies. Somerville has been recognized as one of the most livable cities in the nation, and our efforts around public safety, open government, cultural programming, parks and recreation, the business environment and public education all play key roles. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that each of these areas can best be addressed when they are coordinated and planned for in a strategic fashion.

Quality-of-Life Strategies Should Include:

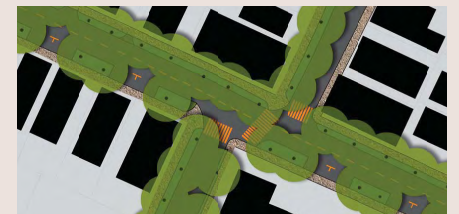
- a. Public Education programs, including SomerPromise
- b. Open Space and Recreation Plan
- c. Community Policing program
- d. Small business assistance
- e. Employer recruitment
- f. Incubation of local "Creative Industries"



- C. **Housing Activities:** Somerville is a vibrant, walkable urban community – the kind of place where people want to live, raise a family and retire. All across the country, the demand for housing that is close to jobs, services and transit is already high, and will only increase over the next twenty years. The SomerVision process has emphasized housing policy from day one. Our city must continue to offer a range of housing options in terms of price, space, location and services. Our strategies must be sensitive to supply and demand. We must be entrepreneurial in the way we fund affordable housing, and we must respect property rights while leveraging private investment for the public good. As we do in so many aspects of civic life, Somerville will lead by example and look out for its own.

Housing Activities Should Include:

- a. Housing Needs Assessment
- b. Homeowner & renter assistance
- c. Homelessness Prevention programs
- d. New housing development



Implementation Priorities

- D. **Sustainability Programs:** Cities are more sustainable than suburbs or rural communities. Somerville residents have spoken loud and clear: the City should take the lead in efforts to promote sustainability, and the Comprehensive Plan is a perfect way to address economic, environmental and social sustainability at the same time. Zero-sort recycling will help Somerville to reduce its environmental footprint, and so will the creation of thousands of new jobs within walking distance from our homes. Rooftop solar panels on new buildings are important because they help us cut down on our utility bills, not just because they reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's all part of the same story.

Sustainability Programs Should Include:

- a. Solid Waste programs
- b. Energy Efficiency programs
- c. Stormwater Management policies



- E. **Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements:** Over the last few years, Somerville has made a generation's worth of improvements to our transportation and utility infrastructure. Projects like Somerville Avenue, Magoun Square, and Washington Street have already made a positive impact on our quality of life, and big-ticket improvements in Assembly Square, Broadway in East Somerville, and on Beacon Street are underway. But we cannot rest on our laurels. The Green Line must be completed, the Community Path must be extended, and sewer, sidewalk, bridge and roadway improvements around the City must be funded and built. Each infrastructure project gives our residents and business owners the opportunity make Somerville's neighborhoods safer, more accessible and more attractive.

Infrastructure Improvements Should Include:

- a. Street repair, repaving and painting
- b. Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility
- c. Sewer and storm drainage
- d. On-street, off-street and resident permit parking
- e. A city-wide multi-use path system
- f. Transportation management associations



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

Implementation Priorities



Banner: Meagan O'Brien

- F. **Zoning Code Overhaul:** The more Somerville residents and businesspersons study it, the more we realize that the City's zoning ordinance is outdated, and provides no predictability. Not for investors, and not for abutters. Neighbors, developers and public officials are forced to guess as to the City's vision for its future. The SomerVision Steering Committee has articulated more than five hundred action statements, and an overhaul of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance is a critical element of more than one hundred. Somerville deserves a zoning ordinance for the twenty-first century: one that helps us conserve our great residential neighborhoods, enhance our funky squares and commercial corridors, and transform our opportunity areas as illustrated on the SomerVision Map in Chapter 4.

Zoning Code Overhaul Should Include:

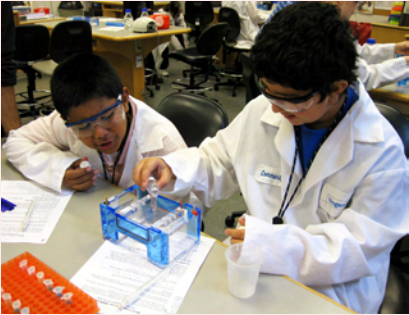
- Review and overhaul of the code, to address ease of its use
- Predictable results for high-quality urban design, using innovative tools including form-based codes
- Protection of existing single and two family homes
- Simplification of the process for establishing and growing a small business
- Parking regulations that reflect Somerville's urban character
- Reflection of the capacity of properties to handle development
- Identification of appropriate and inappropriate small additions including dormers
- Sustainable development features / incentives
- Sliding scale impact fees to provide for off-site benefits
- Contextual sign regulations
- Strategies to address the visual impacts of telecommunications infrastructure
- Consistency with the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and actions
- Consistency with area plan goals, policies and actions

Plan Updates: A Regular Five-Year Review of the Plan will allow the City to:

- How much progress have we made toward meeting our goals, policies and actions?
- What new demographic and economic information is available to help us make sure the Plan remains relevant?
- Has public opinion shifted on any issues that are addressed in the Plan?



6. Conclusion



Somerville's best days are ahead of us.

We are already one of the most dynamic, diverse and livable cities in the United States. Our community has moved forward in spite of the economic recession, and we have united around a clear message: making Somerville an even more exceptional place to live, work, play and raise a family.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to the generations of Somerville residents who built a solid foundation of community identity: independence, pride, entrepreneurship, neighborliness, civic participation, tolerance. We have experienced first-hand the failed policies of the past that eliminated trolley service, built highways through the heart of urban neighborhoods, and told employers and families that they had no place in America's cities.

We've come full-circle in Somerville, right back to our revolutionary roots. Families and employers want to be here. Our students want to stay here after graduation, and our seniors want to retire here. They all recognize our authenticity, our commitment to community, and the clarity of our vision.

That vision is a city where you live near where you work, near where you shop, near where you go to school. Where trolleys and subways bring you into downtown Boston, and bring people from downtown Boston to Somerville's funky squares and great neighborhoods. Where your children can get a great public education, can ride their bikes in the street, and can afford to find a home when they grow up. That vision is SomerVision.

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to
Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*