




**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

*OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

**FROM:** Monica R. Lamboy, Executive Director 

**DATE:** January 27, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Update on Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030

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The Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) is in the process of drafting a citywide Comprehensive Plan (2010-2030) and we would like to provide you and the Board of Aldermen with an update of activities since our last report. In June 2010, OSPCD prepared a staff report (#189817, Housing & Community Development) to provide an update on the progress of the Plan's creation, provide the Plan's draft vision and goals, and outline the Plan's process and schedule. OSPCD respectfully requests that you forward this report to the Board of Aldermen for their review.

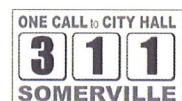
**BACKGROUND**

The Comprehensive Plan is aimed at three different audiences. First, it is directed toward the public, to engage residents and business owners in planning for the future of Somerville. Second, this Plan will aid City departments by identifying and prioritizing policies and actions geared toward continuously improving quality of life and economic opportunity for all. Third, this Plan will inform State and Federal government about the vision for Somerville, thereby guiding them in leveraging their resources toward that end. The Plan is a living document; it will need to be revisited and renewed regularly so that it stays current and provides an ongoing blueprint for decision-makers that goes beyond the next budget or election cycle.

The Board of Aldermen's appointees to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the many other committee members have been actively working over the past 17 months to identify goals, policies and actions that support the community vision statement that was crafted early in 2010. The City of Somerville, MassDOT and a variety of community partners held an open



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house in June 2010 to discuss the Plan's draft Vision and Goal Statements and present information on the Green Line Extension stations and surrounding land uses.

### **ONGOING TIMELINE**

Preparation of the draft Comprehensive Plan involves several distinct phases and activities:

- Compilation and analysis of background information (April 2009-October 2009);
- Convening of Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (September 2009- Fall 2011)
- Community visioning process (November 2009-February 2010);
- Identification of goals, policies and actions (March 2010-February 2011);
- Creation of a land use map (February 2011-May 2011);
- Performance measure and implementation steps (June 2011-July 2011);
- Community outreach (April 2009–Fall 2011).

The intent of the public involvement and outreach strategy is to produce a Plan that can be sent to the Planning Board and Board of Alderman for their consideration in Summer - Fall 2011 (please see *Attachment I* for the Process Map).

### **VISIONING & GOALS PROCESS (November 2009 – June 2010)**

To kick-off the Plan's visioning process in late 2009, OSPCD held a series of "World Cafés:" small round-table conversations aimed at creating greater community connection and mapping out the best ideas from a broad range of community members. Participants said that they enjoyed meeting other people enthusiastic about the future of Somerville and walked away with new thoughts and ideas. But most importantly, participants were excited about the prospect of helping plan our future. Through the World Cafés and in working with the Plan's Steering Committee, a vision was created that captures the elements vitally important to community members - diversity, community spirit, economic growth, city-wide accessibility, sustainability, and innovation (see *Attachment II*).

After the Steering Committee reached consensus on the draft Vision Statement, staff and Committee members began to identify the goals that best reflected the elements of the Vision Statement. "Goals," for a comprehensive plan, tend to be very general and describe ideal future conditions for a particular topic, such as housing or transportation. In early June, the Steering Committee and OSPCD staff prepared a draft set of Goal Statements (see *Attachment III*). The Goal Statements were organized around the themes of work that Committee members focus on – Neighborhoods, Housing, Corridors, Commercial Squares & Growth Districts, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Community Resources. Each theme contains between five and ten goal statements.

### **POLICIES AND ACTIONS (June 2010 – February 2011)**

Over the second half of 2010, Steering Committee members drafted policies and actions necessary to accomplish the above-mentioned Goals. These "Policies and Actions"



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are, again, organized around the themes of work that Committee members are focusing on – Neighborhoods, Housing, Corridors, Commercial Squares & Growth Districts, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Community Resources. Each theme contains between five and ten goal statements and then numerous Policies and Actions to implement their respective Goals.

### **NEXT STEPS**

In October 2010, Somerville had the good fortune to be awarded \$1,800,000 from HUD for its *Preparing for Transit in the 21st Century* application. In the application, Somerville described how the city was initially developed around rail transit and how when that transit was removed, the fortunes of businesses and residents in Somerville declined. The application also described the City's ambitious undertakings preparing for the Green Line Extension and the Orange Line Station at Assembly Square and requested funding to support several critical efforts. Award resources will be used to enhance public participation, prepare high quality promotional materials, perform additional technical analyses, and make available additional copies of the draft plan sufficient to garner additional community support for the Plan.

Starting in February/March, another series of community meetings will be held to gather feedback on the draft Goal Statements and other elements of the Plan and to continue garnering support for the Plan. A detailed survey will also likely be distributed in the spring to make sure to gather as much input and commentary as possible.

The Steering Committee continues to meet monthly and will continue to do so throughout most of 2011. OSPCD staff are working with the Committee to finalize the set of draft Policies and Actions and begin drafting a citywide land use map. Preparation of a draft implementation plan that will identify key priorities and establish timelines for implementation will take place during Spring/Summer 2011.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

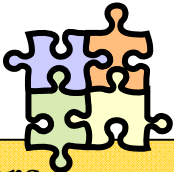
It is recommended that the Board of Alderman accept this report and provide comments to OSPCD staff.

#### List of Attachments

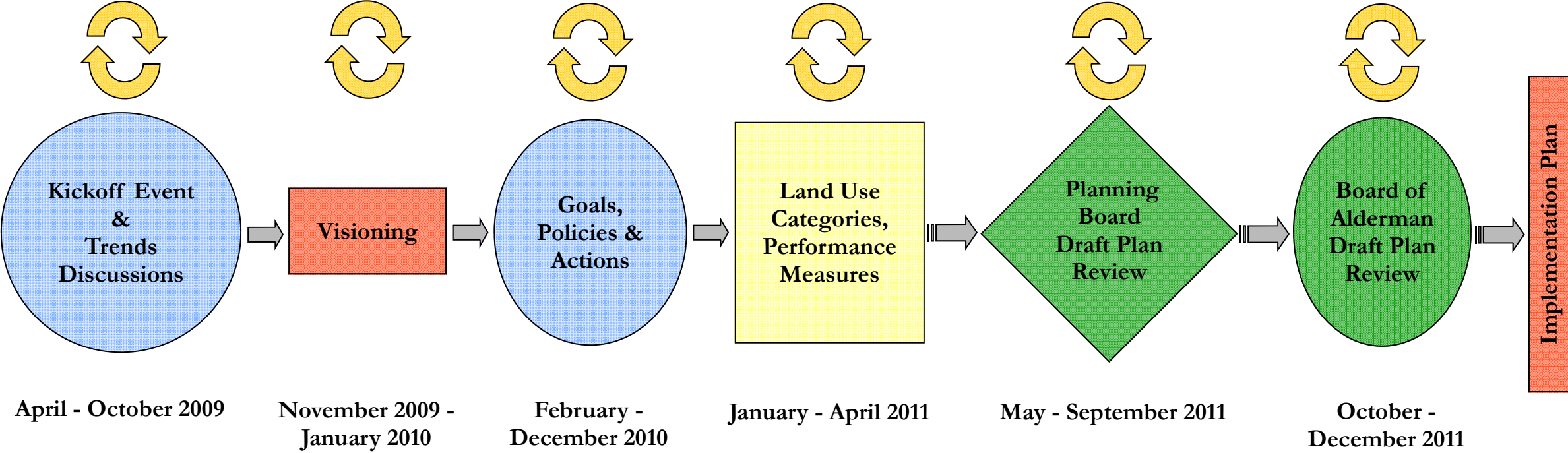
- I. Process Map/Schedule
- II. Draft Vision Statement
- III. Draft Goals



# COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS MAP



Communication with Stakeholders



# Somerville Vision Statement 2010-2030



## In Somerville, We:

Value 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.

# **SomerVision Comprehensive Plan 2010-2030 - - Draft Goal Statements**

## **Neighborhoods Sub-Committee**

### *Quality of Life*

Foster vital, healthy, inclusive, and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, do business, learn, serve, and play.

### *Civic Engagement*

Engage community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.

### *Neighborhood Centers*

Strengthen and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.

### *Neighborhood Businesses*

Protect and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses integrated into the neighborhood fabric.

### *Neighborhood Character*

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.

### *Neighborhood Infill*

Facilitate transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.

### *Environment*

Improve our shared neighborhood environmental quality.

### *Safety and Accessibility*

Ensure that Somerville's streets and public spaces are safe and accessible.

# **SomerVision Comprehensive Plan - - Draft Goal Statements**

## **Transportation & Infrastructure Sub-Committee**

### *Mass Transit*

Create a mass transit network accessible to all parts of the city and to all users, with innovative physical and informational improvements that allow for easy use and seamless intermodal connections.

### *Alternative Transportation – Transportation and Lifestyle*

Increase active and alternative transportation options, reduce congestion and promote workplace-based policies and incentives for mode choice, work hours, and employment location.

### *Bikes and Pedestrians*

Expand bike and pedestrian culture by transforming existing infrastructure to add accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.

### *Roads/Transportation Network*

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 private automobiles, and unlock economic development potential, while having a fiscally sound road maintenance program.

### *Parking*

Manage parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner, to balance transportation, economic development and residential goals.

### *Highways, Bridges, Rail Right-of-Ways*

Connect the city: retrofit, redesign, and build, as necessary, roads, bridges, paths and rights-of-way to improve transportation networks and link neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond.

### *Water*

Provide a safe, high quality, potable water system that is well maintained and financially solvent, provides incentives to customers to use water judiciously, and accommodates the future growth needs of the city.

### *Sewer / Stormwater*

Improve stormwater and wastewater management systems to increasingly separate storm water and sewerage, limit runoff from entering the wastewater system, eliminate combined sewer overflows, and provide for desired levels of future growth.

### *Green Infrastructure*

Maximize environmental sustainability in design and implementation of all infrastructure systems and public facilities.

### *Other Utilities*

Ensure the infrastructure for all utilities is sufficient in capacity and quality, of the best available technologies, has redundancy, and supports the desired level of future growth.

# **SomerVision Comprehensive Plan - - Draft Goal Statements**

## **Corridors, Commercial Squares & Growth Districts Sub-Committee**

### *Financial Self-Sufficiency*

Promote municipal financial self-determination and reduce fiscal dependence on state aid and residential taxes and fees.

### *Job Development*

Make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high quality jobs.

### *Business Environment*

Support a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.

### *Human Capital*

Invest in the talents, skills and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.

### *Connectivity*

Link our corridors, squares and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.

### *Transformative Development*

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 and compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.

### *Commercial Reuse & Infill*

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 Comprehensive Plan - - Draft Goal Statements**

## **Housing Sub-Committee**

### *Housing Choice*

Preserve and expand an integrated mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound housing options for households of all types and from diverse social and economic groups.

### *Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development*

Promote mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development at strategic locations to provide new housing and employment options.

### *Resources and Capacity*

Expand financial, organizational, programmatic, and other resources available for housing.

### *Homelessness*

Create a diversity of programs and benefits that prevent homelessness and address the housing needs of the homeless.

### *Displacement*

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.

# **SomerVision Comprehensive Plan - - Draft Goal Statements**

## **Community Resources Sub-Committee**

### *Creative Community*

Increase the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.

### *Creative Spaces*

Ensure that Somerville has a mix of spaces for performance and exhibition and that arts are incorporated into the built environment.

### *Cultural Institutions*

Help local arts and cultural institutions, such as theatres, museums and libraries succeed, network and grow.

### *Education*

Strengthen existing education programs, and university and professional partnerships within Somerville schools.

### *Waterfront*

Approach our waterfronts as a regional ecological resource, balancing community access and ecological health.

### *Public Spaces*

Design and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm that fosters community connection.

### *Parks and Recreation*

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.

### *Emergency Services & Preparedness*

Ensure that the Somerville municipal government and residential and business communities are well prepared and equipped to address emergency situations.