

Drew Kane, AICP
Urban Designer & Planner



City of Somerville
93 Highland Ave
Somerville, MA 02143

To whom it may concern,

I am applying for the open position to serve on the City of Somerville's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The substance of my professional experience, my approach to urban planning, and my investment in the equitable and sustainable growth of the City of Somerville ensure that I can make a significant contribution to the ZBA and the city's deliberations and decisions. As a resident and professional planner, I would value the opportunity to work with the city government on critical issues affecting housing, civic assets, land use deliberations and real estate development.

I have spent fourteen years working as an urban designer and planner in architecture and planning practices in Atlanta, New York, Cambridge and Boston. Working with municipal agencies, community organizations, foundations, economic development corporations and private developers, I have advised cities on strategic growth and development, led public engagement processes, and prepared framework plans. Recently, much of my work has been focused on zoning recommendations and regulatory planning, including the Brush Park Form-based Code in Detroit and the Flood Resiliency Zoning Overlay District & Design Guidelines for the City of Boston. This experience would be an asset to the City of Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals because it has acquainted me with how both sides of the table operate; the responsiveness and creativity of a design and planning practice and the accountability and consensus-based thinking of the public sector.

The robust market of Somerville's residential neighborhoods, and the future development of Union Square and Assembly Row, are signs of the economic health of the City. A challenge in the near and long-term is how to manage the rapid pace of growth while ensuring that housing and economic opportunity are accessible to all residents. The recent submission of the Somerville Zoning Overhaul for approval, requires that the Zoning Board of Appeals retain individuals that are familiar with the legal authority and structure of zoning, the efficacy of form-based zoning codes, and the impact of zoning on city design. My professional experience qualifies me for the requisite experience that the selection committee is looking for.

As a Somerville resident, I feel that contributing to the collective quality of life in the city by serving on the Zoning Board of Appeals is a personal investment and a civic obligation. My understanding of the physical landscape, the communities, the city's plans and the public's interests is applicable and beneficial to this position. The Somerville by Design process, which is aimed at carrying forward the recommendations of the SomerVision plan, demonstrates that the City of Somerville is focused on its future; and I am too.

I would also like to express my interest in serving on the Design Review Committee should the selection committee find that my qualification and experience are best suited for the position. The content of my career and expertise is well suited for the Design Review Committee, having worked on countless neighborhood, corridor and districts plans, as well as streetscape and site specific design projects. However, I would first like to be considered to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals; to be fully immersed in the mechanics and process of zoning and development approvals in the City of Somerville.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Drew Kane