



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CITY COUNCIL

JON LINK

CITY COUNCILOR AT LARGE

The FY27 budget is being developed in a constrained environment, with an expected reduction of roughly \$5 million due to a slowing economy and deliberate federal cuts targeting housing, education, safe streets, and climate programs, representing a retreat from the communities and values Somerville has committed to protecting. Even in this context, Somerville can and should use our budget to advance our commitments to affordability, safety, excellent public schools, and climate action. The priorities below are grounded in community feedback from the FY27 public budget hearing and outreach reflecting a broad and diverse range of resident voices.

Affordable Housing, Anti-Displacement, and Stable Communities

Somerville's housing and affordability crisis remains one of the most urgent challenges facing our residents. Talking to residents and orgs at events, doors, and listening to public comments, people consistently called for more affordable housing, municipal voucher programs, better tenant protections, and direct investment in addressing homelessness. I request that the FY27 budget:

- Increase funding for the Office of Housing Stability and Inclusionary Housing programs to expand outreach, application assistance, and compliance monitoring for income-restricted units
- Expand eviction-prevention funds like the bridge program, and coordinated with community nonprofits like the Somerville Homelessness Coalition and Project Soup that provide food, shelter, and services to unhoused, housing-insecure, and food-insecure residents
- Fund and expand the municipal voucher program to provide a locally-controlled safety net for at-risk renters, and resource tenant legal assistance for residents facing eviction
- Set aside capital or funds to leverage state and federal affordable housing resources, such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and state housing grants, in order to close financing gaps for new affordable developments and preservation projects.
- Provide pre-development and acquisition support for the Somerville Community Land Trust, Somerville Community Corporation, Community Action Agency of Somerville and mission-driven nonprofits to secure permanently affordable housing and key anti-displacement sites.

Safe Streets, Vision Zero, and Mobility

The Safe Streets Ordinance and Bicycle Network Plan commit Somerville to a protected bike network and a Vision Zero framework. Residents continue to emphasize transportation infrastructure, road conditions, and safety for people walking, biking, rolling, and riding transit. Safe routes to school are especially important. I request that the FY27 budget:

- Provide dedicated capital and operating funding sufficient to meet Safe Streets Ordinance benchmarks, including building toward completion of the 30-mile protected bike network by 2030.
- Fund at least two major intersection redesigns and at least two miles of sidewalk rehabilitation annually, prioritizing high-injury corridors and locations with documented safety issues or ADA gaps. Walking the majority of this city has made me painfully aware just how many of our sidewalks are lifted or otherwise damaged.
- Expand neighborhood-scale traffic calming (raised crosswalks, hardened corners, speed cushions) and fund a camera-based traffic enforcement pilot to reduce speeding and dangerous driving.

- Add staff capacity in Mobility/Engineering to accelerate corridor-scale complete streets projects, bus priority, and accessible and short-term parking, ensuring the city can deliver projects at the pace envisioned by the ordinance.
- Expand citywide mobility options, including accessible transit connections and support for residents with limited transportation access.
- Fund multilingual community engagement and education around street changes so implementation advances equity, accessibility, and public trust.

Education, Children, Youth, and Libraries

Somerville has made significant investments in our schools in recent years, and public commenters reinforced this commitment with calls for stable school funding, expanded childcare, robust youth programming, and library investment. I request that the FY27 budget:

- Maintain support for universal free school meals and home meals during weekends and school breaks, aligning with state-level commitments to student nutrition.
- Expand after-school and summer programming equitably across all neighborhoods. Fund staffing and programming to activate school buildings as community centers outside school hours.
- Fully fund special education services and ensure universal access to programs and supports for all students, including those with disabilities.
- Continue MBTA pass programs for students and, where appropriate, staff, to support attendance and climate-friendly transportation.
- Maintain or increase funding for social workers, counselors, and family liaisons to address mental health, housing instability, and language access needs that directly impact student success.
- Sustain and grow teen programs, especially job training and employment opportunities for Somerville youth and new third spaces, for example, a new community gathering space for teens at the Cummings School.
- Support robust library funding, recognizing that our branches serve as educational hubs, childcare resources, and community anchors that can expand programming into the weekends.

Community Inclusion, Immigrant Services, and Belonging

Somerville's diversity is one of its greatest strengths. The broad spectrum of people coming from different places socially, ethnically, economically, generationally, and philosophically is what leads to growth, excitement, and joy in this city. At a moment when that diversity is under deliberate federal pressure, the city budget must reflect our commitment to protecting and supporting all residents:

- Fund immigrant services and support infrastructure, including programs that help residents navigate interactions with federal immigration authorities, mitigate the harms of ICE enforcement, and access city services regardless of status or language
- Resource anti-discrimination and anti-hate initiatives in keeping with Somerville's commitment to being a welcoming city for all
- Maintain robust senior services, including transportation, programming at the senior center and other community sites, and in-home support

Recreation, Arts, and Public Safety

A thriving city invests in the spaces, experiences, and businesses that bring residents together — from parks and rinks to cultural events and local storefronts. I request that the FY27 budget:

- Invest in indoor recreational facilities, including the Founders Rink and other community spaces that serve residents of all ages and backgrounds.
- Maintain and grow arts funding that supports cultural programming, artist internships, and the creative economy and artist spaces that makes Somerville distinctive.
- Support small and local businesses through grants and programs like Nibble Kitchen, and our Main Street organizations.

- On public safety, I recognize that the public has a wide range of views, from calls for streamlined police funding to requests for stronger accountability measures. I urge the administration to pursue a public safety budget that prioritizes both effectiveness and community trust, and to engage the Council in those conversations.
- Establish and fund the overdue civilian oversight committee.

Environment, Climate, and Resilience

Somerville's Climate Forward plan sets ambitious goals to cut emissions and build resilience. Federal uncertainty makes local investment more critical. I request that the FY27 budget:

- Fund implementation of key Climate Forward actions, with an emphasis on measures that reduce emissions and operating costs in municipal buildings and the transportation sector.
- Increase investment in building decarbonization, including municipal retrofits, electrification, solar arrays, and heat pumps that can be scaled citywide and paired with state and federal incentives.
- Launch or expand a city-wide composting program, designed in partnership with labor to create union jobs through environmental programming.
- Expand green infrastructure and urban tree canopy funding, prioritizing heat-vulnerable, flood-prone, and historically overburdened neighborhoods identified in climate and resilience planning.
- Support climate-friendly transportation like secure bike parking, e-bike incentives, and bus priority to jointly advance safety, equity, and emissions reduction.
- Actively pursue state and regional grants through MassDOT, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), and Green Communities to backstop any federal funding losses.

I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues to align the FY27 budget with these community-driven goals within the City's fiscal constraints.