



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

Finance Department

KATJANA BALLANTYNE

MAYOR

MEGAN HUCKENPAHLER
BUDGET ANALYST

Participatory Budgeting Memo to City Council

I. Purpose and Overview of Initiative

This memo accompanies a request for appropriation of \$955,000 funding by City Council for the 5 winning projects as voted on by 3,890 residents during the period of September 13th – October 13th in the City's first-ever cycle of Participatory Budgeting.

The \$955,000 requested will go directly towards the 5 projects which received the most votes and the remaining \$45,000 will remain in the Participatory Budgeting Stabilization Fund. The \$50,000 budget allocated to run Participatory Budgeting - such as the cost for sending two mailers city-wide, graphic designers, and other printed materials – can be found in the Auditing division in the FY24 General Fund.

This initiative serves as a worldwide template of a democratic process by which citizens engage in direct democracy to select projects receiving public funding. Projects funding criteria was provided during the submission process as being 1) on city-owned property 2) costing less than the allotted \$1 million and 3) being a one-time expense that does not require hiring staff or significant ongoing maintenance. These guidelines helped ensure expectation setting and are in line with how similar communities such as Cambridge, Hartford, and Greensboro run Participatory Budgeting.



Spreading the word about PB at Fluff Fest



Our 40 volunteer Budget Delegates who spent Thursday evenings at Somernova reviewing the 966 submitted

Community involvement led each stage of this project. Councilors will recall a presentation by two of the eleven members of the Working Group at the completion of the Process Design & Planning stage back in January of this year. During the two-month period of Idea

Submission held from April through May, a total of 966 ideas were collected and

displayed on a map of Somerville. Over the course of 10 weeks, 40 volunteers reviewed city plans & documents, talked with city staff, and selected the 20 projects to appear on the ballot. And finally, 3,890 residents voted online and in-person with communications through existing city channels, a mailer sent to all 34,000 residential addresses, posters in local squares, and on various Big Belly trash cans city wide. The mailers and ballot were available in translated languages offered by SOIA and local news such as [WBUR](#), the [Boston Globe](#), and [WickedLocal.com](#) also took an interest in our efforts. High spirits outlasted the rain during Fluff Fest (9/23) and a more temperate Civic Day (9/30) where voting encouraged, and I Voted stickers based on the poster designs by Meagan O'Brien were distributed.

II. Results of Cycle One

The voting methodology used as determined by the Working Group was ranked choice voting. Residents were asked to rank their top 5 of the 20 ideas selected on the ballot. Projects ranked as a voter's 1st choice received a weight of 5 points, 2nd choices received 4 points, and so on. A complete listing of the 20 projects can be found in Appendix A. The winning projects to be funded are listed below, in order of rank, as follows and can also be accessed at any time, along with the current project status at www.somervillema.gov/pb.

Project	Description (as it appeared on the ballot)
1. Support Direct Community Food Access (\$55,000)	Contract with a nonprofit to strengthen direct community food access programs in Somerville. These initiatives redirect excess food to those in need and/or reduce the barriers for residents to access free or subsidized food using tools like Community Fridges.
2. Bike Lane Acceleration (\$250,000)	Accelerate the implementation of the Somerville Bicycle Network Plan. This funding will be used to pay for 1-2 miles of Quick-Build bike lanes divided by flexible delineators. This is additional funding, not replacement funding.
3. Bus Stop Improvement (\$200,000)	Improve access and condition of areas around bus stops in most heavily used corridors in Somerville (Broadway, Washington, Somerville Ave.). Options include real time signage, seating, landscaping, or innovative shade structures.
4. Faster Big Belly Trash Can Adoption for Rat Abatement (\$250,000)	Place additional Big Belly trash can units through the city to improve cleanliness and decrease the rat population. Part of this funding would also go towards promotional materials explaining measures that all residents can take to reduce the rat population.
5. Keep it Cool in the 'Ville (\$200,000)	Install shade structures for parks and public squares. Create cooler, sun-safe areas for pedestrians and park-goers to reduce effects of urban heat.

➤ **Appendix A: Full listing of Ranked Choice Ballot Results**

Project	Cost	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	Total Score
Support Direct Community Food Access	\$ 55,000	616	393	332	245	199	18,832
Bike Lane Acceleration	\$ 250,000	589	276	187	152	138	14,446
Bus Stop Improvement	\$ 200,000	304	345	295	263	182	14,216
Faster Bigbelly Trash Can Adoption for Rat Abatement	\$ 250,000	390	257	264	221	214	13,848
Keep It Cool in the 'Ville	\$ 200,000	156	236	243	295	263	11,657
Improve Pedestrian Safety Near GLX Stops	\$ 150,000	220	260	255	204	161	11,174
Pedestrian Safety at Community Path Intersections	\$ 150,000	197	256	245	217	153	10,807
Light up the 'Ville	\$ 75,000	146	191	197	240	338	10,687
Outdoor Living Rooms in Parks	\$ 150,000	136	152	183	231	230	9,053
Summer Music in the Park Series	\$ 50,000	128	144	164	192	221	8,256
Library of Things Expansion	\$ 50,000	104	158	159	178	222	7,954
Somerville Safe Crossings	\$ 115,000	118	169	192	178	142	7,933
Residential Street Speed Bumps and Daylighting	\$ 150,000	148	164	160	135	115	7,315
Play for all in the 'Ville	\$ 200,000	131	120	124	122	152	6,446
Beating the Heat - Misting + Water Fountains	\$ 50,000	69	137	141	164	147	6,397
Additional Bike Racks and Fix-it Stations	\$ 85,000	59	123	156	141	184	6,362
Concrete Safety Island Crossings on Wide Thoroughfares	\$ 200,000	83	131	138	155	126	6,220
STEM Programming in Libraries	\$ 50,000	76	100	130	147	121	5,603
Get Ripped in the 'Ville	\$ 100,000	57	79	94	111	136	4,580
Solar System Sculpture	\$ 150,000	34	33	34	38	74	2,045