

Fair Housing Questionnaire for Candidates, 2023:

The [Somerville Fair Housing Commission](#), a nonpartisan group of citizens serving the community, asked candidates for Mayor and School Committee a set of questions about Fair Housing in 2021 and again this year, in 2023.

You can see answers for Question 4 from 2021 here: [Question 4](#)

You can see answers from 2023 candidates who did not submit any responses in 2021 **below**. Incumbents seeking reelection have answered follow up questions available [here](#).

Question 4: What do you see as the link between affordability and Fair Housing in Somerville?

William Tauro, Candidate for Mayor

The percentage of income spent on housing helps define affordability. Housing cost burdens of 30% - 50% severely burden Somerville residents many of whom are on fixed incomes or are of low income. Bidding wars on real estate, high income young professionals, expanding rapid transit makes Somerville housing costs over 150% higher than national housing costs. People of modest income, frequently immigrants and minorities, don't stand a chance of living in Somerville unless they are helped with rents adjusted for income. I think the Affordable Housing Trust Fund needs to be looked at and expanded to help with this.

Matthew Hunt, Candidate for City Council, Ward 1

Affordability and Fair Housing and inextricably linked. Protected classes in Fair Housing law are significantly more likely to be economically disenfranchised and lack of access to affordable housing further marginalizes these communities.

Naima Sait, Candidate for City Council, Ward 5

Affordability and Fair Housing make each other meaningful: Discrimination via pricing reifies all of the structural inequalities in our society, and while discrimination based on identity cuts across all income brackets it cuts deeper at brackets whose inhabitants have fewer resources and fewer options. Somerville is already home to a number of organizations that strive to make housing more affordable at the margins; the City must increase funding to the Office of Housing Stability and to the organizers at the Community Action Agency of Somerville and at the Welcome Project to make sure that the services to find and keep housing are available to all tenants. The Somerville Community Land Trust is working to build a housing portfolio outside the market and the City should support it with funding and land grants. The City should also explore the creation of a municipally-owned-and-operated real estate development agency to directly construct City-owned mixed-income housing which reserve much larger fractions of

units at more-deeply affordable price levels than are required by the inclusionary zoning ordinance.

Jack Connolly, Candidate for City Council, Ward 6

The link between affordable and fair housing is availability; There is not enough housing units to meet the overwhelming demand. Somerville must work hand in hand with the Somerville Housing Authority and the real estate development community to provide incentives such as real estate tax credits, to build more housing units with the current affordable requirements percentage.

As we build more in this city, we need to strive to build a city that people can afford to live in.

Wilfred Mbah, Candidate for City Council At Large

Many of the households that fall into the groups, protected by Fair Housing are also lower-income, thus, when they are shut out of the regular housing market by discriminatory practices, they turn to the subsidized and housing programs. This increases the demand for the limited numbers of units that are offered by the public and non-profit programs, adding more families to the waiting lists and further discouraging applicants. Individuals and families should not be forced into subsidized housing as the remedy for encountering discrimination.